



RECIPE CARD WK4

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ASPARAGUS FORCED IN FRENCH ROLLS

This is a very playful recipe, typical of the late Georgian period, with its subversion of nature and its engagement of the intellect.

Original recipe

Henderson, *Housekeeper's Instructor*, c.1800

Cut a piece out of the crust of the tops of three French rolls, and take out all the crumb; but be careful that the crusts fit again in the places from whence they were taken. Fry the rolls brown in fresh butter; then take a pint of cream, the yolks of six eggs beat fine, and a little salt and nutmeg. Stir them well together over a slow fire till it begins to be thick. Have read a hundred of small grass boiled, and save tops enough to stick the rolls with. Cut the rest of the tops small, put them into the cream, and fill the loaves with them. Before you fry the rolls, make holes thick in the top crusts to stick the grass in. Then lay on the pieces of crust, and stick the grass in, which will make it look as if it were growing. This makes a very handsome side dish at a second course.

Adapting the recipe for modern use

You are essentially filling hollowed out, fried rolls, with custard mixed with chopped, cooked asparagus. If you follow the recipe to the letter, you will make holes in the lid of the hollowed out rolls to stick your reserved spears into, but you may find it easier just to leave the

lid off, and put them directly into the filling, as asparagus spears are rather a lot bigger today.

Asparagus, or 'small grass', was much smaller and weedier then, so pick little spears, enough to fill your rolls.

The pint of cream is 16floz, and again remember to halve the quantity of eggs.

RECIPE NOTES

The level of instruction in the recipes is noticeable versus the very sparse prose of the earlier text. By the late 18th century, there were many more professional cooks – and, from the later 17th century, many of them were women. They were expected to be able to read and keep accounts, especially as many were also the housekeeper. Books were still very expensive though, so the recipes were often written out to be taken into the kitchen.

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SPRITZEN

The German title of these puff cakes reflects the Germanic nature of the royal family at the time: German-named dishes continued to appear on the table throughout the Georgian and Victorian periods. Many of the recipes quickly appeared in print, anglicised for the home market.

Original recipe

Mary Cole. *The Lady's Complete Guide*, 1788

Mix two spoonfuls of fine flour with two eggs well beat, half a pint of cream or milk and two ounces of melted butter; stir it all well together, and add a little salt and nutmeg. Put them in tea-cups, or little deep tin moulds, half full, and bake them a quarter of an hour in a quick oven; but let it be hot enough to colour them and top and bottom. Turn them into a dish, and strew powder sugar over them.

Adapting the recipe for modern use

Halve the quantity of eggs, and make sure that they are beaten to within an inch of their life, as they are the only raising agent in these little cakes.

A 'quick' oven is medium/high temperature, around 375–400°F.

RECIPE NOTES

The use of the tea-cups indicates how material culture changes with time: what would once have been delicate aristocratic items are now standard fixtures in the kitchen, discarded and given to the kitchens once they were out of fashion. Tea, too, had become a fixture for the working classes, albeit a much coarser and often adulterated version of that which was being drunk upstairs.