

The Planning and Organizing of a Feast

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Planning the Feast

There are several things that need to be determined before you can start to plan the actual food that is to be served for a feast; the following questions should be answered prior to the menu planning.

- **Does the Autocrat or Event Steward have a theme for the event in which the feast is to be made?**

For some events a feast is the primary focus for the event and the Autocrat may have a specific theme for the feast and the activities surrounding that feast. Other events the feast is just one of several activities for the event. It is important for the Head Cook (or feastocrat) to speak with the Autocrat to determine any special requests they may have for the feast.

- **Themed Feasts**

There are several types of themes that could be used for a feast. For instance, a theme can be based around a specific time period, perhaps even a given year, pulling recipes from various sources of this time period. Another approach is to focus on a specific region for recipes. These could be a broad, such as the Mediterranean area or narrow, such as the Catalonia region of Spain. A feast might reflect the travels of a person from one geographic spot to another, such as a pilgrimage. Or it might focus on a specific item of food, such as pork like is done with the Beaconsgate Boar Hunt. A feast might combine several aspects of themes mentioned above or may take different approaches such as shapes or colors of food.

- **How many people are projected to be in attendance for the feast?**

This may seem like an obvious question, but one that needs great consideration. Depending on the number of people projected for the event and the equipment and facilities available for cooking the feast may have a great bearing on how the feast is served and the actual menu planning that is done. You will also want to know the number of “free” seats that will be taken. Usually these are for small children (under 5). However, they will still take a physical seat and you want to make sure you have all diner’s accounted for at each table.

- **What are the facilities available for cooking the feast?**

This also seems like another obvious question; again it is a fundamental consideration in the planning of the menu. If you don’t have an oven big enough to roast a whole suckling pig, you might want to consider taking it off your menu

plan. But planning needs to take more than just oven space into consideration, it needs to consider stove space, refrigeration space, counter space, and electric outlets.

- **Will the food be served buffet style, family style or to each individual?**

If you are serving buffet style, you will want to have larger serving containers and need fewer of them than if you are planning to serve family style. If you serve family style, you will need to determine the size of a table by the number of people that can comfortably sit at it. I recommend 8 for a table size, for a whole chicken can comfortably feed 8 people. If each person is to be served, then the servers should be able to comfortably carry the serving containers. A feast might incorporate more than one serving style.
- **Are there any special restrictions for the feast?**

There could be any number of restrictions imposed either by a site or by the autocrat for a feast. Such restrictions might include a prohibition of alcohol on site, if this is the case don't plan on bringing any alcohol on site for cooking purposes, or make the items that use the alcohol in advance. The theme of the feast may be based on a cuisine that might have particular dietary restrictions or methods of cooking, such as the kosher cooking of food. An invited royalty might have a particular allergy for food or a dislike for a certain food; it might be required to adjust things to meet these particulars.
- **What is the budget for the feast?**

The budget of the feast will be the deciding factor on what is and what is not on the menu. Most budgets can accommodate at least one exotic dish, but you'll want to make sure that you balance the cost of the remainder of the dishes to compensate for it. Your budget will also determine the total number of dishes that can be served for the feast.

You will need to work closely with the autocrat to have a successful feast. The autocrat is responsible for making the event announcement including all pertinent information for the feast. Make sure the autocrat has your contact information to put into the event copy so potential diner's can contact you with any specific questions or concerns.

Planning the Menu

Once the above questions are answered, now you can start planning your actual menu.

- **Outlining the Menu**

Before picking specific recipes for the menu, it is best to outline the menu. Outlining the menu will help to narrow down on the recipes you research. For a single course of dishes, I try to balance the food for some modern concerns. These concerns take into consideration common food allergies and dietary lifestyles. However, a close examination of many period feast menus shows a heavy focus on meats, which are typically the most expensive part of a meal. For a course consisting of 5-8 dishes, I try to have 2 meat dishes, 2 vegetarian dishes and 2 vegan dishes. I distinguish vegetarian from vegan dishes from one another that the

vegetarian dishes can include dairy and egg products. If someone has allergies or sensitivities to milk products, they typically have 4 dishes of 6 that they can consume. The use of more vegetarian dishes also helps to keep the cost of the food down and affords for more dishes or larger quantities of dishes to be made available. Another consideration in outlining your menu is to not have any one ingredient predominate the dishes of the feast.

- **Understand food that is “in season”**

Many food stuff, especially produce, have seasons where the price may be cheaper. Keeping aware of when a food item is “in season” will help you to determine if the cost of such a food item is appropriate to the budget of your feast.

- **Researching the Recipes**

There are several published books available these days that have a variety of period recipes with a translation into modern English. In addition, many recipes are also available on the Internet. Some cuisines do not have published recipes, and ethnic recipes may have to be reverse engineered to the time period. The amount of effort into researching the recipes is up to the Head Cook.

- **Presentation**

A feast should satisfy all the senses: the presentation should appease the sense of sight, the texture should appease the sense of touch, the aroma should appease the sense of smell, the ooh’s and ah’s from the diners should appease the sense of hearing, as well as the flavor should appease the sense of taste. Keep all the senses in consideration when you are creating your dish. Presentation is more than just a garnish on the dish; it is also about the serving ware you use to bring the dish to the table. It is about contrast in colors in an attractive manner. In addition, you want to make sure that the dishes you serve in a single course look good together on the diner’s plate. If all the dishes in a course are brown, you will diminish the presentation of each dish in that course. Make sure you right down in your notes how you want a dish presented.

- **Plan a Tasting**

It is not only important that each of the dishes you make tastes good, but that they also taste and look good together. Take the time to host a small number of people to sample the feast. This allows you a chance to work out the dishes, get a broad spectrum of input on how the food works together, and to also judge the quantities of food. If any problems arise with the recipes, this gives the opportunity to work these problems and if necessary, replace recipes that fail to work out. This also allows for timing issues to be worked out so that all dishes can serve as planned. It is recommended that you invite the autocrat to these “tastings” so the autocrat has a solid idea of what you are planning for your feast and how it works with the autocrats plans for the event. Also consider those that you invite should have a wide range of palates, this will help to give you a wide range of feedback from the tasting.

- **Finalize your Menu**

With recipes in hand, now is the time to make sure you have everything you need to cook for the feast. Convert all the worked out recipes to have the quantities needed for the number of people you are planning to serve. For each recipe note down what you need to cook the dish and what you need to serve the dish. Having this information at hand will help you to plan what your needs are for equipment you need to bring for cooking the dishes and the equipment needed for serving them.

- **Make a shopping list**

Compiling your ingredients together to find your total quantities before you go shopping will make you shopping much easier. It will allow determining if “bulk” quantities are needed, or if smaller quantities are more appropriate. This will also aid in keeping within the budget.

- **Do any Pre-event cooking or Preparation**

There are often many dishes that can be cooked or have much of the preparation done in advance. Taking the time to do these preparations will place less stress on the Head Cook and their staff on the day of the feast.

- **Make a handout**

It is important to provide a handout with an ingredient listing of each dish you provide in a feast. It is impossible to plan for each and every allergy or food sensitivity a person might have. However, providing an ingredient listing enables each person to see if any of the dishes that are being served is of a health concern to them. However, a satisfied belly is often forgotten by the next morning, providing a handout of all the hard work that has been put into a feast can help remind people of the dining pleasure long past the time their food has been digested.

Organizing the Feast

Both Pre-event and onsite cooking can be organized to make the making of the feast less stressful.

- **Secure a kitchen staff**

It takes more than one person to create a great feast. Secure help in advance for both prep cooking and cooking on the day of the feast. Not only do you need assistant cooks, but someone to clean the kitchen before the food arrives, someone to wash dishes as the cooking is in progress, and someone to clean the kitchen after the feast has been served and enjoyed. If you plan on having the feast formally served, make sure you have enough servers. Also designate one person as the Head Server. Don't forget to nourish your staff as they are cooking.

- **Organize your equipment**

For each recipe you should have notes on what you need to both cook and serve the dish. Make a master list of all the equipment you need, and if there is more than one course of food being served, note the equipment by course. Equipment

can be cleaned and readied for use between courses. Securing someone to do scullery work will enable you to ensure that the equipment is cleaned between courses.

- **Logistics**

With all the equipment and food that is needed to put on a feast, you need to consider how you will get all the equipment and food to and from the event. Do you have enough room in your vehicle to haul all the equipment and food? Do you have friends who can haul part of it? Will you need to take multiple trips? Depending on how far the site is from your residence, you will need to determine the best logistics of transporting the food and equipment.

- **Create a master time schedule**

The time schedule is your guide in making sure everything is ready to be served when you have designated it should be served. A time schedule should be created for each dish. Work backwards to create your time schedule from the time it is to be served, time to plate, time to cook, and preparation time. Give yourself a few minutes leeway in your estimates. Compiling the time schedule for each dish into a master time schedule will make an easy reference for you and your staff the day of the feast.

- **Collect Serving Ware**

Serving Ware is more than just a plate or bowl for the food to go in, it is also the spoon, fork, ladle and knife that the diners need to move the food to their own dish. Ensuring that each dish has all the proper serving ware takes the stress off of diners from having to find spare, or use the utensils they've been using to feed themselves. Providing all the proper serving ware will help to reduce the cross contamination of food after it leaves the kitchen. Determine what you need to serve each dish and make a note of it on each recipe. Create a master list of serving ware needed to server an entire course of food. Serving ware can be washed and re-used between courses, if your serving schedule allows for it. Your local group may have a stockpile of serving ware for use. If there is no stockpile of serving ware for use (or there is not enough), ask for people to lend the pieces you need. You can also ask if your local group is willing to invest in a stockpile of serving ware for feasts or adding to the current stockpile.

- **Create a seating chart**

A seating chart is a great convenience for your diners. Have it available at the start of the event in a place that is easily accessible. The seating chart is simply a place for people to place their names. This helps people, especially families, be able to sit together.

- **Create a master serving schedule**

The serving schedule is for use by the Head Server. It will note each dish, when it is to be served and how it is to be served. This will enable the Head Server to organize the serving dishes before they are to be plated.

- **Create a feast bible**

A feast bible is a collection of all your recipes, master lists and schedule in one easy to find place. It is helpful to put each sheet of paper in a protective plastic slip, in case of spillage. Each recipe should be on its own separate piece of paper. This is so that an assistant cook can take the recipe out of the binder and go work on it independently. The feast bible should be created in such a way, that someone can come in at the last minute and take over the feast for you because of an emergency.

Additional Tips & Tricks

Although the amount of food a person gets for a feast created by volunteers, they always enjoy more food for their money.

- **Shop around for best prices**

Take the time to review store adds in the weeks... maybe even months in advance to your feast. If there is a special deal on an ingredient you need, buy it in advance and make sure you have the proper storage for that ingredient. A little wise shopping may help you to add an additional dish or two to your feast and still keep you within budget.

- **Ask for donations**

One of the big expenses on feasts is the cost of spices. Often only small quantities of spices are used in some of the dishes. Ask if local members are willing to donate a bottle or partial bottle of spice to the feast. You can also approach grocery stores and markets about donating goods or gift cards to purchase some of the items you need for the feast. Speak to your local seneschal about the right way of securing a donation from a store.

- **Portion Control**

There will be few people who will actually eat every dish you prepare, either due to dietary restrictions, allergies or personal dislikes. However, each person will likely eat a large number of dishes. You do not want your feast patrons to go away hungry, so you need to plan for an appropriate size portion that will not be too filling, but satisfying. The following rule of thumb works well:

- 4 oz of meat per person per meat dish
- 2 oz of vegetable per person per vegetable dish
- Mushrooms should be treated like a meat (4 oz per person per dish)
- Fish should be treated like a vegetable (2 oz per person per dish)

- **Don't serve bad food**

Sometimes things happen unexpectedly in the kitchen on the day of the feast which makes a dish unpalatable. Just throw it away, don't serve your feast patrons food that is going to leave a bad taste in their mouth. It is likely you've made enough food that the dish will not be missed.

- **Educate your kitchen staff of safe food handling**

The last thing you want from your feast is to have someone sick because of unsafe food handling. Take the time to educate your kitchen staff about not cross contaminating food and proper kitchen hygiene. Many people have food allergies and are dependent that only the ingredients listed on the handout are present in any given dish. Also all equipment should be thoroughly washed and sanitized after each use to avoid the possibility of food poisoning.

- **Clean your feast kitchen prior to cooking**

Even though a rental hall might look clean, you can not be certain that it is clean. Give all prep and cook surface a good wipe down with bleach. There are wipes available that are presoaked with bleach that make this task easier. If possible, get someone to do this task before the food even arrives on site.

- **Leftovers**

There will always be some leftovers after each course. If you make a sideboard available, people can go back for more at their leisure. After the last course of food is served, place all leftovers in containers or bags that your feast patrons can take home.

- **Advertise your Feast!**

Feasts are typically created on a very tight budget. You want to make sure you sell on the seats that are planned for. You or the autocrat should regularly advertise your feast to encourage people to make reservations for your feast. Emphasize that limited seats are available. Set a time limit of when reservations must be made. Once this time limit is set, plan to serve the numbered of reserved seats plus seats needed to serve a full table.

- **Thank you**

Your staff works hard to help you create your feast. Remember to thank them publicly for their service. A small gift is also well appreciated by your staff. Make sure you also note in your handout all who assisted with your feast. Be prepared to also thank those that step in at the last minute to help with the feast.

Contact Information

Mistress Euriol of Lothian
aka Cassandra Baldassano

503 Stone Hedge Place
Mountaintop PA 18707

570-678-7408
euriol@yahoo.com

Appendix

Menu Outline

German Feast for Fasching

Lunch – 11:11am

Meat Dish (Chicken Pie, Northern Cookery K25, Page 39)

Vegan Dish (Pea Soup, Ein New Kochbuch, #4)

Farmer's Cheese (3lb)

Seasonal Fruit & Dried Fruit (Apples, Pears)

+Bread Pudding (Northern Cookery K15, Page 35)

Bread

Appetizer Course - 3pm

*Meat Dish (Saurbraten)

*Vegetarian Dish (Rutabaga, Ein New Kochbuch, #185)

*Bread Bowls (for soup)

*400 year old Shrimp (Ein New Kochbuch, #16)

Cheese Soup (Ein New Kochbuch, #46)

+Vegetarian Dish (Spinach, Ein New Kochbuch, #194)

+Vegetarian Dish(Sour Orange Salad, Ein New Kochbuch, #24)

Main Course - 5pm

*Meat Dish (Roast Chicken, Ein New Kochbuch, #1))

Honey Mustard Sauce (Guter Spise #48, Page 102)

Sauce for the Lords (Northern Cookery K6, Page 31)

*Vegan Dish (Salad with Pomegranates, Ein New Kochbuch, #6))

*Bread (Fresh Baked)

*Meat Dish (Roasted Pork)

*Vegan Dish (Beans, Guter Spise #31, Page 99)

*Vegetarian Dish (Onion Salad, Ein New Kochbuch, #10)

+Vegan Dish (Saurkraut)

Dessert Course - 7pm

*Apple Dessert (Apple Tart, Das Kochbuch der Sabina Welserin #79)

*Snow (Whipped Cream)

*Springerle

+Cherries (Ein New Kochbuch, #120 http://clem.mscd.edu/~grasse/GK_veggie1.html)-
Served with Snow?

Sample Recipe

* 400 year old Shrimp (Ein New Kochbuck, #16)

Original Recipe:

Wenn die Krebs klein seind/ so dreh das fo:erder am Schwantz herausz/
nim{m} die Oberschalen davon hinweg/ lasz die Schalen am Schwantz
hengen/ pfeffers/ Saltzs vnd Mehls wol/ backs ausz der heiszen Butter/ gib
trucken also warm auff ein Tisch/ bestra:ew es mit einem Jngwer/ so ist es gut
vnd wolgeschmack.

English Translation:

If the crawfish are small/ so twist the front away from the tail/
take the shells away/ (but) leave the shell attached at the tail/
pepper/ salt and flour (them) well/ bake (fry) them in the hot butter/ give
dry and warm to a table/ sprinkle it with ginger/ so it is good
and welltasting.

Redaction:

Serves 8	Serves 40
1 pound raw shrimp, peeled with tails left on and drained.	5 pounds raw shrimp, peeled with tails left on and drained.
1 cup flour	5 cups flour
2 tbsp ground black pepper	10 tbsp ($\frac{5}{8}$ cup) ground black pepper
1 tbsp salt	5 tbsp salt
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups butter
1 tbsp freshly grated ginger	1 Rhizome freshly grated ginger

Combine flour, pepper and salt in medium size bowl. Dredge shrimp in flour mixture. Leave shrimp in flour until flour about shrimp becomes moist (about 20 minutes). Place skillet over medium heat, add butter until butter is melted. Remove excess flour from shrimp and put in hot skillet. Cook until all shrimp meat has turned from gray to pink. Toss with freshly grated ginger, then serve.

Equipment needed to cook:

Skillet or electric griddle, microplane

Equipment needed to serve:

Platter, serving spoon

Advance Preparation:

Mix flour, salt & pepper together. Defrost shrimp night before in refrigerator.

Preparation Time:

1 hour for cleaning shrimp, 5 minutes for grating ginger, 20 minutes to let shrimp set in flour.

Cooking Time:

20 minutes

Serving Time:

3:00 p.m.

Start time for Preparation:

1:00 pm

Master Time Schedule

Time	Activity
8:30:00 AM	Pea Soup Simmering
9:00:00 AM	First batch of rolls in oven
9:12:00 AM	First batch of rolls out of oven
9:14:00 AM	Second batch of rolls in oven
9:15:00 AM	Chicken Pie Assembly
9:26:00 AM	Second batch of rolls out of oven
9:30:00 AM	Start making bread pudding
9:40:00 AM	Chicken Pies in Oven
9:50:00 AM	Bread Pudding in Oven
9:55:00 AM	Pies reduced to 300
10:00:00 AM	Start making cheese soup
10:25:00 AM	Chicken Pies out of oven
10:30:00 AM	Plate fruit
10:35:00 AM	Plate rolls
10:37:00 AM	Whip butter
10:40:00 AM	Plate cheese
10:50:00 AM	Bread Pudding out of oven
10:55:00 AM	Slice Chicken Pies for serving
11:11:00 AM	Serve Lunch
11:15:00 AM	Put sour braten in nesco roaster
11:30:00 AM	First batch of bread bowls in oven
11:42:00 AM	First batch of bread bowls out of oven
11:44:00 AM	Second batch of bread bowls in oven
11:56:00 AM	Second batch of bread bowls out of oven
12:15:00 PM	Cut bread bowls for soup
12:30:00 PM	Clean and devein shrimp
12:35:00 PM	Grate ginger
1:15:00 PM	Boil water for turnips
1:30:00 PM	Start cleaning & stuffing chickens
1:35:00 PM	Put turnips in water
1:40:00 PM	Put turnips in broth
1:45:00 PM	start cooking roast pork
2:00:00 PM	Cook spinach
2:15:00 PM	Put shimp in flour
2:25:00 PM	Put spinach in pier plates in oven (warming)
2:30:00 PM	Plate orange salad
2:40:00 PM	Cook shrimp
2:45:00 PM	Take spinach from oven
2:50:00 PM	Plate bread bowls & cheese soup
2:55:00 PM	Plate turnips
3:00:00 PM	Plate Shrimp
3:00:00 PM	Serve Appetizer Course
3:05:00 PM	Whip butter
4:00:00 PM	Cook onion salad
4:05:00 PM	Strain chick peas
4:15:00 PM	Cook chick peas
4:20:00 PM	Make salad & dressing

4:25:00 PM	Put onion salad in pie plates in oven (warming)
4:30:00 PM	Put chick peas in oven (warming)
4:35:00 PM	Put honey mustard in bowls
4:37:00 PM	Put sauce for the lords in bowls
4:40:00 PM	Plate roast pork
4:45:00 PM	Plate roasted chickens
4:50:00 PM	plate bread & butter
5:00:00 PM	Serve Main Course
5:10:00 AM	Make apple pies & bake
5:15:00 PM	Bake bread for snow
5:27:00 PM	Take bread from oven
5:30:00 PM	Make cherries
5:35:00 PM	Plate Springerless
6:00:00 PM	Check apple pies, remove from oven
6:15:00 PM	Make whipped cream
6:30:00 PM	Slice & toast bread for snow
6:45:00 PM	plate toast for snow
6:50:00 PM	plate cherries
6:55:00 PM	slice apple pies
7:00:00 PM	Serve Dessert!!!

Master Shopping List

½ cup	Almond milk
½ package fresh	Basil
½ cup	Blanched Almonds, ground
1 cup unseasoned	Bread Crumbs
3 loaves of	Bread Dough
2 cups	Broth
8 cans	Chick Peas
6 whole	chickens
16 whole	cloves
20	cubebs
2	Egg Yolks (cooked)
3	Eggs
2 cloves	Garlic
20	grains of paradise
1 Tbsp.	Granulated Sugar
3 Tbsp.	Ground Cinnamon
1 Tsp.	Ground Cloves
¼ cup ground	Hazelnuts
1 Tbsp.	Honey
6 lbs.	Leg of Lamb
1 tsp	mace
1 Package	Marjoram
½ Package	Mint
6 lbs sliced	Mushrooms
1 cup	Olive Oil
2 large	onion, minced
1 small	Onion, sliced
1 cup Grated	Parmesan Cheese
1 Bunch Fresh	Parsley
½ bunch Fresh	parsley
2 Tsp.	Powdered Ginger
6 lbs.	Ricotta Cheese
20 threads of	saffron
½ Package	Sage
½ package fresh	sage
3 Tsp.	Salt
1 tsp	salt
6 lbs	stew beef
1¼ cup	Sugar
2 cups	Vegetable Oil

2 cups
¼ cup

Vinegar
Walnuts

Lunch Menu

Chicken Pie

Northern Cookery Book

Original Recipe:

De cibo qui dicitur kokenwanhoner.

Man skal gøra en grytæ af degh, oc skær et hønns thær I alt I styki, oc latae thær I spæk wæl skoren sum ærtær, pipær oc komiæn oc æggi blomæ, wæl slaghæn mæth safran; oc takæ thæn grytæ oc latae bakæ I en ofn. Thæt hetær kokæn wan honer.

Ingredients: chicken, black pepper, cumin, saffron, eggs, onion, flour, butter, salt, sugar

Pea Soup

Ein New Kochbuch

Original Recipe:

Erbeßsuppen mit klein gehackten Zwibeln/ die geschweißet seyn/ pfeffers vnd gelbs/ so ist es auch gut.

Ingredients: split peas, onion, pepper, saffron, vegetable broth, water, salt, olive oil

Bread Pudding

Northern Cookery

Original Recipe:

Recipe XVI

Quomodo temperetur cibus qui vocatur hwit moos.

Man skal takæ søt miælk, oc wæl writhet hwetebrøth oc slaghæ æg, oc wæl writhæt safran, oc latae thæt wællæ til thæt warthær thiuct. Sithen latae thæt up a dysk oc kastæ I smør, oc strø a pulvær af kaniæl. Thæt hetær hwitmoos.

Ingredients: milk, butter, eggs, sugar, cinnamon, salt, flour, yeast, salt, water, red sugar sprinkles

Variety of Cheeses

Fresh Fruit

Donation Letter Template

SOCIETY FOR CREATIVE ANACHRONISM
Local Group Region

Date

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to you on behalf of the *Local Group Region* of the Society for Creative Anachronism, a non profit educational organization designed as a living history organization that teaches and researches life in Europe prior to 1600AD using a hands-on, learning-by-doing approach. We are organized as a 501(3)(c) corporation (Tax ID number 94-1698556) in the State of California.

An event has been scheduled for ***Date*** at ***Location*** in ***City*** in which classes and workshops have been scheduled to study life in the Middle Ages. Teachers and Volunteer Event Staff are donating their time and energy to make this event a success. Entry fees will be charged to attendees to cover the ever-increasing site costs. We are planning to provide meals on site but in order to keep the cost down to the participants; we are looking for donations of money or store credit from generous business owners/managers to subsidize these costs.

Head Cook will be acting as the Food Services Manager for this event and has been authorized to solicit funds on our behalf. Please forward correspondence and donations to her for management. I can be contacted as listed below for any questions or concerns. We would appreciate any and all donations that you can provide to our organization.

Sincerely,
Local Seneschal
Chapter President,
Local Group Region
Address.
City, STATE ZIP
Phone

Head Cook
Event Food Services Manager
Address
City, STATE ZIP
Phone