

Menu

Defending the Gate 2023

This feast is themed around the Battle of Otranto, 1480-81. The Ottoman invasion of Otranto occurred between 1480 and 1481 at the Italian city of Otranto in Apulia, southern Italy. Forces of the Ottoman Empire invaded and laid siege to the city, they captured it on 11 August 1480 establishing the first Ottoman outpost in Italy.

Antipasti / Appetizer

Pepperwine salami, soppressata dolce, dried apricots, dates, green garlic cheese, garlic stuffed kalamata olives, whole wheat flatbread

Green garlic cheese: mozzarella, parmesan, romano, asiago, olive oil, wine vinegar, salt, parsley, garlic

1 Difensori / The Defenders

First Course

This course is themed around the cuisine of southern Italy. Otranto is in the Apulia region and was part of the Kingdom of Naples, which is why most of the recipes used in this course are adapted from an anonymous 15th century Neapolitan recipe collection. The Kingdom of Sicily, the Papal States and Hungary also fought on the Italian side of the conflict.

Torta con Salsiccio et pollo (Meat Pie)

There are recipes for many varieties of meat and cheese pies throughout the several 15th century Italian recipe collections that have survived. This version is our own combination of elements we like from several of the recipes. Since this particular version does not have a top crust, it is considered a torta.

Pie crust: wheat flour, wheat starch, lard, sugar, salt, Sodium Propionate, Citric Acid and Potassium Sorbate (preservatives), xanthan gum

Filling: sausage (Pork, Water, Salt, Fennel, Sugar, Paprika, Extractives of Paprika, Spice Extractives, Dehydrated Garlic), chicken thighs, eggs, ricotta, mozzarella, parmesan, dried basil, parsley

Salsa Papale (Papal Sauce)

This sauce is from the Neapolitan recipe collection with no explanation of the name.

Carrots, sugar, ginger, ceylon cinnamon, salt

Salsa Verde (Green Sauce)

Green sauce based on parsley, mint or basil is common throughout many 15th century Italian cookbooks. The Neapolitan collection mentions that it is good with fish but does not actually give a recipe.

Parsley, olive oil, white wine vinegar, lemon juice, anchovies, salt, pepper, garlic, capers

Sicilian Macaroni (Pasta with Butter & Cheese)

Macaroni in this case means pasta but not a specific shape of pasta. There are several “macaroni” recipes in the Neapolitan recipe collection. We are following the recommendation under “sicilian macaroni” for service: to “garnish them with grated cheese when you set them out on plates with fresh butter and mild spices”.

Pasta, butter, parmesan cheese, nutmeg, salt, garlic

Funghi (Mushrooms with lemon slices)

This is more based on Roman recipes than 15th century and would probably have been prepared with garum, a fish sauce for the savory flavor. We substituted soy to make this dish vegetarian.

Portabella mushrooms, shallots, soy sauce, lemon, butter

Rice Pudding

Rice pudding recipes are found in cookbooks from the entire Eurasian medieval world. Many are very simple with just rice, sugar, and milk or almond milk but others have a variety of spices and fruits added.

Rice, sugar, half & half, ceylon cinnamon

The Attackers

Second Course

This course is themed around the Ottoman Empire, the attacking force in the battle of Otranto. As there are not a lot of medieval sources translated into English, we also used a 14th century Egyptian cookbook for ideas as well as some modern Turkish recipes.

Pilavi (Rice Pilaf)

Rice and mare's milk was the base food of nomadic Turkic horsemen, and rice was the core food on which the Ottoman armies marched. This pilaf harkens more after the rich varieties served at court.

Brown basmati rice, grapes, feta cheese, parsley, ginger, pepper, garlic, salt

Kofta (Lamb Meatballs)

Does it even count as an Ottoman course if no lamb is served? These are delicious with the yogurt-garlic sauce.

Lamb, onion, mushrooms, cumin, coriander, salt

Sarmisakli Yogurt Sos (Yogurt-Garlic Sauce)

Yogurt was supposedly first discovered by the Turks as milk stored in camel bags soured on journeys. As apocryphal as this story is, we had to include at least one yogurt dish in this course. We went with this garlic flavored sauce after reading in the Egyptian cookbook that if you are making table sauce for a Turk, you should add garlic, but for a local you should flavor it with mint and rue.

Whole milk yogurt, garlic

Himmas Kassa (Hummus)

Several different varieties of spiced chickpea paste appear in 14th century Egyptian cookbooks. (Hummus just means chick peas.) They vary in complexity and spicing, some having elements we associate with hummus now and others being very different. We went for a more familiar modern style this time.

Chickpeas, tahini (sesame seed paste), olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt, citric acid, cayenne

Beet Salad

Beets, onion, olive oil, parsley, mint, garlic, pomegranate molasses, salt, lemon juice

Maqrud (Fried Date Stuffed Semolina Cakes)

This Tunisian sweet recipe was irresistible once we tried it and had to be included.

Dough: semolina flour, olive oil, water, baking soda, salt

Filling: date paste, olive oil, ginger, ceylon cinnamon, orange zest

Fried in vegetable (pure soybean) oil.