

NOTES AND QUERIES

'FIRST BOILED, THEN BAKED'

from Karen Hess

I know nothing of Uygur, nor for that matter very much about bagels. What I do know, is that bagels are by no means the only bread that is 'first boiled and then baked', as claimed (in *PPC* 58) by Cyril D. Robinson, who emphasizes: 'No other bread is prepared in this way.' In fact, scalding small breads before baking them was historically fairly common. Nor is this arcane. Just off the top of my head, I can list entire families of breads and cakes that are, or used to be, 'first boiled and then baked'. In France alone, there are *échaudés* (which means 'scalded'), *gimblettes*, *la rioute*, this last a ring-shaped bread from the Savoie. In England, cracknels and jumbals were historically 'seethed' before baking. Not to mention pretzels, which are properly scalded before baking; to be sure, they are finally double-ringed bagels, unless bagels are single-ringed pretzels. But I think I have made my point.

As a historian, I am concerned by the notion held even by serious writers that somehow, a specific method of food preparation has to have been 'invented' somewhere and somehow disseminated, a notion leaving the writer vulnerable to stray pop history tales. As a reader for a university press, I had to scotch a perfectly preposterous theory presented by an academic claiming that the Celts were responsible for having disseminated the hearth cake, all based on lingering hearth cakes in parts of the British Isles and Brittany. Well yes, except that hearth cakes are all but universal, known from India to the halls of Montezuma, and have existed for millennia, at least since Abraham bade Sarah make cakes upon the hearth, whenever that was. Hearth cakes linger where modern ovens have not yet replaced older ways. Some things are so elemental that they don't necessarily have to be brought from somewhere else. Like the circle, for heaven's sake. Or even a circle within a circle. But by the way, doughnuts were not always ring-shaped, as may be inferred from the name; more to the point, they are neither boiled nor baked, and never were, so what on earth is the historical relationship between them and bagels whereof he speaks?

My address is: 285 Riverside Drive # 6 B, New York, New York 10025-5227, USA.

SOME EARLY UR-BAGELS

from Gillian Riley

Cyril D. Robinson might like to add some recipes I have been reading recently to his entertaining collection of Bagel Lore (*PPC* 57).

First, a recipe in Bartolomeo Scappi's *Opera* of 1570: