

Recipe #2

Most respectful salutations and wishes of good health and prosperity to Their Excellencies Montengarde, Long May They Govern Their Bounteous Lands, and friendliest greetings to thee, my fellow cook.

Know that I was most surprised to hear of your request for receipts from our kitchens for the cooking of dragons. Indeed, although all the lands hereabout are plagued with a devilment of the creatures, I thought that surely the fertile and productive lands to the south would be the last to find need to resort to the cooking of these creatures as we here in the fens have done. But mayhap it is just a whim of those who always seek the new and unusual with which to confound and astonish visiting noble folk from afar.

Being that it is only early summer when you wish to hunt and cook your dragon, I will tell you the receipts that I know which make use of the products of the gardens that are available here in this early season. That is chiefly lovage, and onions, and garlic, and horseradish, and what may be still preserved in the pantry from the past year.

First, if you wish to cook a dragon, it is best to have slain him by an arrow through the eye, as that is the most sure method of dispatching the creature quickly and neatly with no loss of life or limb to the hunter.

When you would cook the dragon, ensure that he is fresh, slain no more than half a day previously, else the meat shall be good for none but the hounds in the kennels, and even they may scorn to eat it. Remove its scales, skin it, remove its entrails and discard them far from your habitation for you know not what the creature has been eating of late, and wash it in clean water.

If the dragon is large as most are such that you cannot hold in in two arms, prepare the meat like I told you. Fill a sufficiently large pot one quarter of the way with small stalks and the leaves of lovage. Upon this place the dragon, and then cover him most generously with sliced onions. And then take as many bulbs of garlic as you need and trim them and rub them in olive oil and cover the whole of the mound with them. Add some clean water to the pot such that the meat is no more than half swimming and put it to the boil. Cover the pot only lightly that the steam may escape as needs be, but you must watch that all the liquid does not escape or your dish may burn. When it is done, lift out the garlic bulbs carefully, and clean them and mash them and serve them with good bread and a little olive oil. And strain the broth from the pot and set a little aside to make into a sauce with breadcrumbs and parsley as you do for diverse other meats. You will not need the use of pepper in this sauce as it will have sufficient spice from the fire within the dragon flesh without the use of pepper. The rest of the broth give to the cook who has served you well and ask that it be made into a soup of their own devising for to feed those that work in the kitchens for it will provide most hearty and delicious fare and they will thank you and wish to remain in your employ for years to come if they are served good food like this. And also some of the roasted garlic and good bread, for a good lord should always endeavour to feed the serving people well. Take the bones from the meat and divide it. The meat will be tough and likely to cause a great deal of noisome wind in the bellies of those who partake but is of such great renown and prestige that the

diners will feign to not notice. It will be wise to have the hounds removed from the feast hall before serving this dish as they are known to commence a great howling and scrabble to exit the hall as the odours emanating from the guests become overpowering. This is an excellent dish to serve to guests who have stayed longer than you wish but yet you wish to impress them with your hospitality and grace and hunting prowess.

Should you be fortunate to obtain a very small dragon and wish to startle and astonish your guests with the excellence of your kitchens, then you must do to cook it in the the way it is done in Naples that it seem to be living and breathe fire through its mouth. You must take the dragon which has been killed by an arrow through its eye as I have said before and carefully remove the skin having made one cut only from the top of its breast to the tail so that the skin is not damaged in any way, and ensure that the ears and wings and feet remain attached to the skin so that the illusion will be complete. Then take the skinned carcass and roast it with garlic and good oil and such seasonings as best suit your household and stuff it with root vegetables and onions as you will. Cook it gently that so that its neck and tail do not burn, and when it is cooked take it down and redress it in its skin whose inside you have coated well with salt and cinnamon and spices. And then set it upon a framework of iron that has been driven into a cutting board such that no iron can be seen and the dragon is standing or crouching such that it will seem to be alive. And the dragon should be of a size that each will be meat for no more than four people for if it be larger it will cause vile wind in the bellies of your guests as was described previously. And to make it breathe fire through its mouth, take some camphor and wrap it in some fine candlewick and put it in the dragon's mouth and nostrils and soak it with some spirits and when you are ready to serve it set fire to the candlewick and this way it will breathe fire for a long time. And this is the way also to serve peacocks and other birds. And serve it all on a platter ringed with roasted root vegetables and with diverse sauces such as the one made with grated horseradish and white wine and a little cream if you have it and also one made from the broth of the meat and breadcrumbs and parsley. And serve with a richly coloured wine and with custards and pastries also. And in this way great renown shall come to your kitchen.

And this is what I know of the cooking of dragons and I swear that it shall bring great renown to your kitchen such as it has brought to mine. And never can any man alive say that my cooking has been the cause of another man's death in all the years that I have kept a kitchen.

And when all is done and the dishes cleared and the fires banked, pray write to me and tell me how this great feast of yours has gone and how the dragon was slain and all the wonders of the day.

Written this sixteenth day of June in the second year of the plague, by my own hand