

## **An introduction to the Mongol Cookery of Yuan China and Central Asia**

by Drake Morgan and Natal'ia Vladimirova 'doch

- 1) Discussion of Region
  - a) Coastal regions and their food: lighter fare, fish, fowl, vegetables
  - b) Northern and Steppes regions and their food: often contained red meat, little or no vegetables, and a lot of dairy
  - c) Middle Eastern Influences: as time progressed, there was the inclusion of Middle Eastern spicing and cooking methods in the Mongolian regions.
- 2) Sources and Their Timelines, History, and Location
  - a) *Yun Lintang Yinshi Zhidu Ji (Cloud Forest Hall Collection of Rules for Drinking and Eating)* by Ni Tsan (CFH)
    - i) A good translation provided by Teresa Wang and EN Anderson can be found in *Petits Propos Culinaires* 60.
      - (1) Francoise Sabban provided 'Some Remarks about the Translation of Yun Lintang Yinshi Zhidu Ji published in PPC 60' in *Petit Propos Culinare* 61.
    - ii) Ni Tsan was a famous painter and poet who lived in central eastern China.
    - iii) This is a 14<sup>th</sup> century household management book – probable completion dates focus on the mid-1300. It includes recipes favoured by Ni Tsan and important notes for his household such as directions for cleaning his paint brushes and making ink.
    - iv) CFH uses food stuffs found closer to the coast. There are many water (fish/shellfish) and bird dishes. Those dishes with pork or beef (which are few) are often associated with water (so broth or soups).
  - b) *Yin-shan cheng-yao (Proper and Essential Things for the Emperor's Food and Drink)* by Hu Szu-hui (YSCY)
    - i) A translation and examination can be found in *A Soup for the Qan* by Paul Buell and Eugene N. Anderson.
    - ii) Hu Szu-hui
      - (1) Court therapist and dietitian in China during the Yuan Dynasty.
      - (2) Is credited with being the first to use scientific measure to discover, describe, and treat nutritional deficiencies and the diseases associated with.
    - iii) Extensively YSCY is a Mongol era Chinese Dietary Medical text.
    - iv) Manuscript believed to have first been presented in court in 1330, but the knowledge goes back to Kublai Khan's court.
    - v) Influences include Mongolian, Han Chinese, Turkic, and Persian.
    - vi) YSCY uses a heavier flavour/food selection. Lots of red meat. The favours can be overpowering (especially some of the spicing) to modern tastes. There is no fish, few vegetables, and few bird dishes.
  - c) *Account of William Rubruck's Journey to Möngke Khan's Court at Karakorum, 1253-1255*
    - i) A digitized copy of this travel journal can be found at:  
<<https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/rubruck.html>>
      - (1) This is the W. W. Rockhill translation (1900)
    - ii) Willem van Ruysbroeck (William of Rubruck) was a Flemish Franciscan monk who was in Palestine (on crusade for King Louis IX) when he heard about the Mongolians and their khan. In 1253 he undertook travels into Mongolian territory to promote Christianity and to meet the Mongol leader. His travels lasted three years.
      - (1) Rubruck's journals are reputed to be the most complete and detailed of the contemporary accounts of the Mongols.
- 3) Food stuffs eaten, including spices
  - a) A full list of Yuan Dynasty era food stuffs can be found at:  
<<http://mongolmusings.weebly.com/yuan-food-stuffs.html>>
    - i) This list is updated as we source new food items.
  - b) Meat sources we can find challenging

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- i) Sheep: If you are truly interested in Yuan Dynasty Mongolian cooking, you are going to need to know your lamb/mutton cuts and the difference between these meats - yes, there is a difference - lamb is far sweeter and mutton is quite gamey.
- ii) Of Fish and Fowl: On Mongol Musings, you will find a list of food stuffs with the scientific names of the fish/ crustaceans and birds used in some of the recipes. Some of these are not available in Australia and substitutes will need to be acquired (and just a small word of warning, going into a pet store and looking to buy finch by the kilo doesn't go over well).
- iii) Specialized Meats: Some recipes require wolf, bear, and game animals. While some (deer for example) can be located at specialty butchers, we recommend skipping recipes with 'exotic' meats (Although Natal'ia has served 'wolf soup' to friends by using a medley of meats just to get a reaction from those eating the dish).
- c) Spices for the masses, maybe (some of the more interesting spices used)
  - i) Asafoetida (*Ferula assa-foetida*): A dried latex (a type of gum) that is produced in the tap root of *Ferula spp.* It is also known as 'Hing'. It has a strong, unpleasant smell similar to fetid cheese or dirty feet. As it cooks, it begins to take on a mild onion or garlicky smell and taste. Hing is often used in modern Indian cooking.
  - ii) Black cardamom (*Amomum sublatum* and *A. costatum*): Also known as: Bengal, Greater, Indian, Brown, Hill, Nepal, or Wing cardamom (which name is used is primarily dependent on the company supply the cardamom). it is not the better known green cardamom. The flavour is smoky and it imparts this flavour even to strong flavoured meats. Tsaoko cardamom is a variant of Black cardamom. It is also called 'red cardamom' or cao guo. Tsaoko produces a slightly chili hit to its after flavour.
  - iii) Cassia vs Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum cassia* and *Cinnamomum verum*): In Mongolian dishes, 'cinnamon' is actually cassia (*C. cassia*) - a thick bark with a sharp, hot cinnamon flavour. It is not *C. verum* which is a thin, paper-like substance with a milder flavour and that lacks the sharp bite of cassia.
- 4) Humours and Qualities in Central Asian Foods and their balance
  - a) There are two important humour sets in early Asian foods. These are known as the Five Smells and the Five Flavours. Foods need to address and balance each of these.
    - i) The Five Smells: rancid, scorched, fragrant, rotten, and putrid
    - ii) The Five Flavours: sour, bitter, sweet, pungent (as in the 'hot' flavour), and salt
  - a) There are four qualities of food: Heat/Cold and Wetness/Dryness. Like with most of the food systems that tried to classify how much and what we should eat, the Asian 'qualities' is convoluted. However, broadly:
    - i) Heat/Cold: It was a popular belief that illness was caused by an imbalance of hot and cold in the body. Environment played a major contributing factor (who has not heard that you will catch a cold if you go out without a jacket or that you will get sun stroke if you stay out in the sun?). There is evidence that environmental factors can affect health. The Chinese in the middle ages believed that foods could help with these imbalances of environmental factors. They classified some foods as warming and some as cooling. You could use these in combination to overcome issues. More modern research shows that the placement of food into hot or cold seems to work along caloric numbers and spiciness. The more calories, the more likely the food is to be classified as 'Hot'. The converse is true, the fewer calories, the more likely to be a 'Cold' food.

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- ii) Wetness/Dryness: An excess of wetness can manifest in the body as weeping sores, rashes, and bloating. Foods such as shellfish are an example of wetness. Dry foods are those which feel dry in the mouth – such as coffee and dry-roasted nuts.
  - b) Due to the rules of balance and humour, some foods could not be served with others. Obviously, this is important to keep in mind when planning menus.
  - c) When serving foods in multi-course feasts, light dishes were served first and progressed to heavier dishes.
- 2) Pitfalls of redacting Central Asian Foods
- a) Translations: unless you are familiar with medieval Chinese, you will need to use a translation of the Chinese texts. Your quality of redaction will directly be linked to the quality of the translation of your text.
  - b) Ingredients: as mentioned above, trying to determine the true ingredients, and then obtaining them can be challenging.
  - c) Understanding Original Techniques: some study might be needed to understand the techniques used in period to make some dishes.
  - d) Weights and Measures:
    - i) Qian = 3.12g
    - ii) Liang = 31.2g
    - iii) Jin = 16 liang (or about 500g)
    - iv) Sheng = 516.19ml
    - v) He = 51.619ml
    - vi) Dov = 10 sheng (or about 52ml)
    - vii) Cun = 33.3mm
    - viii) Fen = 3.33mm
    - ix) Chi = 10 cun (or about 1/3 meter)
    - x) Ho = 3.17 cubic inches or about 52ml
    - xi) These numbers are slightly contentious. More study needs to be done into it.
- 3) Drinks: Drinks often recorded in the travel journals included both alcoholic and non-alcoholic options.
- a) Alcoholic: Mung Bean Wine and Rice Wine are options; as is, Airag. Airag is known as Kumiss in Russia. It is fermented horse milk. For more information on Airag, <<http://www.jollyduke.com/kumiss---a-discussion-thereof.html>>
  - b) Non-alcoholic options included teas (such as Lotus Flower Tea, Tangerine Flower Tea, or salted milk tea). There are also sweet drinks such as Cassia Syrup, Red Currant Puree, or Ginseng Puree.

4) Redactions used for the cooking and tasting section of class

## **BBQ Pork (CFH)**

### **Original Recipe:**

#### **47. Barbecued Pork**

Wash the meat. Rub spring onion, Chinese pepper, honey, a little salt, and wine on it. Hang the meat on bamboo sticks in the saucepan. In the pan put a cup of water and a cup of wine. Cover. Use moist paper to seal the pan. If the paper dries out, moisten it. Heat the pan with grass bunches; when one is burned up, light another. Then stop the fire and leave for the time it takes to eat a meal. Touch the cover of the pan; if it is cold, remove the cover and turn the meat over. Cover it again and seal again with the moist paper. Heat again with one bunch of grass. It will be cooked when the pan cools again.

### **Drake's Redaction:**

#### **Ingredients:**

- 3 Kg Pork Long Loin (60g each), in 6 pieces
- 12 green shallots, very finely diced.
- 6 tsp Salt
- 200g Honey (I used Cherry Blossom)
- 4 tsp of freshly ground Szechwan Pepper (very finely ground)
- 6 cups of Sweet White Rice Wine
- 6 cups of Water

#### **Method:**

1. Marinade the loins in the salt, honey, shallots, and pepper overnight.
2. Place 4-6 long bamboo skewers through the pieces of loin crossways. Check that the loin balances in the middle of the wok, with the skewers touching the sides. You might need to cut each skewer to match. The idea is to suspend the meat in the middle of the wok, with no part of the meat touching the bottom or the sides.
3. Add 1 cup of wine and 1 cup of water to the base of the wok.
4. Put the lid on the wok, and place pulped paper (I used wet toilet paper!) around the seal.
5. Cook on low heat on a gas stove for 20 minutes.
6. Turn off the heat and leave for 20 minutes.
7. Open the wok and turn the pork over. Add more water and wine if it's getting low.
8. Reseal, place more pulped paper around the seal. Cook for 20 minutes. Leave to cool. Serve.

#### **Notes:**

Watch the pork carefully. My first attempt failed as too much honey dripped into the wok, the water dried out, and the honey burned into a thick black gunk. Use a low gas heat, don't be tempted to turn it up (trust the steam). You might have to adjust the times depending on the wok and stove.

#### **Assumptions:**

I used a wok instead of an earthen pot to good effect. The cooking action of the meat is unusual, being steam roasted.

#### **Translator's Note:**

This is a version of the modern Cantonese 'cha sui'. Francois Sabban disagrees that the recipe should be entitled BBQ Pork as shaois not the correct word for barbecue but more as braising. Perhaps this recipe should be entitled Braised Pork.

## **Yellow Bird Buns (CFH)**

Original Recipe:

### **8. How to cook yellow-bird buns**

Take yellow birds and chop up the wing and chest meat with spring onions, brown pepper and salt. Stuff into stomach (i.e., probably, body cavity). Use leavened dough to wrap it. Make long small rolls, flattening and rounding down the ends. Put into bamboo container and steam them. After steaming they can perhaps be treated like 'lees buns': use brewing lees and fragrant oil and fry them.

### **Natal'ia's modifications to Drake's redaction:**

*Note: Although I did the original redaction, Natal'ia has done massive amounts of work to refine this recipe and get the pastry to work well... It's truly her recipe, not mine.*

Ingredients:

- 2 kg minced Chicken Breast
- 6 tsp Salt
- 3 tsp of freshly ground Szechwan Pepper (very finely ground and filtered through muslin to remove husks)
- 6 green shallots, finely sliced
- 2 kg white leavened bread dough of your favourite recipe

Optional Ingredients:

- Sesame Oil
- Brewing Lees

Method:

1. Make leavened bread dough and set aside (allowing it to rise).
2. Combine chicken mince, shallots, Szechwan pepper, and salt in a frying pan. Cook until the chicken is just done. Then let chicken mixture stand until cool enough to work with by hand.
3. Break off a small piece of dough. Roll into a ball and then flatten so that it is not too thin. Add some chicken mixture to the centre and make long small rolls, flattening and rounding the ends. The amount and size of your dough ball/chicken mix is dependent on how large you would like your final product. Smaller parcels seem to create a better outcome.
4. Steam for 10 minutes or until the dough is cooked.

Optional Part:

5. Roll each steamed bun in brewing lees until coated.
6. Shallow fry in sesame oil until golden.

Assumptions:

- I used chicken mince instead of buntings. It would probably be illegal or frowned upon to use any small bunting/sparrow like bird. Tunnel-boned quail is another option, but cost and amount of time to tunnel-bone each bird, make this option impractical for a feast.
- Although, strictly following the original directions, the meat mixture would not be pre-cooked, I have thoroughly cooked it before stuffing my 'bird buns' for food safety reasons. I do not believe that the chicken would be adequately cooked with such a short steaming time and thick dough.

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- Ni Tsan offers an optional part in his recipe, "After steaming they can perhaps be treated like 'lees buns': use brewing lees and fragrant oil and fry them." As Master Drake assumes in his original redaction of this recipe, the brewing lees seals the dough, allowing the dough to be fried without absorbing a hideous amount of the 'fragrant oil'. The resulting bun is both crispy and light.

Note:

Yellow birds or yellow sparrows are, focally, Chinese yellow buntings (*Emberiza* spp.), but the name is used generally for any small yellowish or brownish bird. Brewing lees are a common pickling, marinating, coating and flavouring agent in China, especially the central east where Ni dwelt. 'Fragrant oil' is probably sesame oil. The word translated 'buns', here as elsewhere, is *man-t'ou*, probably a borrowing from Turkic *manty* or *mantu* (borrowing may have gone the other way, but this is unlikely on several grounds; Buell et al, ms). Today *man-t'ou* are unstuffed, but in medieval China they had fillings, as their cognates still do in Korea and the Altaic world.

### Cow's Milk Buns (YSCY)

#### Original Recipe:

[92.] Cow's Milk Buns

White flour (five *jin*), cow's milk (two *sheng*), liquid butter (one *jin*), fennel (one *liang*. Slightly roasted).

[For] ingredients use salt and a little soda and combine with the flour. Make the buns.

#### Natal'ia's redaction:

Ingredients:

- 6 cups white flour
- 2 cups cow's milk
- 250 g liquid butter (unsalted butter)
- 15 g fennel, slightly roasted
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 3 Tablespoons baking soda

Method:

1. Make liquid butter ([130.] Liquid Butter: take the floating, congealed material from cow's milk. Boiled it becomes liquid butter) by melting the butter in a pan over medium heat keeping an eye on it so that it does not burn.
2. Combine flour, salt, fennel, and baking soda in a large mixing bowl. Mix well.
3. Add milk and mix until the milk is evenly through the flour.
4. Knead liquid butter into flour mixture a little bit at a time. Continue to knead until the dough ball is smooth and elastic.
5. Divide dough into equal sized balls. Place in bamboo steamers.
6. Set aside in warm location for 15 minutes. While waiting, heat water for steamers.
7. Place bamboo steamers on boiling water pan. Steam for 10 to 15 minutes (or until done).
8. Serve hot. Makes 32 buns.

Assumptions:

- This recipe lacks the details on making the buns. I have combined the ingredients in known ways to produce the buns.

## **Eggplant Manta (YSCY)**

### **Original Recipe:**

[83.] Eggplant \*Manta

Mutton, sheep's fat, sheep's tail, onion, prepared mandarin orange peel (cut up each finely), "tender eggplant" (remove the pith).

[For] combine ingredients with meats into a stuffing. But [instead of making a dough covering] put it inside the eggplant [skin] and steam. Add garlic, cream [or yoghurt etc.], finely ground basil. Eat.

### **Master Drake & Mistress Acacia's Redaction:**

#### **Ingredients (Manta):**

- 5 Finger Eggplants
- 250g Fatty Lamb Mince
- 3 French Shallots - finely chopped (should be about 3/4 cup)
- 1/2 teaspoons of Fresh Mandarin Peel, finely grated (about 1 Mandarin) **(note: Used Blood Orange peel - mandarin was out of season)**
- Light Pinch of Flaky Sea Salt

#### **Ingredients (Sauce):**

- 4 Cloves of Garlic, finely minced.
- 125g Low Fat Greek Yoghurt (can use full fat).
- Pinch of Black Pepper.
- 2 generous pinches of Flaky Sea Salt.
- Handful of Basil Leaves (1/4 cup), finely chopped.

#### **Method:**

1. Slice top end of the finger eggplant off, core out the eggplant with an apple corer and a knife.
2. Finely dice shallots and sweat with a tiny bit of oil (or melted lamb fat) off. Add lamb and fry until brown. Fully cooking the lamb is not required.
3. One minute before lamb is done, add orange peel and pinch of salt.
4. Let mixture cool
5. Setup Bamboo Steamers
6. Stuff meat mixture into eggplant, use the back end of a wooden spoon to tamp the mixture in.
7. Steam the Manta for 15-20 minutes. Eggplant should be tender but not falling apart.
8. Whilst eggplant is steaming, finely mince garlic and fry in saucepan with a drop of oil.
9. When garlic is soft, add salt, pepper and yoghurt, turn down to very low and gently simmer. Just before serving add sauce.
10. Serve the eggplant, pouring the sauce over the top.

**[49.] [41A] \*Seu [Pomegranate] Soup (YSCY)**

**Original Recipe:**

[49.] [41A] \**Se-aBru* [Pomegranate] Soup (This is the name of a Western Indian Food)

It treats deficiency chill of the primordial storehouse, chill pain of the abdomen, and aching pain along the spinal column.

Mutton (two legs, the head, and a set of hooves), tsaoko cardamoms (four), cinnamon (three liang), sprouting ginger (half a chin), Kasni (big as two chickpeas)

Boil ingredients into a soup using one telir of water. Pour into a stone top cooking pot. Add a chin of pomegranate fruits, two liang of black pepper, and little salt. The pomegranate fruits should be baked using one cup of vegetable oil and a lump of asafetida the size of a garden pea. Roast until a fine yellow in color, slightly black. Remove debris and oil in the soup. Strain clean. Use the smoke produced from roasting chia-hsiang, Chinese spikenard, kasni, and butter to fumigate a jar. Seal up and store the soup as desired.