

Edible archive needs strong stomach

Historic Scots recipes serve up cormorant soup and locust bread

Emma Cowing

DISHES such as cormorant soup, sheep's head broth and half-pay pudding are unlikely to be making an appearance on *Ready Steady Cook* any time soon.

But they are about to be revived as part of Scotland's first "edible archive" - a collection of Scottish recipes stretching back hundreds of years and cooked in kitchens across the country.

Compiled by the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA), the project has already collected more than 100 recipes, including an orange marmalade made by the Countess of Sutherland in 1683 and a "soup for 100 children", which was submitted by NHS Grampian and found in a chief medical officer's inspection report from 1912. And there are plans to bring the dishes to life with a Heston Blumenthal-style feast in Edinburgh, in which some of the dishes will be recreated and served up to adventurous diners.

Victoria Brown, research officer at the SCA, said: "People are interested in food and the diversity of it, so we thought this would be a good way to demonstrate the range of food across the regions of Scotland. We're trying to build a picture of Scotland through its recipes and through its food, and look at how recipes and how we eat has changed over time."

Some of the more unusual recipes submitted include a locust bread from the archive of Mount Stuart in Bute, which was brought back to the island by the 4th Marquess of Bute following a trip to Tangiers; and a medicinal drink called Wort, concocted in 1773 and submitted by the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh.

They also include half-pay pudding, a modest dish from Fife using very cheap ingredients that was targeted at the poor just after the Second World War and which may become popular again in today's economic climate.

Brochan Sgarbh, a recipe for cormorant soup in Gaelic, was submitted by the Pairc Community Association in the Western Isles, and a rice pudding recipe, written in code in a letter by a Scottish soldier



Aberdeen County Council's recipe for soup for 100 children



INGREDIENTS.

Shin beef, 5lbs
Bones, 7lbs
2 to 3 turnips
3 to 4 large carrots
7 to 8 small onions

For broth add 2lbs barley and 1 lb peas.
For pea soup add 7 lbs split peas.
For lentil soup add 7 lbs lentils.
For rabbit soup, 6 rabbits, barley and vegetables.

Sheep's Head Broth

Get a singed head and trotter and have the former cut open by the butcher. Take out the brains and rub the head and feet well with them, and allow to lie all night. Wash the head with warm water, put in a pan and cover with cold water, bring to the boil, draw aside from the fire and allow to soak for one hour; then scrape it well.

Wash and thoroughly clean the head, split the trotters between the toes and remove the inside part and again put into cold water (four quarts) with the barley, which has been well washed. Bring slowly to the boil and cook one and a half hours. Now add the cabbage, one carrot, turnip, onion, and two leeks, all prepared in the usual way and cut up finely, again boil for two hours. Add a tablespoonful finely-chopped parsley, salt and pepper.

The second carrot should be grated and added to the broth, one hour before serving. For serving the head, remove the flesh from the bones and place it neatly on a dish. Skin the tongue and split it in two. Place in the middle of the dish, pour parsley sauce over.



INGREDIENTS.

Sheep's head and trotters
Two leeks
Two small carrots
One onion
One turnip
Parsley
One small cabbage
Four quarts of water
Salt and pepper
A good teaspoonful of barley

KHUBZ EL JARADE Locust Bread



The best way to catch locusts is to repair to the nearest wall, the higher the better. Here, if the season be propitious, numbers of these insects will be found flying with such force against the wall that many will fall senseless to the ground.

Of these that fall, pick up the females - they are somewhat larger and rather lighter in colour. Pull off the head as the head is pulled off a shrimp. Then squeeze the body and there will exude the eggs, like dark and diminutive castles, to the amount of nearly a teaspoonful from each animal. When half a kilo of this spawn has been obtained in a small basin, mix with half a kilo of flour and bake into small loaves.

Be careful not to let an opportunity pass - make this dish, as these little beasts make their visitation to the North of Morocco, at least, every nine years only. The last swarm occurred in France in AD 1947.

big cheese recipes



Matter of taste: a class at Glasgow School of Cookery, founded in 1875, which is where Glasgow Caledonian University originated. Left: a 70s promotion by the Company of Scottish Cheesemakers.

Photographs: University of Glasgow Archive Services. Recipe images: Glasgow Caledonian University Archive. Recipes: Northern Health Services Archive, Glasgow Caledonian University Archives, The Bute Archive at Mount Stuart

servicing in India in 1808 who was practising his encryption skills, also appears.

Food writer Sue Lawrence said: "It's hugely important to have an archive like this. It would be a real shame if some of these recipes fell by the wayside. Some recipes from the past don't translate well because you can't get some of the ingredients, but it's very important to actually preserve these old recipes. They make us what we are."

John Quigley, chef and restaurateur at Glasgow's Red

Onion bistro, said: "The thing about food and recipes from the past is it tells us about our economic background, how poor or rich we were, who the immigrant population was - all sorts of things. So many families pass recipes down the generations. I still have handwritten recipes of my Granny's. You're eating things that are unique to your family and have been there for generations."

So far the archive has collected around 100 recipes but is looking for more contributions and hoping Scots will

have a root around for old family recipes and get in touch.

Ben Bennett of the SCA said: "What we're looking for is recipes with stories. Even the smallest story is important - it might be a recipe for spag bol but with a great memory attached. We'll accept every recipe that people submit, whether it's from a foodie angle or more about the history of the recipe, or the personal memory."

There are plans to release an electronic cookbook featuring recipes from the archive,

as well as hold a feast of some of the dishes at Edinburgh's Cafe Camino, with catering students trying out some of the recipes and serving them up to diners.

"We want people to try them out if they can," said Brown. "Hopefully it will be a historical experience that they can gain something from."

Other organisations that have contributed recipes include the Royal Bank of Scotland, which submitted a 1960s strawberry cheesecake recipe served at a board meeting,

and the Royal College of Nursing, which contributed a 1950s muffin recipe entitled "For Husbands Only", which once did the rounds among young married nurses.

A number of Scottish councils have also made contributions, including a recipe for how to cook turtle from 1771 submitted by North Lanarkshire Council - possibly brought back by a Scottish seafarer - and instructions on how to "dress a cod's head the Scot's way" from Orkney Council dated 1712.

Lawrence said that researching old Scottish recipes could be immensely rewarding.

"I've researched recipes from my Grannies, my aunts and my Mum for my books over the year. I've got lots of old family recipes - everyone's got a cloutie dumpling recipe or a different shortbread recipe.

"People go off and trace their genealogy, but I also think it would be fantastic alongside to look at what our ancestors ate too. It's a real reflection of who we are as a nation."

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