

March Crown Science Competition - Soup

Euriol of Lothian

The following recipe is a fairly simple to cook and is quite nice served by itself as a simple dish or served with rice.

Original Recipe taken from Cookery Book II Harleian MS. 4016, ab. 1450 A.D., from Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery-Books, edited by Thomas Austin.

Hen in Broth

Original:

Gelyn in brothe. Take rawe hennes, chop hem, caste hem into a potte; cast to fressh broth Wyne, parcelly, oynons myced, powder of peper, clowes, Maces, saffroun, and salt; then stepe brede with vinegre and ¶le same broth, and draw hit through a streynour, and cast it thereto, and lete boyle ynogh; And caste thereto powder ginger, and sesone hit vp, & serue forth.

Translation:

Hen in broth. Take raw hens, chop them, cast them into a pot; cast to fresh broth Wine, parsley, onions minced, powder of pepper, cloves, Maces, saffron, and salt; then steep bread with vinegar and the same broth, and draw it through a strainer, and cast it thereto, and let boil enough; And cast thereto powdered ginger, and season it up, & serve forth.

Interpretation:

1 chicken, cut-up	½ tsp ground mace
2-2.5 cups of water	10-20 threads of Saffron
1 cup white wine	1 tsp salt
3 tbsp chopped fresh parsley	¼ cup vinegar
1 small onion, minced	3-4 tbsp unseasoned bread crumbs
½ tsp finely ground pepper	1 tsp powdered ginger
6 whole cloves	

Place all ingredients into a pot, except for breadcrumbs. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and let simmer until the chicken is cooked, approximately 30-40 minutes. After the chicken is cooked, remove it from the pot and remove the skin and bones, and chop the chicken further into bite size pieces. Return the chopped chicken back to the broth. Stir in the breadcrumbs, and stir regularly until broth is thickened to desired consistency, then serve.

Notes:

One of the changes I do from the original recipe and this one is using breadcrumbs instead of steeping the bread with vinegar and broth, then mashing it through a strainer. My reasons for this change are as follows. Using breadcrumbs does not in anyway change the nature of this dish. The same property of the bread (the cooked starch) is being used for thickening the broth. This is also a more frugal method in my opinion, you are not using more dishes (a strainer and a bowl to steep the bread in) to get the same desired result. It is also a simpler means to achieve the desired result, especially since this dish was cooked on site. I found the above proportions of ingredients to give this soup a nice balance of flavors. In addition I add the breadcrumbs as a final step rather than in the beginning so that the pot does not have to be stirred while the chicken is cooking and minimizing any scorching that might occur.

Another change that I did from the original is to take the chicken back out and remove the skin and bones, chopping up the meat and returning just the meat to the pot. This is more a courtesy to our modern sensibility that you would not find skin and bones in a soup.

References:

Two Fifteenth Century Cookery Books, Thomas Austin, Oxford University Press, 1964.