

INTRODUCTION WHICH NEEDS TO BE KNOWN

[Wise men have said,] the cook must be knowledgeable, well versed in the principles of the dishes and proficient in making them. Let him take care to trim his fingernails lest he injure them [and ulcerate them], and not to let them grow long, lest dirt collect under them. Of pots, he will prefer [choose] the soapstone, then the earthenware, and in case of necessity, tinned copper. The worst (of food) is what is cooked in a copper pot that has lost its tinning.

Of wood, he will choose the dry and whatever does not have obvious smoke [because of its dampness], such as olive, [dry] oak, [oleander¹ and the trees that are for sale], and the woods that resemble them. He will avoid fig wood, because it produces much smoke, and whatever has dampness in it. He will know how much wood (to use).

He will choose *al-darānī* salt.² If none is available, then clean [white] salt free of dust and small rocks; [the best kind is that which has been dissolved and thickened (i.e. clarified)].

What is to be borne in mind about spices: Of coriander, that which is fresh, green in colour, dry. Of cumin and caraway and the like. Of cinnamon, that which is rough, thick, tightly coiled, with a penetrating aroma, burning to the tongue. Of mastic, that which has large, [white] lustrous grains, not pounded, free of dust

1. *Diflā* (oleander) may be an error for *dafnī*, Greek *daphnē*, bay laurel; oleander wood is poisonous.
2. That is, rock salt mined in Andarān, near Nishapur, rather than sea salt.

and dirt. Of pepper, what is fresh, not old. [Of ginger, that which is *maghrūs*, ‘implanted’.] He will clean all the spices extremely well and grind them fine.

Likewise he will wash the vessels and pots that have been used in cooking and beat them with brick dust, then with potash and pounded dry rose (petals). [He will perfume bowls with mastic and galangal, then scoop in them.] And he will wipe the pot, after washing it, with fresh citron [and orange] leaves.

He will choose a stone mortar for pounding meat; he will grind spices fine on a stone or pound in a copper mortar. In short, let him scrupulously pound the spices well and make them smooth, and wash the pots and utensils as much possible.

He will use much spice in *sawādhij* and even more in *qalāyā* and *nawāshif*, whether sweet or sour, and he will use little in *ḥawāmid* that have sauces.

The basic rule in all dishes is, when the pot is boiled, to be scrupulous in removing the scum and froth and dirt of the meat, and whatever might float on the surface of the pot along with the rising bubbles. Before that, wash the meat [in hot water and salt] to remove any blood and dirt that might remain in it, and clean it of any glands, [tendons and membranes].

The meat in *sawādhij* and *qalāyā* is stewed in grease [and a little sesame oil] before boiling. [It is the basic principle for eliminating the scum.] Dishes should be left until they settle on a quiet fire [one] good while (*sā^catan jayyidatan* [*wāḥidatan*]) before ladling. So know that.