

COOKING *APICIUS*

ROMAN RECIPES FOR TODAY

Sally Grainger



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDRAS KALDOR



PROSPECT BOOKS

2006

Contents

PREFACE	9
INTRODUCTION	
Historical background	13
Dining in Rome	15
How to use this book	19
Special ingredients	23
Herbs and spices	23
Fish sauce	27
Grape must syrups	30
Wines	32
Ready-made sauces	33
Wheat products	34
RECIPES	
HORS D'ŒUVRE AND SIDE-DISHES	
Roman bortsch (<i>Apicius</i> 3.2.3)	40
Barley and vegetable soup (<i>Apicius</i> 4.4)	41
Beef or lamb faggots (<i>Apicius</i> 2.1.7)	43
Chicken pottage to serve with meatballs (<i>Apicius</i> 2.2.9)	45
Chicken meatballs in <i>hydrogarum</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 2.2.4)	46
Marinated liver (<i>Apicius</i> 7.3.2)	47
Stuffed kidneys (<i>Apicius</i> 7.8)	48
Prawn balls in <i>hydrogarum</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 2.1.1)	49
Chicken liver salad (<i>Apicius</i> 4.1.2)	50
Asparagus <i>patina</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4.2.6)	52
Lettuce <i>patina</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4.2.3)	54
Cheese and fruit dip (<i>Hypotrimma</i>) (<i>Apicius</i> 1.33)	55
Melon with mint dressing (<i>Apicius</i> 3.7)	56
Assorted salad leaves with <i>oenogarum</i>	57
Soft eggs in pine kernel sauce (<i>Apicius</i> 7.13.3)	57

MEAT DISHES

Sauce for cooked meat (<i>Apicius</i> 7.6.12)	60
Baked ham in pastry with figs (<i>Apicius</i> 7.9.1)	62
<i>Patina</i> Apiciana (<i>Apicius</i> 4.2.14 & 15)	64
Chicken in sweet and sour sauce (<i>Apicius</i> 6.8.1)	67
Roast chicken in a honey and dill glaze (<i>Apicius</i> 6.8.2)	68
Duck with turnip (<i>Apicius</i> 6.2.3)	69
Sauce for cooked meats (<i>Apicius</i> 6.2.7)	71
Parthian chicken (<i>Apicius</i> 6.8.3)	72
Chicken or guinea-fowl in the style of Vardanus (<i>Apicius</i> 6.8.11)	73
Cold sauce for pork (<i>Apicius</i> 8.7.15)	75
Toasted pine kernel sauce for roast boar or pork (<i>Apicius</i> 8.1.4)	76
<i>Ofellae</i> Ostian style (<i>Apicius</i> , 7.4.1)	77
<i>Ofellae</i> Apician style (<i>Apicius</i> 7.4.2)	79
Terentine <i>minutal</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4.3.2)	80
Pork and apricot <i>minutal</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4.3.6)	82
Stuffed hare (<i>Apicius</i> 8.8.3)	84
Roast lamb with coriander (<i>Apicius</i> 8.6.8)	86
Boned shoulder of lamb in a creamy date sauce (<i>Apicius</i> 8.6.7)	87
Roast lamb with asafoetida (<i>Apicius</i> 8.6.4)	89

VEGETABLE SIDE-DISHES

Lentil pottage (<i>Apicius</i> 5.2.3)	92
Spicy mushy peas (<i>Apicius</i> 5.3.6)	93
Spring cabbage with cumin (<i>Apicius</i> 3.9.1 & 3)	94
Carrots or parsnips in a cumin honey glaze (<i>Apicius</i> 3.21.3)	95
Spring cabbage and chicken <i>patina</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4.2.7)	96
Spinach or nettle <i>patina</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4.2.36)	98
Mushroom <i>patina</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 7.13.6)	99

Boiled vegetables in simple <i>oenogarum</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 3.10.1)	100
Leek and beet greens with <i>oenogarum</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 3.2.1)	101
Sauce for fried gourd or marrow (<i>Apicius</i> 3.4.7)	102
Beans in mustard sauce (<i>Apicius</i> 5.6.3)	103
Vitellian peas (<i>Apicius</i> 5.3.5)	104
Mushrooms in <i>caroenum</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 7.13.4)	105
FISH	
Sauce for baked bream (<i>Apicius</i> 10.2.14)	108
Stuffed mackerel (<i>Apicius</i> 9.10.1)	109
Sauce for lobster (<i>Apicius</i> 9.1.6)	110
Whitebait <i>patina</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4.2.20)	111
Fish <i>patina</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4.2.12)	112
Sauce for tuna or mackerel (<i>Apicius</i> 9.10.5)	113
Simple <i>oenogarum</i> for fish	114
DESSERTS	
Almond and semolina pudding (<i>Apicius</i> 2.2.10)	116
Pear <i>patina</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4, 2, 35)	117
Peaches in a cumin sauce 4.2.34)	118
Deep-fried honey fritters (<i>Apicius</i> 7.11.6)	119
Honey nut omelette <i>patina</i> (<i>Apicius</i> 4.2.16)	121
Pine nut and honey pudding (<i>Apicius</i> 7.11.5)	122
Bibliography	123

A note on the illustrations

Andras Kaldor's pictures are based on the mosaic pavements of the Rio Verde Roman villa at San Pedro de Alcántara near Marbella in Spain. These date to the first century AD. In the peristyle or patio there are several decorations relating to food and cookery, such as animals, ovens, bowls, grills, soup dishes and so forth. These are all in black and white *tessellae*.

Preface

This new collection of adapted recipes taken from the ancient cookery book known as *Apicius* was in part inspired by the completion of the recent edition of the Latin text that my husband Dr Christopher Grocock and I have published. In that volume I hope we have managed to translate the Latin in as precise a way as possible, and to solve some of the more common confusions found in the original recipes.

I began reconstructing Roman dishes in the mid-1990s, and in 1996 published with Andrew Dalby *The Classical Cook Book* for the British Museum Press. It seemed entirely appropriate that I should take advantage of the publication of *Apicius* to select and test a new batch of recipes for the modern cook to follow.

Over the years we have endeavoured to understand these Roman recipes by reconstructing them using authentic equipment and techniques. The translation of the written text is the result of a learning process where we stood in the shoes of the slave-cooks and attempted to prepare the food as they might have done, given the obvious limitations of time and situation. We do not expect that our readers will be willing or able to follow our lead and build their own Roman kitchen, though I am aware that there will be many fellow re-enactors who will, I hope, benefit from my recipes.

The recipes that follow are a selection from *Apicius* that you will find easy to reproduce in your own kitchen from ingredients that can be sourced with a little effort. I do not include items that are unfamiliar or bizarre such as sterile sow's womb or dormice. There are over 450 recipes in the original text to choose from but many, particularly the sauces, are repetitious both in taste and form, and I have selected only those that appealed to me. There are also a number of large-scale dishes in *Apicius* that use boned and stuffed lamb,

kid or suckling pig, and I have avoided these too. It is possible to interpret these dishes using smaller joints of meat and occasionally I have included one. I have included a section on *gustum*, 'hors-d'œuvre', which includes side-dishes, a section on *mensae primae*, 'main courses', a section on vegetables and side-dishes, and sections on fish and also desserts. I have tried to avoid the more elaborate and expensive foods and to concentrate on the many everyday dishes that are found in *Apicius* and that represent the diet of a reasonably financially secure Roman citizen.

The original selection that I made from *Apicius* for the *Classical Cook Book* was quite small. Over the years, I added to my repertoire many more recipes which I found appealing, but they were added in a piecemeal fashion. In order to prepare for this book I had to cook Apician recipes day after day. I have always considered Roman food to be underrated, but even I have been pleasantly surprised at new dishes and new tastes that emerged from the testing process. These new recipes have only now come to life for me, and I hope for you, because I was able to learn from the constant repetitive cooking. The difference between a good cook and a really successful one is the repetitive working process that irons out faults and flaws and gives you that sense of confidence in your choices. I hope I have been able to pass on to you that confidence in these recipes. There are a few recipes that I have chosen (seven in fact) that I have already interpreted in the *Classical Cook Book* but I have revised them here. One or two of them cannot be bettered and are so successful that to miss them out of a book entitled *Cooking Apicius* would have simply been wrong. In the case of others, we have re-interpreted the Latin, and therefore the recipes themselves, and this has led to a re-interpretation of the modern adaptations.

Roman food, and particularly Apician Roman food, has a terrible reputation. Many of the recipes in *Apicius* have so many spices, herbs and liquids that the food they represent seems, to the untrained eye and palate, to be simply over-done. The consensus among scholars and archaeologists over past decades has been that the spices were

there to reflect wealth, not taste, and were chosen by the decadent Roman gourmet for the status they projected rather than their suitability or flavour. But crucially, these modern commentators have not had the requisite training to interpret recipes written by cooks for other cooks to read. For this, in fact, is the true nature of *Apicius*: a practical handbook of recipes, many written in a kind of shorthand that only another cook could understand. It is therefore a tricky business to turn the recipes in *Apicius* into successful dishes without acquiring some prior knowledge of the techniques and ingredients. The numerous spices were used with considerable restraint and in fact the very subtlety of their use is easy to misinterpret, and the results of such misinterpretation would support modern criticisms, but with care, the flavours of the various ingredients can be balanced (*temperas*, 'balance', is a recurring instruction), and the results are stunning. We would not criticize the food of the Indian subcontinent for its spicing, nor that of South East Asia or Africa, though the cuisines of these areas can be just as intoxicating in their use of spices. In Rome, literary tastes developed an appreciation for surprise and complexity of expression and just such an appreciation came to dominate their cuisine. This does not mean that all their food was intensely flavoured; there are numerous recipes for simple and plainly seasoned food in *Apicius*, something often overlooked. We have defined the collection as a whole not so much as simply 'high status' but more as a cosmopolitan and urban collection of recipes covering a wide section of the population of Rome and her empire.

Thanks are due to the team of tasters who helped us to consume weekly Roman feasts; and to Andrew Dalby for his advice on modern wines and syrups. Christopher Grocock, my husband, deserves especial thanks for his enthusiastic appreciation of all the Roman food he was compelled to eat. Sometimes, in the text which follows, the authorial 'I' slips into 'we'. This is intentional, for many of the conclusions have been arrived at jointly with my husband in the course of working on our edition of *Apicius*.

SALLY GRAINGER, 2006

This item: *Cooking Apicius* by Marcus Gavius Apicius Paperback \$13.99. In stock. Ships from and sold by Book Depository US. *Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome* by Apicius Paperback \$16.95. In Stock. Ships from and sold by Amazon.com. FREE Shipping on orders over \$25.00. Details. *The Roman Cookery Book: A Critical Translation of the Art of Cooking, for Use in the Study and the* by Elisabeth Rosenbaum Paperback \$10.50. In Stock. Ships from and sold by Amazon.com. Part of a complete English translation of Apicius's *de Re Coquinaria*. Site contains many Greek and Latin texts, translations and related material. This webpage reproduces a Book of the *De Re Coquinaria* of Apicius published by Walter M. Hill, 1936. The text is in the public domain. This page has been carefully proofread and I believe it to be free of errors. If you find a mistake though, please let me know! next: *Book II. Apicius De Re Coquinaria. p45 Book I. The Careful Experienced Cook Liber I. Epimeles. Cooking Apicius book. Read 7 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. Sally Grainger has gathered, in one convenient volume, her modern in... We'd love your help. Let us know what's wrong with this preview of *Cooking Apicius* by Apicius. Problem: It's the wrong book It's the wrong edition Other.*