

Two Italian Tarts

Lady Ysabel de la Oya

Two very similar recipes are found in *The Medieval Kitchen: Recipes from France and Italy*. One is a cheese tart with garlic and the other a cheese tart with onions.

Both are 14th century Italian and both are found in *Libro di cucina del secolo XIV. (Cookbook of the Fourteenth Century)*

In the 14 century people often would not have their own oven and would bring their tart or pie filling to specialty bakers called patissiers (in Italy). The baker would then place the filling in a crust and bake in their oven. This practice would allow people of middle and lower means to produce these pastries.⁽¹⁾

Some people would attempt to make their own pies by placing the pie in a covered, shallow pan and surrounded it by embers. A pie fully encased in dough (pastry cover) in a covered pan would act very much like an oven when surrounded by embers.⁽¹⁾

This particular recipe would be found on the table of an individual of a higher class. Both tarts call for expensive ingredients like saffron. Secondly, since the recipe was written down and preserved it is unlikely it was a peasant meal. However, if spiced differently, the tarts are humble enough to have been a meal of a much lower class person. Cheese was ubiquitous and the tarts could be made with a relatively small amount of pork fat. Pork would have been easy to find and less expensive than other meats due to the ease of keeping, feeding, and maintaining pigs.⁽⁶⁾

Fresh Cheese (used in both tarts)

1 gallon whole milk
2 large lemons (juice)
1/4 cup white vinegar (scant)
salt

Place milk in large pot and bring to about 185 F, stirring to keep milk from scalding. Take off of heat and add acid (lemon and vinegar), stir. Let sit for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, by now there will be separate curds and whey. Drain off whey by carefully pouring contents into a strainer lined with cheesecloth, allow to drain. Stir in salt. I used just enough salt so cheese just barely tasted like it had salt in it.

Tart Dough

3.5 cups flour

1 cup + 2 tablespoons butter

2 teaspoons salt

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup water

Cut butter into flour until it has a grainy, consistent texture. Be sure not to melt butter with the warmth of your hands. I used my fingertips to break apart and work the butter into the flour.

I ended up having to work the butter into the flour in stages, I would put the mixture in the freezer for a little while when I felt the butter was getting too warm. Dissolve the salt in $\frac{1}{3}$ cup water, and add to mixture once the butter has been incorporated fully. Add the remaining water and mix into a dough.

I did make my own butter for this dough several days before, using a stand mixer and using heavy whipping cream. I did lightly salt the butter after it was made.

Since I am not familiar with pastry dough, I will admit I simply used the recipe on page 225 of [The Medieval Kitchen](#) titled "Rich Pastry Dough or Pate Brisee".

Garlic Tart

Torta d'agli

(original Italian- from *Libro di cucina del secolo XIV* via *The Medieval Kitchen*)

Toy li agli e mondali e lessali; quando sono cocti metili a moglio in aqua freda e poy pistali e metili zafarano e formazo assay che sia fresco e lardo batuto e specie dolze e forte distempera con ova e mitili ova passa e poy fa la torta ⁽¹⁾⁽³⁾

Garlic Torta

(English Translation - from *The Medieval Kitchen*)

Take the garlic cloves, and peel them and boil them; when they are cooked, put them to soak in cold water, and then pound them and add saffron and plenty of cheese, which should be fresh, and chopped pork fat, and sweet and strong spices, and moisten with eggs, and add raisins, and then make the torta. ⁽¹⁾

My redaction

Garlic Tart

2.5 oz roasted garlic (about 5 cloves)

12 oz cheese

8 oz salt pork

2 oz raisins

2 eggs

Large pinch saffron

½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon white pepper
¼ teaspoon ginger

I roasted the garlic rather than boiling it. I did so in order to bring out the complex flavors. (Also, if I'm being honest, I just couldn't bring myself to boil garlic). I roasted the heads of garlic whole, at 400 F for 50 minutes. After allowing to cool for a while, I cut the heads in half, and squeezed the garlic out of the heads into a small bowl, then measured out my amount. At this point it is almost paste like.

Mince pork (I used a food processor). Mix cheese, roasted garlic, chopped raisins, minced pork, and spices well. Add egg and mix.

Roll out dough very thin for a 9 inch pie pan and cover. Cover pan with dough, add mixture, and cover tart with dough. Trim off edges and pinch to seal.

Cover edges of tart with aluminium foil until the last 15 minutes of cooking.

Cook in a preheated 400 F oven for an hour.

Onion Tart

Torta de schalonge o de cepolle

(original Italian- from *Libro di cucina del secolo XIV* via *The Medieval Kitchen*)

Se tu voy fare torta de queste do cosse, toy quale tu voy e fay ben allessare. Pone prima l'aqua furo ben con stamegna e po'le bati finalmente e toy lardo fino e batillo bene; toy l'ova e caxo fresco e zafarano e bati insiema e fay la torta. ⁽¹⁾⁽³⁾

Torta of shallots, or of onions, ect.

(English Translation - from *The Medieval Kitchen*)

If you want to make a torta of these two things, take whichever you like and boil it well. First thoroughly remove the water with a sieve, and then chop them fine, and take a good pork fat and chop it well; take eggs and fresh cheese and saffron and chop them together, and make the torta.

⁽¹⁾

My redaction.

1 large onion (about one lb)
2 shallots
10 oz cheese
4 oz salt pork
1 egg
Large Pinch Saffron

1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon white pepper
½ teaspoon ginger

Chop onions and shallots and roast at 350 F until tender (about half an hour). Mince then place in sieve and lightly weight to drain well.

Mince pork (I used a food processor). Mix cheese, onions, minced pork, and spices well. Add egg and mix.

Roll out dough very thin for a 9 inch pie pan and cover. Cover pan with dough, add mixture, and cover tart with dough. Trim off edges and pinch to seal.

Cover edges of tart with aluminium foil until the last 15 minutes of cooking.

Cook in a preheated 400 F oven for an hour.

Notes

My first attempt at the onion pie I was true to recipe and boiled the onions. I also used the same spice profile as the garlic tart (although I forgot the saffron in my test tart) The resulting tart was too wet and lacked flavor. I decided to roast the onions and increase the spices.

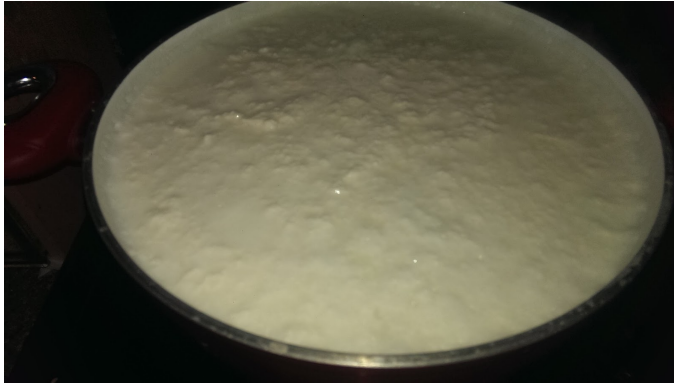
The original recipes called for boiling the vegetables. I'm sure this was done since boiling is much more fuel efficient. In my modern kitchen, I had no fuel restraints.

Neither recipe indicated whether or not to cover the tarts with a top crust. In *The Medieval Kitchen* they covered the garlic tart but not that onion tart. I chose to cover both. The reasons are two fold. Firstly, with the pies being covered a 14th century cook without an oven may have been able to cook it at home. Secondly, due to modern time and travel constraints my tarts had to be made/baked ahead of time. Having them fully enclosed in a crust made them easier to transport and let them travel with less texture/flavor/moisture changes.

I didn't add salt to the tart mixtures themselves, since I used salt pork and didn't rinse it.

This was quite the culinary adventure. I had never made any type of pie crust. It was not as hard as I imagined, and was actually quite fun.

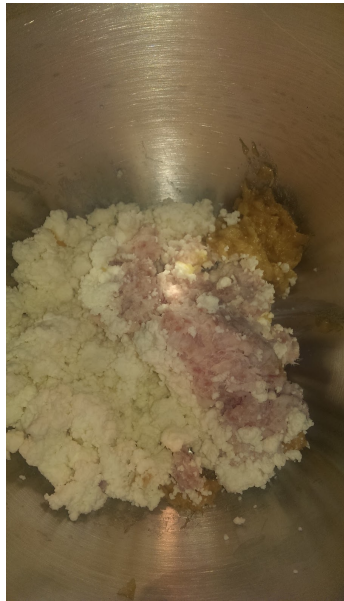
For my personal tastes, I think the combining both the garlic and onion flavors would taste great.



Left:
Milk after add acid.



Right:
Strained, salted cheese



Left: Garlic tort, prior to mixing.



Right: Ontion tart, mid mixing.

Bottom: Onion tart, in bottom crust



And for your amusement:
Onion Fail Tart (practice one that was too wet)



Baker using Portable Oven (Goode Cookery) (<http://www.godecookery.com/afeast/kitchens/kit044.html>)⁽²⁾



Left: A Woodcut from 'Ortus Sanitatis' of woman delivering pies to market, 15 Century (Getty Images) (<http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/woodcut-from-the-ortus-sanitatis-depicting-an-old-woman-news-photo/51240780>)⁽⁵⁾



Right: Cheese Manufacturing from the "Tacuinum Sanitatis", 14 Century (Getty Images) (<http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/cheese-manufacture-1390-1400-a-woman-waves-a-stick-at-a-dog-news-photo/463924995>)⁽⁴⁾

Works Cited

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4. *Cheese Manufacture*. Digital image. *Getty Images*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/cheese-manufacture-1390-1400-a-woman-waves-a-stick-at-a-dog-news-photo/463924995>>.
5. *1491, A Woodcut from the 'Ortus Sanitatis'* Digital image. *Getty Images*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Apr. 2016. <<http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/woodcut-from-the-ortus-sanitatis-depicting-an-old-woman-news-photo/51240780>>.
6. "Life In A Medieval Castle Medieval Food." *Castle Life*. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Apr. 2016. <http://www.castlesandmanorhouses.com/life_04_food.htm#dairy>.