

Menu for Defending the Gate 2026

We chose to theme this feast slightly differently than our previous feasts. Traditionally we have a course centered around each side of the conflict. This feast is themed around the Battle of Marignano, in which the French (and supporting mercenaries!) defeated the Swiss. Swiss cuisine already has a lot of influence on, and from, the French, northern Italian and German cuisines we would be considering for our “opposing course”. So you will not find the separation of the sides as clear as in some previous feasts.

First Course

Medieval Swiss cuisine was influenced by their neighbors. *Le Viandier de Taillevent* was well known in Switzerland, for example. Within the country, there was regional variation, none greater than the divide between the agrarian plateaus and cities and the Alpine herding regions. We chose to theme this first course around Alpine foods, which included lots of dairy but not a lot of meat. Foraged food such as mushrooms and chestnuts was also common.

Alpine Macaroni (V)

Dried pasta for preservation was known in Italy since the 1300s but would have represented an indulgence in the Alps. This recipe is an interpretation of a modern Swiss variation on macaroni, with parsnips in place of the potatoes used now. “Macaroni” dishes of noodles with butter, spices and cheese are common in Italian cookbooks of the era.

Pasta, parsnips, nutmeg, cheese, cream, salt

Macaroni Toppings

Add any or all of these to your macaroni for a delightful gustatory experience.

- **Salt-cured ham** *ham, salt*
- **Apple Compote** *apple butter, dried apple, white balsamic vinegar*
- **Sauerkraut** *green cabbage, salt, caraway?*
- **Fried Onions** *onions, butter, salt*

Arugula Salat (V GF)

Salads of fresh spring greens and herbs would be common in March. Arugula was considered to be hot and inflame the passions, so was traditionally served mixed with cooler greens such as lettuce or mint. Eat this straight arugula salad at your own risk.

Arugula, olive oil, vinegar, salt

Mushrooms and Garlic (V GF)

Martino recommends cooking mushrooms with garlic and spices.

Baby bella mushrooms, garlic, olive oil, butter, coriander

Second Course

In looking into the conflict, we found that the southernmost canton of Switzerland, Ticino, was conquered in this era. It was previously under control of the Dukes of Milan. We were excited to discover that Maestro Martino, celebrity chef and author of the 15th century’s most famous cookbook, *Libro de Arte Coquinaria*, originally came from the Blenio valley in Ticino. We have sprinkled recipes from Martino throughout the feast. This course is also themed specifically around Ticinese food.

Minestrone Ticinese (V GF)

Modern minestrone from ticino uses borlotti beans, but those are bred from New World legumes. We were excited to discover that black-eyed peas are a variant of the very Old World cowpea.

Onion, celery, kale, garlic, black-eyed peas, vegetable broth, fresh parsley, salt, pepper, olive oil

Pane Ticinese / Tessinerbrot

This bread is still baked today, and although we don't have a recipe from this time we do see this unique shape in paintings.

Bread flour, olive oil, salt, yeast, egg

Polpette di Agnello (GF)

Tasty little morsels.

Lamb, onion, cumin, coriander, salt

Third Course

We had to include recipes to represent the mercenaries at the mercenary Defending the Gate! The German *landsknecht* and Venetian *condottieri* supported the French army in this conflict.

Pollo All'arancia (GF)

Martino suggested creating a sauce for chicken with oranges and sugar.

Chicken breasts, olive oil, orange sugar syrup, salt

Rotkohl (V GF)

This German stewed red cabbage is a household favorite.

Red cabbage, apples, red wine vinegar, red wine, cloves, salt, brown sugar, raisins

Pane di Torta / Kuchen aus Eirn und Brot (V)

This dessert came about because of a synchronicity. We first found recipes for egg cake, bread cake and milk cake in the 15th century German sources. Then, while looking into Swiss food, we found that Ticino still serves a version of "bread cake" to this day. The confluence of our German, Swiss and Italian inspirations meant that we had to serve this dessert to wrap up the feast. This is based primarily on the medieval German sources rather than including the additional ingredients in the modern one.

Bread (flour, yeast, water, salt), eggs, brown sugar, ceylon cinnamon, raisins, butter, orange sugar, candied orange peel

V = Vegetarian

GF = Gluten Free