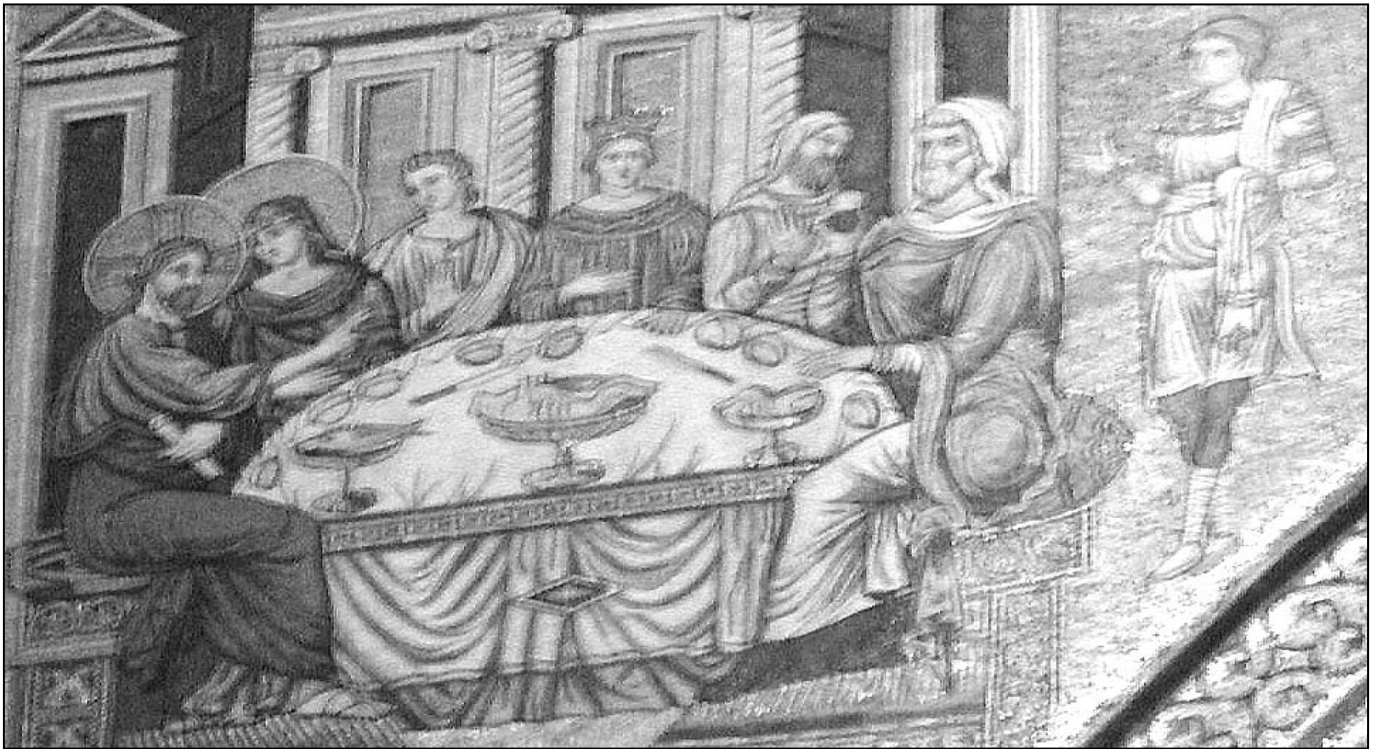


*The Coronation of Boru and Deirdre,
King and Queen of Meridies
Fall 2005, AS XL*



*A feast based upon the culture of Norman Sicily
during the reign of King Roger II.*

Presented by Donna Serena da Riva

Norman Sicily

To begin with, I must make it clear that I have been unable to uncover any culinary manuscripts from this region and time. In fact, the only reference to food served at Roger's coronation speaks only of serving women dressed in silks and bearing platters of silver and gold. While this is interesting information, it is utterly useless towards developing recipes for a feast. This pointed the direction for research towards the culture and peoples that made up the varied populace of Norman Sicily.

The island of Sicily was originally occupied by the Ancient Greeks who were annexed by the Romans during the second century BC. In 515 AD Roman Sicily was conquered by the Byzantine army and remained there for several centuries until the Saracens began raiding from the North African coast during the 9th century. By the beginning of the 10th century all of Sicily was in the hands of the Saracens. Then along came the Normans at the end of the 11th century with Roger I the victorious "Count of Sicily".

And it is his son, Roger II that we are concerned with. In 1130 Roger II was crowned King of Sicily. A King who was crowned in Byzantine splendor yet maintained a Saracen style harem. Other positions in his court were occupied by Saracens including Historian and Cook. During the reign of Roger II the Sicily experienced a relatively tolerant atmosphere towards the religious and cultural differences of her peoples.

Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Saracen all combined to create a unique blending and it is upon this that I have based my conjecture as to what dishes might have been served at a Coronation Feast. While most of these recipes are based on extant period manuscripts, none of them are specific to Norman Sicily, so I would hesitate to claim that this is a truly "period" feast. But, based on my understanding of Medieval Cuisine and the constituent cultures, I feel I have arrived at the best educated conclusions possible at this juncture. And, I most sincerely hope that they are the tastiest conclusions.

North African Trade Influences

Many of the foods that we consider typically "Italian" in nature were first introduced to Europe through Sicily by the Saracens. Sicily's remarkably fertile land proved to be the perfect place to grow many of these foods and because of this we see the use of many exotic foodstuffs long before they become commonplace in other European countries. Among these food items are Spinach, Eggplant, Asparagus, Artichoke, Lemons, Oranges, Limes, Melons, Sugar Cane, Short Grain Rice, and an utter surprise to me; Bananas. I have tried to incorporate many of these items into the menu to reflect the character of Sicilian cuisine.

Feast Format

One thing that you are sure to notice immediately is the arrangement of the High Table. This reflects the practices of the time. Dining in the Roman Empire was conducted from a reclining position on a series of couches, with the far left couch as the position of Honor. After this dining arrangement fell into disuse and tables, both rectangular and semi-circular, came into fashion the position of Honor continued to be at the far left of the table. It was not until the late 13th/early 14th century that the position of Honor moved to the position with which we are most familiar, the center.

As with the lack of recipes, there is a dearth of information on the format in which the feast was served. I have chosen the Roman convivium for inspiration. The tradition of opening a meal with a series of small dishes began in Rome and continues in the Mediterranean to this day. The Italian Antipasti, the Lebanese Mezza and the Spanish Tapas all reflect this style.

Gustatio

Chicken Pasteda

Discussion: The first avenue that I explored in identifying texts to utilize for this feast was to attempt to locate a book on period Sicilian cuisine. I was able to find references to two such texts. One, Giuseppe Coria's *Profumi di Sicilia. Il libro della cucina siciliana*, is available only in Italian and the time that would be involved in translation precludes it for this particular feast. The other is *Pomp and Sustenance: 25 Centuries of Sicilian Food (P&S)* by Mary Taylor Simeti, and luckily it is in English. I was able to purchase a copy of the latter and waited anxiously for its arrival. I will not say that it was disappointing, but for those interested in a strict academic text this is not the book for you. It does contain a fair amount of historical information, but it is even more useful for learning about traditional Sicilian cuisine.

All of the dishes in this feast reflect a synthesis of several different approaches. This text gave me a good grounding with what Sicilian cuisine eventually evolved into. I looked to the earlier Roman sources to see where things began and to relatively contemporary Arabic Texts for what was going on elsewhere at the same time. This dish is the first attempt I have made at a "fusion" style of redaction.

One of the traditional dishes discussed in *P&S* it what seems to be a type of bread pie called an Impanata. *P&S* supplies three different stuffings for this Impanata which is very similar to our traditional two crusted pie, only bread dough is used in place of a pastry crust. The first filling contained: Swiss chard, tomatoes and red pepper. The second: cauliflower, Sicilian sausage, fennel seeds and cheese. The third: spinach, ricotta and parmesan cheese. While the third recipe sounded very enticing to me, the amount of dairy already planned for the feast had gotten excessive for both the budget and the number of dishes that the dairy-free populace could not enjoy. So, I set this dish aside for quite some time. Most of the feast had come together when another dish in *P&S* caught my eye.

Listed as "Pasticcio di Mohammed ibn Itmnah", it is another enclosed bread dish; only the bread is baked and then hollowed out. The removed bread is mixed with chicken, almonds, pistachios, capers, parsley and lemon and then returned to the bread to be baked again. *P&S* cites two similar recipes as possible ancestors of this dish; one from Apicius and one adapted from "a medieval Arabic cookbook" by Claudia Roden. I looked through my copy of Apicius and was unable to determine which dish she was referring to, but I was able to find "Chicken Awsat" in Roden's *A Book of Middle Eastern Food*. One of the drawbacks to Roden's book is that she does not provide the source material from which she develops her recipes, but for this one she cited the original text as *Kitab al Wusla il al Habib*. Incidentally, Roden's stuffing recipe calls for chicken, chicken livers, sesame oil, allspice, pistachio nuts, parsley, mint, lemon and rose water.

Medieval Arab Cookery contains only references to *Kitab al Wusla* but one of the translated texts it does contain, *The Book of the Description of Familiar Foods*, has two recipes that are very similar to Roden's "Chicken Awsat". The first is titled "Bazmāward" and the second is "Ausāt".

Bazmāward [Persian bazm, banquet, and award, bringing]

Take nice well-done roast meat, as much as necessary, from the ribs and other parts, and pound it fine with the cleaver. Throw fresh mint leaves on it and, if you want, a little celery leaf. Sprinkle it with a little vinegar and lemon juice: and if you wish, put in the juice of salted lemons or of sour fruits instead of lemon juice; they are pounded with it [the meat]. Flavor it with a little milled mastic and Chinese cinnamon and sprinkle it with good rosewater. Pound it exceedingly well until it becomes fine. Then take some brick-oven bread, watched over as it baked in the oven, and let it be in the shape of a tulma loaf, in the middle of which there is a lattice rose, whose rim is not high. It should be well cooked, between dry and soft, that rose being conspicuously arched. Set it aside then split it with the knife and stuff it well with that prepared roast, and cut it into thin pieces and arrange it in baking trays. Throw mint leaves on it. It is eaten right away and the following day.

Ausāt [middles, viz. rolled up canapes, bread with fillings].

Take the same roast meat described in bazmaward, then spread it out widely on jardaqa bread, which you fold nicely and roll up tight. Cut it up and arrange it as described.

Ausāt might be made another way, which is that roast meat is taken and pounded by itself without the mentioned spices and spread out in strips of jardaqa bread. Put shelled

hardboiled eggs inside and roll it up tight and cut into *ausāt* the length of four or three fingers. Some people take that roast meat which we have described with the described spices and make *ausat* in *jardaq* of it.

After reading these recipes I hit upon the idea looking to these stuffings for inspiration to develop a filling for the *Impanata* that had previously sparked my interest.

I liked the idea of using chicken even though it is debatable whether the Middle Eastern texts are calling for chicken or lamb. But I decided that as long as I was developing this as a fusion dish I might as well tailor it towards something that my patrons would find exceptionally palatable. And a combination of mint and celery for the aromatics did not sound particularly appetizing. Both almonds and lemon sounded like good elements to keep, but what to pair with them. I had not yet included mushrooms into the feast in any way, and mushrooms always go well with chicken. Then, while perusing yet another source, I stumbled on the following quote:

Celery, coriander, dill and leeks may be added in the preparation of all foods, so long as the leeks are parboiled a little beforehand.

The source of this wisdom was Anthimus, a 6th century doctor in Gaul who wrote a treatise on food entitled *De obseruatione ciborum*. Leeks were the answer for me. Leeks are a ubiquitous vegetable that formed the staple of many medieval tables. It would have been a familiar food for the invading Normans, and a valued crop by the native Sicilians. So with this I had my ingredients, but no seasoning. Again looking at the dishes I already had planned I tried to think what I had not used yet. For this I turned to the *Tacinum Sanitatis* (discussed in more detail shortly) and perused the available herbs and decided on marjoram. I surmised that marjoram has a delicate flavor that would not overwhelm the other subtle flavors at play in this dish, and I turned out to be correct.

So, while it was a long and round about path to this dish I believe it came out well. I would in no way claim that this is a truly period dish. It was inspired by a combination of period and traditional dishes and has ingredients prepared and assembled in a period fashion. Call it a dish in a period style, but do not call it period.

Recipe:

- 1 ½ lbs chicken, 1 each breast, leg and thigh
- 1 Bay Leaf
- 8 Peppercorns
- ½ t Pickling Salt
- 1 Pinch Saffron

Combine above ingredients except chicken with sufficient water and bring to boil. Add chicken and boil until done, approximately 20 minutes. Remove from water, reserve cooking liquid for later. Allow chicken to cool then remove skin and meat from bones. Place skin and meat into a food processor and process until almost a paste. Set aside in a bowl.

- 2 large Leeks
- 4 oz Canned Mushrooms
- 1 T + ½ t Finely Minced Lemon Zest

Remove the green tops from leeks, quarter, separate and clean them. Drain the mushrooms. Place a pan on medium heat and coat the bottom with olive oil. Add the mushrooms and leeks to pan sprinkle lightly with salt to induce sweat. Sweat covered until limp and then allow to brown slightly. Deglaze pan with small amounts of chicken cooking liquid to avoid burning. Once vegetables are limp add lemon zest and allow to cook for a couple of minutes to release oils.

Transfer veggie mixture to food processor and add the following:

- 3 oz Blanched Almonds
- ½ t Kosher Salt
- ¼ t Black Pepper
- ¾ t Dried Marjoram
- 1 T Olive Oil

Process until almost a paste and then combine with chicken mixture. Have 1 lb ball of pizza dough at room temperature. Preheat oven to 350° F. Divide both stuffing and dough into two equal portions. Working with one half of dough and stuffing at a time; roll out dough on a lightly floured surface into a rectangle roughly 16 in by 4 in. Place stuffing down the center of the dough spreading until you have an even, thin layer of stuffing,

leaving 1/3 in of dough free all around. Take the leading edge of the long side of the dough and roll until you have achieved a rough log shape. Pinch the ends shut and place seam side down on a lightly oiled baking pan. Bake in oven for 25 – 30 minutes, or until done. Allow to cool and slice into ¼ inch pieces to serve.

a final note: In trying to decide what to call this dish I considered many things. Initially I thought to call it an Impanata, but decided that would be misleading. Then I considered Calzone, because that is the modern dish it most closely resembles. But again I believe it would be a misnomer. Then I stumbled across a discussion of Italian bread turnovers in *A Mediterranean Feast*, a text that was extremely useful for this feast, if not for the recipes then most assuredly for the historical references. Wright states that the Arabs of Sicily called such dishes “sfinci” which is nigh on unpronounceable so of no use. Another unpronounceable name the Italians have for a stuffed focaccia is “scacciate” which will not work. But then he mentions an Italian text written in 1348 titled the “Declarius of Senisio” which calls such stuffed dishes “pasteda” and I had a name.

Melon Relish:

Discussion: One of the texts that I felt would be of help in planning this feast is *The Four Seasons of the House of Cerruti*. *Cerruti*. This book is a modern translation of a 14th century Italian translation of the 12th century Arabic text called the *Tacinum Sanitatis*. The *Tacinum* is a medical treatise that was written in the by the Arab doctor Ibn Botlan. In the 14th century it became a very popular text and was translated into the modern language and presented with illuminated images of the discussed items. Several of these manuscripts have survived to this day, the text translated for *Cerruti* being one of them. Because it is a medical text it contains a great deal of information on the foods being consumed alongside their humoral properties. Considering that this text was Arabic in origin, yet Italian in location I decided it would be a good source for inspiration for possible foods and dishes to be served. One of the entries in the manuscript is as follows:

Melons

We are told by the Arab doctor Ellbochasim de Baldach that the best melons come from Samarkland. They should, in any case, be perfectly ripe, nourishing, brightly colored, and fragrant. They promote blood moderately and suit phlegmatic and bilious temperaments. They relive the pain of calculi and cleanse the skin, but cause a flux from the belly, which can be treated with syrup of vinegar. Eat melon with mature cheese and salty foods and drink a fine wine, but not too strong; then eat some other nourishing food. This is a suitable food for when the weather is very hot.

Research into melons indicated that the melon commonly sold as cantaloupe in the U.S. is not actually cantaloupe at all but musk melon. Musk melon is a period variety of melon and entirely appropriate for this application. In reading the *Cerruti* entry I must admit that I chose to stretch my conclusions a bit thin. It calls for melon to be served with mature cheese and salty foods. I thought, why not a mature, salty cheese. The stretch comes in classifying Feta as a mature cheese – which it is not. But Feta is most commonly associated with and similar to the types of cheeses found in Middle Eastern cuisines. Feta is also a period type of cheese and suitable for inclusion in the feast. I tested my inclinations and must say it makes for an unusual, yet tasty combination. Although I received many prods towards the idea, I can only stretch so far and was unable to justify wrapping slices of the melon in strips of Prosciutto.

Recipe:

8 oz Cantaloupe

1 oz Feta Cheese

Cut melon in half and place cut side down onto cutting surface. Peel off rind with knife. Slice and then chop melon into roughly ¼ inch cubes. Set aside. Crumble Feta Cheese into very small bits. Combine melon and feta in a bowl and cover. Allow to set in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes but no longer than 1 hour.

Counterfeit Isfiriyâ of Garbanzos:

Discussion: This recipe is from the *Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook*. This cookbook has proven to be invaluable in the planning of this feast. Written sometime in the 13th century it contains recipes from another Arabic population living in Europe, and more specifically another Mediterranean culture. I did not delve deeply into the history of the Saracen conquest of this portion of Spain, but there are enough parallels for this to be as close as I could come to Norman Sicily in both region and time period.

Chickpeas are a staple of Middle Eastern cuisine and I felt that I had to include them in some form. But I wanted something a little unusual and less ammunition shaped. Within the *Anonymous Andalusian* manuscript I found the following recipe:

Pound some garbanzos, take out the skins and grind them into flour. And take some of the flour and put into a bowl with a bit of sourdough and some egg, and beat with spices until it's all mixed. Fry it as before in thin cakes, and make a sauce for them.

Recipe:

7 ½ oz Chickpea Flour, weighed then sifted
1 pinch Kosher Salt
¼ C Warm Water
1 t Yeast
10 threads Saffron
1 pinch Sugar
2 Eggs
¼ t Black Pepper
½ t Coriander
¼ t Cumin
1 t Cinnamon
2 C Canola Oil

Combine water, yeast, saffron and sugar and allow to proof. Sift chickpea flour into a bowl and add spices, mix with whisk until well combined. Beat eggs in a bowl and add to flour, add yeast mixture and combine well. Roll out to 1/8 in thickness on a floured surface and cut into 1" squares. Bring oil to a temp of around 375° F and hold there. Fry several pieces at a time turning once. 1 – 2 minutes per fritter. Remove to draining rack and sprinkle with kosher salt while hot. Remove to paper towels.

Sauce:

Discussion: Unfortunately the text was singularly unhelpful in the case of the sauce. After preparing the fritters I sampled them and tried to envision what sauce would suit them. With this I had to take into consideration all of the other items served in this course as well as the courses to come. One element that is very common in Medieval Arab cookery and so far missing in my feast is the combination of sweet and sour. Another element frequently mentioned in the purely Arabic sources and not yet represented was the pomegranate. With the spiciness of the fritters I decided a sweet and sour pomegranate sauce would be very appropriate. I combed through *The Baghdad Cookery Book* and noted all of the references to pomegranates in sauce. The most appropriate thickening agent indicated would have been ground almonds, but I already had almonds in this course. Wanting to avoid too many nuts I looked further and found a reference to the combination of pomegranate and raisins. Using a pureed dried fruit is a common thickening technique in Arabic cuisines and it would bring the sweetness that I was looking for to the sauce. The most common souring agent in the texts is most obviously vinegar. To keep a nice bright color I chose to stick with a red wine vinegar.

Recipe:

½ C Water
3 T Pomegranate Molasses
2 oz Raisins, pureed
1 t Red Wine Vinegar
Sugar to taste

Puree raisins. Combine all ingredients in small saucepan, simmer and stir vigorously until desired consistency is reached.

Eggplant Pancakes:

Discussion: As mentioned earlier, eggplant is one of the exotics introduced to Sicily by the Saracens. The most common “traditional” dish of eggplant associated with Sicily is Caponata. All of the modern recipes I found for this item involved large amounts of tomato, and frequently cocoa. There is much speculation as to what the origins of this dish are, with no conclusive answers. Combing through the *Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook* I found several dishes that I believe might be ancestors of this Sicilian delicacy.

Preparation of Arnabi: Take sweet eggplants of great size and cut in half. Boil with water and salt, then take out of the water and leave to drain. Then take a tajine and put in it sharp vinegar and a smaller quantity of murri naqi', pepper, cumin, thyme, saffron, chopped garlic and a lot of oil; put in it the boiled halves of eggplant and roll in this broth; then arrange in the said tajine and put in the oven, where you will leave it until the sauce is dry and [only] the oil remains; take out and leave until it loses its heat and use. There are those who break in eggs and then put it in the oven.

A Vegetarian Version of the Same[136] Prepared by Ibn Muthanna[137]

Take eggplants and with a stick pierce them on all sides and boil. Then press out the water in which you boiled them and put in a pot; pour on them vinegar, murri naqi', plenty of oil, pepper, saffron, cumin, cinnamon, cloves of garlic wrapped in sprigs of thyme and two whole onions, place on a coal fire and cook; then put a lid [heated] from the fire on the pot and leave until brown on top and the sauce is dry; then take out of the fire and throw out the two onions and then use. This dish keeps for many days without going bad and does not change, like Arnabi.

My attempt at preparing this dish was not even remotely a success. I believe it could be a tasty dish, but it would have taken extensive testing and fiddling. And even then, it would only appeal to die hard eggplant lovers. For a feast I desire to find something that will appeal to a wider range of tastes and hopefully encourage people to try new things. So I was back to square one for an eggplant dish. This search was made doubly difficult by the fact that I do not particularly care for eggplant. Actually, I hate it. I then found a dish in Cariadoc's *Miscellany* listed as coming from *La Cocina Arabigoandaluza*. This text was translated from Arabic into Spanish by Fernando de la Granja Santamaria and from Spanish into English by Melody Asplund-Faith.

Get sweet eggplant and boil it with water and salt until it becomes well cooked and is dissolved or falling apart. You should drain the water, crush and stir it on a dish with crumbs of grated bread, eggs beaten with oil, dried coriander and cinnamon; beat it until all becomes equal. Afterwards fry cakes made with this batter in a frying pan with oil until they are gilded. Make a sauce of vinegar, oil, almori, and mashed garlic; give all this a shaking and pour it over the top.

It proved to be delicious even to myself – an abject eggplant opponent.

Recipe:

- 1 large eggplant (1 ½ lbs)
- Salt
- 2 oz Bread Crumbs
- 2 Eggs
- 1 T Sesame Oil
- 1 ½ t Coriander
- 1 t Cinnamon
- 2 pinches pickling salt

Peel and chop eggplant coarsely. Bring heavily salted water to a boil and add eggplant. Boil for 20 – 25 minutes or until completely squishy. Allow to drain. Place in large bowl and puree with immersion blender. Add remaining ingredients and combine well. Can hold overnight. Bring cast iron skillet to a medium heat and rub lightly with butter. Using a standard tea spoon (like for eating with) place heaping scoops of batter onto hot skillet. Pat to a round shape about 1 ½ - 2 inches in diameter. Cook on first side until edges start to brown and the batter loses its shiny-ness. Flip and cook until done on the other side. Remove to cooling rack. Pancakes can be held in refrigerator in an airtight container layered with waxed paper. Reheat in 350° oven until heated through.

Sauce:

Discussion: The difficulty in this recipe lies with the first ingredient, Murri. As with garum it is a salty fermented sauce used extensively in the manuscript but with the assumption that one will be buying it from your local merchant. There are explicit recipes for the manufacture of murri in *The Book of the Description of Familiar Foods* all of which are too lengthy to quote, but I can provide a brief synopsis. Loaves of barley bread are made and wrapped in fig leaves. They are allowed to rot for 20 days and then turned and allowed to rot for 20 more days, if at that point they do not have red veins throughout their interior they can be allowed to rot for an additional 20 days. After this period you are to combine the rotten barley with 1/5th its weight in salt and a list of seven spices (included are instructions on proportions). This is allowed to steep with water in the sun in a clear jar for 60 days and then it is good. The liquid is drained off and then the remaining matter can be used for a second and third extraction, but they are of decreasing value.

Within the essays contained in *Medieval Arab Cookery* there is a discussion on murri and it's similarities with soy sauce. Both are fermented grain products and the speculation is that soy sauce should be an acceptable substitute. In Cariadoc's *Miscellany* the author has come to a different solution involving a second murri recipe in the same period text. His rationale is as follows:

In addition to the surviving recipes for murri, there are also at least two surviving references to what was apparently a fake murri a substitute made by a much simpler process. If one cannot have real murri, period fake murri seems like the next best thing.

He proceeds to provide the period recipe and his redaction using spices, nuts, burnt bread and scorched honey. All of this is appended to the *Anonymous Andalusian Cookbook*. While I have the utmost of respect for Duke Cariadoc's accomplishments in the culinary field I have to disagree with this conclusion. My specific rationale for this departure comes from a statement made earlier in the period text when the author discusses the ingredients found in the presented recipes:

Murri is not suitable to be used unless of the infused sort, because of its benefits and penetrating quality; following this is murri made of grape juice with spices but without burned bread. The murri that people make with scorched honey and bread and other things is not suitable to be used at all, for it causes black bile and has neither benefit nor penetrating flavor.

So a compromise had to be found. The decision I arrived at was to abide by the recommendations of the culinary historians who authored *Medieval Arab Cookery* and use soy sauce as my base ingredient. Assuming that the soy sauce already contained sufficient salt I added the appropriate spices and allowed it to sit on my back porch in the sun for a week. A longer infusion would most likely produce a stronger flavor but I judged a week to be enough. After straining the spices and herbs from the soy sauce I returned the liquid to its original container. The sauce for the pancakes provides a wonderful platform to showcase the flavor of the murri, and it is quite delicious as an ingredient if not on its own.

Recipe:

1/2 C + 3 T Murri
3 T + 2 t Sesame Oil
1/4 C Red Wine Vinegar
2 Cloves Garlic

Puree garlic. Combine with other ingredients and place in lidded container. Shake well before service.

To make Murri:

1 gallon Soy Sauce (make sure ingredient label includes wheat and the word distilled)
1/3 C Dried Thyme
1/3 C Whole Dry Coriander
1 T each Whole Caraway, Whole Nigella, Whole Fenugreek, Whole Anise
1 1/3 T Whole Fennel Seed

Combine all spices in a mortar and pestle or spice grinder and crack coarsely to release oils. Pour half of the soy sauce into a clear jar and add the spices, top off with the remaining soy sauce and seal tightly. Place in a sunny spot outdoors and stir daily. After a week strain through fine woven cheese cloth set into a strainer and then return to soy sauce container.

Cena Prima

During the convivium a fully laden table bearing all the food for each course would be carried to the diners and then the individual dishes would be served to the couches from this table. Thus it was termed the First Table or Cena Prima. The Second Table was typically made up of fruits, sweets and beverages. This Secunda Mensae (later known as Bellaria) will be presented separately at the White Rose Ball.

Ferculum

Pork in a Sprightly Sauce:

Discussion: The source that I was able to find that most closely approximates the time and region of Norman Sicily is *Salernitan Regimen of Health*. The poem dates from the 12th century and is a medical treatise supposedly written by the Medical School of Salerno as instructions on healthy living for the English King. It is not certain who actually wrote the piece, but it is possible that it was Arabic in origin. More on the provenance of this piece can be found at the cited website. Regardless of its origin, the Italian version dates from the 12th century and was available to the people of the time. Salerno is in southern Italy, a mere 100 miles from Palermo (the capital of Sicily) as the crow flies. There is a great deal of sage advice in the poem, one tidbit being:

From sage, salt with wine, pepper, garlic, and parsley
Make a sauce, mixing it together in a sprightly manner.

Further on in the text the following is stated:

If you eat pork without wine, it is worse than mutton.
If you add wine to pork, then it is food and medicine.

And finally this:

Why should a man die in whose garden grows sage?
Against the power of death there is not medicine in our gardens
But Sage calms the nerves, takes away hand
Tremors, and helps cure fever...
O sage the savior, of nature the conciliator!

With this ringing endorsement, I would be remiss in my duties to the health of my Crown should I chose not to serve this Sage based dish. And with this dish the singularly most Norman aspect of the feast. As in modern times, the majority of the Arabic population eschews pork and pork products. This dish would have never been found on a Middle Eastern table, but is right at home here in Norman Sicily.

Recipe:

3 lbs Boston Butt
3 T Dried Sage
2 T Dried Parsley
1 C Chardonnay
2 t Kosher Salt
½ t Black Pepper
2 Cloves Garlic, crushed

Cut Pork into roughly 4 ounce cubes. Combine all ingredients and allow to marinate overnight. Preheat oven to 350° F and place pork into a roasting dish. Roast tightly covered for 1 ½ hours basting occasionally or until the meat can be cut with a fork.

And one more piece of advice from the *Regimen*:

If you develop a hangover from drinking at night,
Drink again in the morning; it will be your best medicine.

Rice in the style of Lombard:

Discussion: inspired by *Opera dell'arte del cucinare* by Bartolomeo Scappi.

Take rice from Lombard or Salerno, clean and wash with warm water, in order that it stays more white, and it cooks faster let it soak in warm water for an hour. Pour it out and let it dry in to the sun or in the heat of a fire a long way from the flame in order that it does not become red (toast), and put it on the fire in a pot of ceramic or copper with enough water that it is covered. And when it has absorbed all the water add to it almond milk with fine sugar many times (enough to cover?) and let it finish cooking in such a way that it remains firm. And when it is cooked serve with sugar and cinnamon above. One can also at the same time serve like a "ginestrata", having passed it through a sieve with more sugar and ground cinnamon and saffron, and re-cook it with a little rose water and Madeira wine. But if you want it with oil, don't do that but put in the pan with oil, water, salt and saffron and at the end add a little chopped herbs or chopped onion that have been fried. And in all these ways this dish is prepared it should be served hot.

I chose to go with this recipe from a 16th century Italian culinary author based on an observation in *Mediterranean Feast*:

I believe that the dish was once a kind of saffron pilaf known among the Jews and Arabs of medieval Sicily who traveled north. As early as the sixteenth century, the Renaissance chef Cristoforo da Messisburgo had claimed that he thought rissoto con lo zaffrano was born in Sicily.

Having established that short grain rice was indeed introduced to Sicily at this early date I desired to present a dish that featured this ingredient. Unfortunately all of the dishes I could find in the Arabic Corpus involved large quantities of meat. In acknowledgement of the modern diners' expectation that starch dishes be free of meat I sought out a meatless version. I chose to look forward in the Italian texts and believe that this dish would not have raised too many eyebrows if served to a 12th century Sicilian diner.

Recipe:

2 C Rice
1 t Olive Oil
4 C Water
1 T Salt
10 threads Saffron
1 medium Onion

Place rice in a bowl and cover with hot water. Seal tightly and allow to rest for 1 hour. Strain out water and rinse rice with additional hot water. Spread out onto a cookie sheet and allow to rest for 15 minutes. During this time, place salt and saffron and heat lightly. Then bring to boil. Add rice and cook until done. Slice onion thinly and sauté until caramelized. Serve rice with onion on top.

An Assortment of Salads:

Discussion: Vegetable dishes are often the most problematic of the required elements of a SCA feast. The dish must be palatable to the average diner and I usually try to keep them free of what I call "hidden meat". Many if not most medieval vegetable dishes call for meat in some manner for the flavoring. In deference to modern concepts I often substitute olive oil or leave out the meat altogether. This creates a less authentic presentation – but I will not be hunted down by the vegetarians! As usual, I was stuck for a vegetable dish for this course and then my inspiration came while reading *Around the Roman Table*, which I highly recommend. The author has this to say about vegetables:

The Romans did not think of vegetables as side dishes. They merited a place of honour at the table – the gourmet knew his onions. The Romans took wild, sometimes unpalatable plants and developed them into vegetables that are now common: cabbage and other brassicas like kale, cauliflower, sprouts, broccoli, as well as lettuce, endive, onions, leek asparagus, French beans, courgettes, artichoke, radishes and cucumber.

He goes on to quote Pliny:

The ordinary people complain that there are vegetables that are not meant for them. Even kale is so fertilized that it assumes enormous dimensions for which there is no longer any room on poor people's tables.

There is wide variety of salads presented in Apicius' *The Art of Cooking*, most of which involve some combination of garum, oil, vinegar, wine and herbs. In Anthimus' cookery book we are provided with a wide range of vegetables suitable for consumption, with the most common serving suggestion being "with salt and oil".

In *Pomp and Substance* one of the most common ingredients is anchovies, and I did not want to let the entire feast go by without providing at least a taste of the oily fish. By the 12th century it is likely that garum was falling out of favor, Anthimus himself said:

We ban the use of fish sauce from every culinary role.

He later allows for it in some instances, but sparingly. One of the preparation suggestions in *Around the Roman Table* was to create oenogarum (a sauce of garum diluted with wine) by whisking together anchovy paste and wine. On the Roman, and most likely Sicilian, table the salads would have been served already dressed to perfection. But again bearing in mind the different tastes of our diners I have chosen to serve the dressing separately as a dipping sauce for the vegetables.

Recipe:

½ head Romaine Lettuce
8 oz Asparagus
4 oz Radish
3 Carrots
2/3 C Olive Oil
½ C White Wine Vinegar
2 t Anchovy Paste
¼ t Oregano, dried
¼ t Marjoram, dried
pinch each Salt and Pepper

Clean all veggies and lightly blanch asparagus. Hold chilled. Combine all remaining ingredients and whisk vigorously. Arrange veggies nicely on platter and place bowl with sauce in the center.

Intermezzo/Secundo

Honeyed Bananas:

Discussion: My first indication that a banana dish might be appropriate to serve in this feast came while I was reading through the *Tacinum Sanitatis*. The entry on the Banana is as follows:

Bananas

It is no surprise that Ellbochasim mentions this plant and its fruit, but as far as we are concerned we know of it only from texts or tales from merchants from Cyprus or pilgrims from the Holy Land. Sicilians, on the other hand, know them well. The leaves are fan-shaped and have a hard rib and a thin blade, which dries up in the summer. The banana has a yellow skin when ripe and white pulp. It seems at first to be very insipid-tasting, but then, they say that one can never eat enough of them due to their delicious flavor, which gradually emerges very pleasantly. They weigh heavily on the stomach, and their only virtue is that they are sexually arousing

Looking for further confirmation of this idea I searched *Stefan's Florilegium* and found a discussion on the banana. One specific entry was precisely on point with the pertinent portions included below:

Date: Wed, 2 May 2001 15:14:09 -0500

From: "Decker, Terry D." <TerryD at Health.State.OK.US>

Subject: RE: SC - bananas

Thomas Gloning provided the following a while back:

The 11th century *Taqwim al-Sihha* of Ibn Butlan (*Tacinum sanitatis*) has an entry on bananas with one sentence on how to eat them. Here is a rough English paraphrase based on the Editor's French translation of his arab edition:

---- "To eat it with sugar and honey helps to make good use of it (?). Make sure that the banana is ripe and thoroughly peeled and drink some perfumed wine afterwards'

---- "La manger avec du sucre et du miel aide la faire bien appcier, surtout quand elle est mure, bien pelee et suivie d'un vin parfume". (Elkhadem 155)

According to Maxime Rodinson's 'Recherches sur les documents arabes relatifs la cuisine' [1950; Inquiries into the arab texts pertinent to cookery], there are two recipes with bananas in the 'Kitab al-Wusla ila l-Habib' (Book of the connection to the friend; 12th century; later manuscripts). As far as I know, there is no edition of this text yet, but at least Rodinson's summary [On donne ci-dessous un sommaire du contenu de l'ouvrage; 130] indicates, that there _are_ two banana recipes:

---- "Two dishes of meat with bananas'

---- "2 plats de viande aux bananes" (p. 138).

Dr. Gloning is a highly renowned academic in the realm of culinary history and Terry Decker is a member of the SCA who has concentrated on botanical research as well as culinary. I find both of them to be reliable sources and worthy of citation. Also within the *Florilegium* file are references to the origin of the Banana and how it found its way to Northern Africa. These and every discussion on the history of the banana reference Pliny the Elder as the documentation for Alexander the Great bringing bananas with him back from India. I searched through Pliny's *The Natural History*. After much perusal I found the specific reference to which all of the citations were pointing:

CHAP. 12. (6.)--THE PALA: THE FRUIT CALLED ARIENA.

There is another tree (1) in India, of still larger size, and even more remarkable for the size and sweetness of its fruit, upon which the sages (2) of India live. The leaf of this tree resembles, in shape, the wing of a bird, being three cubits in length, and two in breadth. It puts forth its fruit from the bark, a fruit remarkable for the sweetness of its juice, a single one containing sufficient to satisfy four persons. The name of this tree is "pala," and of the fruit, "ariena." They are found in the greatest abundance in the country of the Sydraci,(3) a territory which forms the extreme limit of the expedition of Alexander. There is another (4) tree, also, very similar to this, but bearing a still sweeter fruit, though very apt to cause

derangement of [p. 3111] the bowels. Alexander issued strict orders, forbidding any one in the expedition to touch this fruit.

1 Sprengel and Bauhin are of opinion that the banana is the tree meant here; Dodonæus thinks that it is the pomegranate. Thevet says that the pala is the paquovera of India, the fruit of which is called pacona. The account is borrowed from Theophrastus.

2 The Gymnosophists, or Brahmins.

3 Called Sydraci in B. vi. c. 25.

4 It is not improbable that the Tamarindus Indica of Linnæus is the tree here alluded to: though M. Fée combats that opinion.

To me this is a bit confusing, and judging by the footnotes there is/was some debate as to this actually being a reference to the banana. But this is the source of all of the history I have been able to uncover. With this evidence I am confident in serving the fruit within the context of a Coronation feast. The celebration of a Coronation is one of the single most significant occurrences in medieval life and I think it most appropriate to serve this extravagant and exotic item. But nothing I have found leads me to believe that it was a frequent visitor to the Sicilian table.

Recipe:

Bananas
Honey
Coarse Sugar

Peel the bananas and cut them in half lengthwise. Arrange on a platter. Heat the honey until it is runny, and then drizzle over the bananas. Sprinkle with coarse sugar and serve.

Cucumbers with Persian Milk:

Discussion: inspired by Traditional Lebanese dish and *The Baghdad Cookery Book* In Mark's book on Byzantine Cuisine there is included the rationale and documentation for tadziki. The earliest he has been able to date it to is the 15th/16th century. I cannot in good faith speculate that the dish existed as early as the 12th century. But I was able to find multiple references to Persian Milk (yogurt) being used as an ingredient modified with garlic, mint and lemons. I present it here for you to enjoy.

Another common vegetable that has been enjoyed since ancient times is the Cucumber. Emperor Nero was even said to have had a special wagon constructed to hold dirt with mica mirrors mounted on the side so that he could have cucumbers year round.

If some of the cucumbers find their way into the yogurt, well I cannot be blamed now can I?

Recipe:

1 lb Yogurt
1 T Fresh Mint
1 T + 1 t Lemon Juice
1 Garlic Clove
1 t Olive Oil
1 large European Style Cucumber

Place mint (approx 5 leaves) lemon juice, olive oil, and garlic into a mini-processor. Mince until fine. Stir/fold mixture gently into yogurt, until thoroughly combined. Allow to sit overnight for best flavor. Slice cucumber thinly and arrange on plate, serve with yogurt.

Tertia

Beef Roasted in the Roman Style:

Discussion: Although I have already made the argument that garum was most likely going out of style by the 12th century, I still wanted to have at least one dish that retained that truly Roman flavor. So I selected the following recipe from *The Art of Cooking* by Apicius.

Another Style for Roasts: Take 6 scruples of parsley, of laser just as many, 6 of ginger, 5 laurel berries, 6 scruples of preserved laser root, Cyprian rush 6, 6 of origany, a little costmary, 3 scruples of chamomile, 6 scruples of celery seed, 12 scruples of pepper, and broth and oil as much as it will take up.

To bring this dish forward in time to Sicily I decided to consider the list of herbs as suggestions based on availability. Of the herbs, many are difficult or impossible to obtain so they were dropped. Considering the flavors already present in the feast I chose to go with a simplified mixture that featured the flavors of pepper, oregano and ginger. What resulted was very tasty. The garum does not smell very good, but lends a lovely salty flavor to the finished roast. If you are a total wuss then you might want to substitute Worcestershire sauce, but I believe it will sweeten the flavor profile a good bit.

Recipe:

- 3 lbs Beef Roast
- 1 t Pickling Salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ t Black Pepper
- 2 t Ground Ginger
- 2 T Nuc Nam
- 1 t Dried Oregano
- 1 T Canola Oil

Combine all ingredients except pepper and allow to marinate for several hours in refrigerator. Before cooking, add the pepper and seal tightly in aluminum foil pouch. Preheat oven to 350° F and roast for 1 hour and 25 minutes, or until you have reached desired internal temp.

A Pasta Dish:

Pasta is a staple of today's modern Italian cuisine but the pasta of today is far removed from the noodles of antiquity. Based on shipping and trade documents it can be established that the primary source for dried pasta in the 12th and 13th centuries was Sicily. The incredibly efficient agricultural techniques of the Saracens can be partially credited with this accomplishment. The best wheat for making pasta is hard or Durum wheat. This type of wheat was extensively grown in Sicily making it the primary exporter of not only dried pasta, but of the wheat itself.

You may find that the pasta presented today seems a bit, well, overcooked. And I must assure you that this is not so. One does not find specific instructions for preparing pasta until late in the period texts, and when discussed the boiling time ranges from 30 minutes to 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. The term "al dente" in reference to how pasta should be prepared did not come into usage until the First World War. So, while the texture may be unfamiliar I assure you it is a close approximation of how the Normans would have found it in Sicily.

Discussion: For this feast it was essential that I have a strong pasta dish. It is documentably a large part of period Sicilian cuisine and continues to be to this day. In most SCA feasts that I have attended the pasta or noodle dish is relegated to being a starchy side suitable for sopping up gravies and sauces. I did not want this to be the perception of pasta in this feast. It needed to be an entrée on its own. The first dish I tested was from *Pomp and Sustenance* called "Pasta con salsa di acciughe salate" or Pasta with Salted Anchovy Sauce. Looking at the traditional techniques and ingredients I produced a modified version with the following recipe:

- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz Currants
- 2 Cloves Garlic
- 1 T Fresh Chopped Italian Parsley
- $\frac{1}{2}$ C Olive Oil
- 1 oz Pine Nuts (chopped)

2 oz Anchovy filets (1 can with oil)

1 T Oregano

1 lb Linguini Pasta

Bring enough salted water to cover the pasta plus 1 inch to a boil. Add pasta and cook at a bare boil for 30 minutes. Soak currants in water until plump. Chop garlic and parsley and add to olive oil over low heat. Chop anchovies and add to mixture with the anchovy oil. Add in drained currants and pine nuts. Stir and cook until anchovies dissolve into oil. Drain pasta and toss with sauce.

This came out delicious, but was much too strong of a taste to serve alongside the beef dish. Looking for a more mild, yet tasty dish I turned to *Mediterranean Feast*. In it I found pasta in ricotta and nut sauce that looked very tasty. With there being no cheese already in this course, I decided to give it a go. Wright's recipe called for ricotta cheese, pepper, almonds and pistachios. The recipe I ended up with reduced the amount of ricotta and added butter and water. Again, the dish was delicious, but much too heavy to work with the beef dish. And the ricotta/nut combination would prove to be prohibitively expensive.

I was at a loss and began thinking on another "fusion" dish. One of the early introduction foods that I had not yet incorporated into the feast was spinach and I decided that spinach in a pasta dish would bring the right level of sophistication to make it more than just a "noodle dish" without competing with the beef dish. Both the *Tacinum Sanitatis* and *Medieval Arab Cookery* contain references to spinach with assorted spices and oils cooked in their own juices. Combing these references with the traditional Sicilian preparation from *Pomp and Sustenance* (minus the anchovies) produced a dish that balances wonderfully with the beef. A final addition was the cheese. This is based on my knowledge of later period pasta recipes, most all of them contain butter, cheese and spices and I believe the cheese to be an acceptable addition here.

Recipe:

1 lb Linguini Pasta

8 oz Spinach

1 ½ oz Chopped Pine Nuts, lightly toasted

½ C Currants

½ t Salt

pinch Pepper

½ t Cardamom

2 cloves Garlic, finely chopped

1/3 C Olive Oil

½ C Parmesan Cheese

Bring Salted water to a boil and add pasta. Cook for 30 minutes. Put currants into a small dish and cover with warm water to dehydrate. While pasta is cooking, combine olive oil, garlic, spices and drained currants over low heat and allow flavors to combine. When pasta is done, place cleaned spinach in the bottom of serving bowl and put drained pasta on top. Pour sauce over pasta and add cheese. Combine thoroughly. Sprinkle pine nuts on top before service

Beans in the Pod:

Discussion: Originally this dish was slated for the Ferculum, but I moved it when I developed the Salat. To place the Salat into this course would have two dishes with "fish sauce" in the same course and I decided that would not be a good idea. Considering the esteem in which vegetables were held on the Roman table it seems only proper to return once again to *The Art of Cooking* by Apicius for my final vegetable dish.

Beans in the Pod: Cook the beans; meanwhile crush pepper, lovage, cumin, green coriander, moistened with broth and wine, and add broth to taste, put into the sauce pan adding oil; heat on a slow fire and serve.

The most accurate candidate for this dish would most likely be immature fava beans whose pods were still edible. Unless I grew them myself I could not acquire such beans so I looked to the commonly available edible podded beans. Snow peas are blatantly modern so I chose to go with Sugar Snap Peas. This pea has been specifically developed over centuries to be what it is today, and there is a distinct possibility that one of it's ancestors were available in period. The listing of herbs and spices that specifies green coriander implies to me

that the lovage was intended to be included fresh as an herb. With this assumption I have substituted a wilder version of our modern celery that is available at my local farmer's market. I chose to omit the cumin because it would bring an earthy flavor to this dish that would lessen the bright flavor I desired to balance out the beef.

Recipe:

1 lbs Sugar Snap Peas
1/4 t Pepper
3 T Chinese Celery
1 T Cilantro
3/4 t Salt
1 T Olive Oil
1/2 C Vegetable Broth
1/4 C Chardonnay

Wash, tip and tail beans. Bring a pot of water to a boil and then blanch pods. Bring water back to a boil and allow to blanch for a few minutes only. Combine all ingredients and toss in hot peas. Cover and allow flavors to combine for a short time before serving.

What is missing?

One of the most difficult parts of planning a feast is not the period dishes. The array of delicious dishes available in the period texts is staggering; narrowing them down to those to be presented is often quite a challenge. No, the difficult part is dealing with the restrictions of the mundane world. Things like budget and modern preferences always confine what is possible to serve in the feast format.

One of the dominant aspects of Sicilian cuisine is completely missing on your table; and that is the Sea. Sicilian tables overflowed with the bounty of the sea. Tuna and Swordfish were the preeminent fish, but they were joined by mackerel, sardines, anchovies, mullet and sole. Lobster and eel were served alongside octopus, cuttlefish, squid, oysters, scallops, prawn, and urchins.

Unfortunately tuna, swordfish and lobster are not to be had for prices reasonable enough to fit within our monetary confines. So, if you could imagine that you were served a lovely plate of lightly dusted calamari with a bright vinegar and parsley sauce it would be of great help in rounding out my offerings.

Or possibly a delicious tuna steak cooked in the Roman manner; lightly sprinkled with oil, salt and garum and then grilled over a hot fire. Garnished with parsley and served hot to the table it would be a fitting inclusion to this feast. In any manner, when you are thinking on the Norman Sicilian cuisine, think not only of what you have been served here this day, but also of the Sea.

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Appendix A: Culinary Gleanings from *The Norman Kingdom of Sicily*

The following selections are statements that I was able to cull from an academic text on Norman Sicily. I read the text with an eye towards mentions of food, feasting or agricultural items. Most of the mentions are in the form of tithes due to various lords and clergy. This indicates to me that they were valued products that most likely made their way onto the dining table. Also included are various shipping and legal items. These are being included here to assist anyone else who might desire to look into the cuisine of Norman Sicily. While the book is chock full of information, unless you are particularly interested in the minutiae of political maneuvering within the Kingdom you would most likely find it very boring.

Yet it is obvious that the kingship could not have been proclaimed without the participation of great men, like the crown-bearer prince of Capua, and the approval of the hundreds more who made the ceremonies impressive, accompanying the processions and feasting from gold and silver dishes served by domestics dressed in silk. (p 37)

...but before 1130, many commercial links seem to have been with places outside the kingdom altogether, since the different regions found the best markets for their surpluses not so much with their neighbours, as with the populous cities of North Africa and the east. The most important export was the **hard grain** which Sicily had been famous for growing since antiquity, though other regions of the kingdom such as Campania and Apulia also produced it in sufficient quantities to export some. The South was able to export seasonal fruits such as **hazelnuts, walnuts** and **chestnuts**, as well as timber and oil, especially to Egypt. There were in fact many exportable products. Sicily was valued by the abbey of Santa Maria Latina in Jerusalem as a source of food such as **bacon, tunny**, and **cheese**, but also for **lamb-skins, rabbit-skins**, ox-hides, wooden bowls, hemp and both linen and woolen cloth. (p 73)

The king had not tampered with the old customs of the turbulent mainland in his first two years ... The main exports of the island were **grain** (from all ports), cotton (from west Sicily), wool and **lamb** (Palermo), **bacon** (Messina) and skins of various kinds (Agrigento and Mazara). (p 77)

The rural economy of the South cannot have been uniform but its full complexity can never be grasped. Most of the documents available relate patchily to the affairs of Apulia, or to a few monasteries like Cassino, La Cava and Montevergine, and even these have not yet been adequately studied. The fertility of the soil and the industry of the population readily provided surpluses for the market. The network of domestic trade throughout the South brought these surpluses to some main centres. Markets in **grain, nuts, oil** and **wine** were certainly matched by those dealing in more perishable food such as **vegetables, meat** and **fish** which did not travel so far. Some contracts to encourage the cultivation of **vines** and **olives** involved long-term planning; the availability of surpluses was not merely fortuitous but contrived. (p 77)

One of Cassino's priors made a list in 1157 of the renders of his church from various properties – twenty-two separate holdings in ten distinct **chestnut** groves. ...he set down for each place what was due...some **hens** and unadulterated **wine** (*vinum mundum*). All the shareholders (*partionarios*) had to provide meals when they pressed the grapes (*quando pisant palmentum*) and when they shared out the chestnuts. (p 80-81)

In 1156, the *camerarius* of the count of Lesina summoned the abbot of San Giovanni in Piano to answer a complaint ... At Salerno, difficulties arose when water was taken from the river Irno for the irrigation of the gardens of the cathedral and others because Luca Guarna (A royal justiciar) tried to increase the annual leve due to him as water rights, his claims appear to have been bought off by negotiation, so that he has the use of the gardens in the period of irrigation for taking **vegetables, citrus fruits** and **cucumbers** (*olera, citrolis, cucurbitis*).

Water also provided abundant supplies of **fish from the sea, lakes and rivers**. In some cases, grants of fishing were conceded in the form of the right to keep a boat; in others, the beneficiary was allotted the services of a fisherman. (p 83-84)

As the numbers of the Greek working population declined, it may also have become more difficult to get monastic land cultivated: in 1168, the monks of San Filippo di Fragalà received royal permission to graze up to

two thousand **sheep**, one hundred mares, two hundred **cows** and five hundred **pigs** on the royal domain, which points to a pastoral rather than an agricultural economy. (p 96)

This is illustrated from a case at Messina in 1195. ... On his death the properties passed to a relation and his four sons, provided that they too recognized themselves to be the convent's *villain* for the properties. This involved them paying dues in money and **hens** and carrying out such orders, including *corvées*, as they were given. (p 97)

The South was, however a place where northerners could find unfamiliar treasures if they wanted to. Judging from the books available in the library of Monte Cassino, for example, southerners had access to classical Latin texts of Varro, Tacitus, Apuleius and Seneca not available or reading the rest of Christendom, but copied because still valued in the South in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. (p 115)

The *Epistola ad Pertum*, written in 1194 by an author who was fundamentally charmed by the beauties of Sicily ... Last of all he treats the splendid city of Palermo itself. The writer claims words are inadequate for this, but cannot restrain his desire to express his admiration: the site itself; the buildings, particularly the royal palace complex, its textile workshops singled out even ahead of the fabulously ornate royal chapel; the three main streets of the city; and finally the abundant fertility of the cultivated area round it, its irrigation-wheels, **vines**, **vegetables**, **fruit trees**, **sugar-canes**, and **date-palms**. (p 121-122)

The community's concern for traditional rights to pasture extended to the forest (but not to fell timber); they could keep what was hunted, provided a quarter of the **bears**, **pigs** and **stags** taken was offered to the lord (*curia*). (p 132)

The rural interests of citizens received further protection from royal officials in 1243 over an ancient right to cut canes in the **sugar plantations** for use in their vineyards and pasture for their tamed bulls, providing they were properly attended, did not come in droves (*in armentum*) and no hunting was done. (p 139)

When the abbot of Cassino made concessions 1162 to encourage men to return to the abandoned *casale* of *Castellione* near Troia, he expected to be able to coax knights by offering to relax all the dues for one year, except the tithes on fields, **vines**, **gardens**, **olives**, **pigs**, **flocks**, **lambs**, wool and **cheese**; ... (p 157)

Enquiries in 1249 into the value of *casalia* revealed at Santa Lucia in Sicily that, of 118 families, sixty-eight had no oxen and did two days' service a year, one at sowing and one a harvest. ... On the estate of Sinagra, about twenty miles away however ... The tenantry here did heavier services than those at Santa Lucia; they paid dues in cash as well as **hens** and **eggs** and other renders in kind. (p 158-159)

As an example of the diversity of his resources before becoming king consider the charter issued by Roger II for the Greek monastery of Agrò in 1115. To relieve its poverty he made a gift of money from his treasure, authorised an official declaration of the lawful bounds of the property, made concessions over rights to pasture, fields both ploughed and unploughed, **fruit-bearing trees** and others, flowing water for building mills and industrial machinery, and over the services and payments of the men on the monastery's vill (including tithes of their **goats** and **pigs**), concerning exemptions for these men from the duty of carrying wood for building walls and fortresses. He gave eight barrels of **tunny fish** a year from the Olivery fishery, one boat free from all dues in all Sicilian ports and from tolls in Messina, free pasture for animals in the territories of Taormina and Troina, pannage for 100 **pigs** in a specified region and a site for building a mill. (p 234)

On the mainland, the position was not different... Roger confirmed to the church of Troia the tithe of his revenues there in the same terms as his uncle Guiscard had given them nearly fifty years earlier in 1081, specifying the nature of his receipts. The dukes of Apulia obtained corn, **barley** and **wine** from their cultivated lands; livestock – mares, **cows**, **pigs**, **sheep**, **lambs** – and animal by-products such as wool and **cheese**; renders from mills (as dues or as flour)... (p 235)