

## 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?

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### 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:

*Per fare Ciambelloni con ova, & latte*

*Impastinsi libre tre di fior di farina con otto ova fresche sbattute, et sei oncie di zuccaro, & tre oncie d'acqua rosa, & il restante latte di capra tiepido con un poco di sale, & facciasi la pasta, che non sia troppo soda, ma sia ben menata, & faccinsi i ciambelloni di quatro once l'uno, & ponghisino in una caldara d'acqua che bolla, & lascino stare fino a tanto che venghino a galla, poi cavisino, & lascisino raffreddare, & asciugare, & faccisino cuocere in forno su la carta, o sul suolo che sia ben netto, & cotte che saranno, servisino calde, & fredde a beneplacito; si puo mettere con esso finocchio dolce secco, o anici.*

Knead together 3 lbs [not the same as our sadly deceased imperial pound] of fine flour and 8 fresh eggs, beaten, 6 ounces of sugar, 3 ounces of rosewater, and finally tepid goat's milk with a little salt, and make a dough which is not too stiff, but well mixed, and form *ciambelloni* [Scappi did not need to define them: ring-shaped, with a hole in the middle], of 4 ounces each. Put them in a cauldron of boiling water, and leave until they come to the surface, then take out and leave to cool and dry. Cook in the oven on paper, or on the oven bottom if it is really clean, and when they are done serve hot or cold as you please. One can add dried sweet fennel or anise.

Another recipe is in the notebooks of Suor Maria Vittoria della Verde (1555-1622), who spent 48 of her 67 years as a nun in the enclosed convent of S. Tommaso in Perugia. She kept two notebooks, which began in 1583 with devout thoughts, but eventually filled up with enthusiastic gobbets of information about daily life in the convent, embroidery and cooking. A selection of her recipes, *Gola & Pregghiera*, edited by Giovanna Casagrande, was published by Edizioni dell'Arquata in 1989. Recipe 157 on p 310 is as follows:

*Ciabelle in aqua*

*Intride con aqua e sale e aneso agiacchato, fa ciabelle ordinarie, pasta sode, coce in padeletto da spargere ova overo stagniato, mette quanti ci vanno che non si attaccano, quando bolle l'acqua mette; quando vengano a sommo son cotte, cavale, lassa sciucare al vento o in teghia di ferro senza testa, muta; quando sonno sciute cocele in forno o in testo con foco comme l'atre, sonno sode quando son cotte; la propriet  metterci il zucaro dentro e non il sale, ma cos  ancor si fanno.*

Make them like ordinary *ciabelle*, with water, salt and ground anise, into a stiff dough. Cook them in the egg pan or the tinned cooking pot [Maria Vittoria here refers to specific items in the convent kitchen], putting in the right amount, so that they do not stick together; you put them in when the water boils. When they come to the top they are done. Remove them and let them dry in the open air or in an uncovered metal baking tin [in the oven?].

When they are dry cook them in the oven, or on the fire with coals above, like the others. They are hard when they are cooked. They are usually made with sugar and not salt, but this is still done sometimes.

The slightly breathless quality of writing suggests that some of Maria Vittoria's recipes may have been dictated, perhaps by an older and more experienced cook, so we could assume some continuity here, that she is writing down a known recipe, not an innovative or 'foreign' one.

In Ada Boni's *Talismano della Felicità* of c1932 we find a recipe for *Ciambelle affogatelle*, drowned ciambelle, which she says are typical peasant food of Lazio (I remember a hard, sweetish home-made *ciambella* made with wine, heavy going after a heavy meal, in the Abruzzi, but I was not told if it was first boiled). In her recipe these simple egg and flour dough rings are first boiled, then baked, and Ada Boni claims they end up light and dry.

Ciambelle today are sweet, circular cakes with a hole in the middle, often flavoured with lemon and rum, baked in the oven, and have only the shape in common with bagels as we know and love them.

I incline towards an antidiffusionist approach to recipes; it seems that many similar things are done with bread and cake mixtures in different places at different times, and they do not need to have been derived from or influenced by each other. It is unnecessary to claim that recipes were brought to places by conquerors or traders, or created by a certain cook at a particular time (think of all the charming but undocumented myths about the 'invention' of croissants . . .). Although bagels today have a wonderfully rich and emotive Jewish identity, I think they may have been just one of many varieties of bread that were being made all over the world, and these early references from serious Catholic kitchens indicate a continuity with an even more remote past rather than a point of origin.

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## ON 'INFIDEL LIME'

from Sri Owen

I cannot resist the urge to reply to David Karp's and Cara De Silva's comments (in *PPC* 58) on the name 'kaffir lime', although I gave David my opinion on the subject when we met earlier this year.

I admit to being among the cookery writers he mentions, who 'are unaware that this is an issue'. The only reason for avoiding the term 'kaffir lime' is that it gives offence to certain groups of people. Fine. If I receive a reasonable number of complaints from individuals who say they have been hurt, upset, or otherwise disadvantaged by my using the word 'kaffir' as part of the name of an ingredient in any recipe or cookbook, I promise to follow Cherry Ripe's example and refer to this knobbly lime as *makrut*. Or I may prefer to revert to my own language and call it *limau purut* (*jeruk* is Javanese). In any case, as Charles Perry points out, I shall still have to