

NOTES AND QUERIES

LEEDS SYMPOSIUM ON FOOD HISTORY from C Anne Wilson

The tenth meeting of the Leeds Symposium on Food History will be held on Saturday 1 April 1995 (two weeks before the Easter weekend). The theme will be: THE KITCHEN GARDEN, THE HERB GARDEN AND THE ORCHARD, 1600-1900: GARDEN PRODUCE AND HOW IT WAS USED, with some speakers talking about the garden side, and others about how the produce was variously cooked, preserved, used medicinally, etc. The programmes and details about the venue will be sent out in January 1995 to everyone on our regular mailing list. If anyone else would like to receive a copy then, please let me know at the address below.

My address is: The Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.

A SOURCE FOR A MUSHROOM SAUCE from Valerie Mars

On reading the Mushroom Pottage recipe in Joop Witteveen's 'Sterbeek and his *Theatrum Fungorum*', Part II, in PPC 46, can a possible link with a mystery recipe of the mid nineteenth century be found? G. A. Sala, the journalist and friend of Alexis Soyer, in *Things I have Seen and People I have Known*, vol II (pp 202-5), describes London *alamode* beef shops of the 1850s and '60s. Sala then describes a house in Blackmore Street, Drury Lane, with the sign of the 'Thirteen Cantons' outside and kept by a man named Jaquet.

This *alamode*, he says, '... with the exception of its bovine foundation, presented no culinary resemblance to that *boeuf à la mode* which is one of the standing dishes of the French *cuisine bourgeoise*. The *alamode* served was distinctive because of the 'remarkably luscious and tasty sauce, or rather soup with which it was accompanied'.

The ingredients were secret and even Soyer, who liked to send out for 'a quart of it in a jug ... frankly acknowledged that he did not know what were the ingredients of the sauce'. Sala later got the answer in a letter from the retired proprietor. The sauce was thickened with a dried mushroom powder made from mushrooms gathered near London. In the letter they are simply called 'morella' which Sala thinks must be *Morcella esculenta*, the Common Morel.

Was the recipe, which seems to have been similar to Mushroom Pottage, revived, or was it in continuous use, when referred to by Sala in 1894? If so, is it a dish particular to any other time or place?

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