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Drinks

Weak Honey Drink

(More commonly called Small Mead)

Digby p. 107/147

Take nine pints of warm fountain water, and dissolve in it one pint of pure White-honey, by laving it therein, till it be dissolved. Then boil it gently, skimming it all the while, till all the scum be perfectly scummed off; and after that boil it a little longer, peradventure a quarter of an hour. In all it will require two or three hours boiling, so that at last one third part may be consumed. About a quarter of an hour before you cease boiling, and take it from the fire, put to it a little spoonful of cleansed and sliced Ginger; and almost half as much of the thin yellow rind of Orange, when you are even ready to take it from the fire, so as the Orange boil only one walm in it. Then pour it into a well-glased strong deep great Gally-pot, and let it stand so, till it be almost cold, that it be scarce Luke-warm. Then put to it a little silver-spoonful of pure Ale-yeast, and work it together with a Ladle to make it ferment: as soon as it beginneth to do so, cover it close with a fit cover, and put a thick dubbled woollen cloth about it. Cast all things so that this may be done when you are going to bed. Next morning when you rise, you will find the barm gathered all together in the middle; scum it clean off with a silver-spoon and a feather, and bottle up the Liquor, stopping it very close. It will be ready to drink in two or three days; but it will keep well a month or two. It will be from the first very quick and pleasant.

11 pints water

1 T peeled, sliced fresh ginger (~1/4 oz)

1/2 t yeast

1 pint honey = 1 1/2 lb

1/2 T orange peel

Dissolve the honey in the water in a large pot and bring to a boil. Let it boil down to 2/3 the original volume (8 pints), skimming periodically. This will take about 2 1/2 to 3 hours; by the end it should be clear. About 15 minutes before it is done, add the ginger. At the end, add the orange peel, let it boil a minute or so, and remove from the heat. The orange peel should be the yellow part only, not the white; a potato peeler works well to get off the peel. Let the mead cool to lukewarm, then add the yeast. The original recipe appears to use a top fermenting ale yeast, but dried bread yeast works. Cover and let sit 24-36 hours. Bottle it, using sturdy bottles; the fermentation builds up considerable pressure. Refrigerate after three or four days. Beware of exploding bottles. The mead will be drinkable in a week, but better if you leave it longer.

This recipe is modified from the original by reducing the proportion of honey and lengthening the time of fermentation before bottling. Both changes are intended to reduce the incidence of broken bottles. Using 2 liter plastic soda bottles is unaesthetic, but they are safer than glass.

Sekanjabin

Dissolve 4 cups sugar in 2 1/2 cups of water; when it comes to a boil add 1 cup wine vinegar. Simmer 1/2 hour. Add a handful of mint, remove from fire, let cool. Dilute the resulting syrup to taste with ice water (5 to 10 parts water to 1 part syrup). The syrup stores without refrigeration.

Note: This is the only recipe in the *Miscellany* that is based on a modern source: *A Book of Middle Eastern Food*, by Claudia Roden. Sekanjabin is a period drink; it is mentioned in the *Fihrist* of al-Nadim, which was written in the tenth century. The only period recipe I have found for it (in the Andalusian cookbook) is called "Sekanjabin Simple" and omits the mint. It is one of a large variety of similar drinks described in that cookbook-flavored syrups intended to be diluted in either hot or cold water before drinking.

Syrup of Simple *Sikanjabîn*

(Oxymel)

Andalusian p. A-74

Take a ratl of strong vinegar and mix it with two ratls of sugar, and cook all this until it takes the form of a syrup. Drink an ûqiya of this with three of hot water when fasting: it is beneficial for fevers of jaundice, and calms jaundice and cuts the thirst, since sikanjabîn syrup is beneficial in phlegmatic fevers: make it with six ûqiyas of sour vinegar for a ratl of honey and it is admirable.

This seems to be at least two different recipes, for two different medical uses. The first, at least, is intended to be drunk hot. In modern Iranian restaurants, sekanjabin is normally served cold, often with grated cucumber.

Syrup of Pomegranates

Andalusian p. A-74

Take a ratl of sour pomegranates and another of sweet pomegranates, and add their juice to two ratls of sugar, cook all this until it takes the consistency of syrup, and keep until needed. Its benefits: it is useful for fevers, and cuts the thirst, it benefits bilious fevers and lightens the body gently.

Use equal volumes of sugar and pomegranate juice (found in some health food stores). Cook them down to a thick syrup, in which form they will keep, without refrigeration, for a very long time. To serve, dilute one part of syrup in 3 to 6 parts of hot water (to taste).

Syrup of Lemon

Andalusian p. 279 (trans DF)

Take lemon, after peeling its outer skin, press it and take a ratl of juice, and add as much of sugar. Cook it until it takes the form of a syrup. Its advantages are for the heat of bile; it cuts the thirst and binds the bowels.

This we also serve as a strong, hot drink. Alternatively, dilute it in cold water and you have thirteenth century lemonade. All three of the original recipes include comments on medical uses of the syrups.

Hippocras

Goodman p. 299/28

To make powdered hippocras, take a quarter of very fine cinnamon selected by tasting it, and half a quarter of fine flour of cinnamon, an ounce of selected string ginger, fine and white, and an ounce of grain of Paradise, a sixth of nutmegs and galingale together, and bray them all together. And when you would make your hippocras, take a good half ounce of this powder and two quarters of sugar and mix them with a quart of wine, by Paris measure. And note that the powder and the sugar mixed together is the Duke's powder.

4 oz stick cinnamon

2 oz powdered cinnamon

"A sixth" (probably of a pound-2 2/3 ounces) of nutmegs and galingale together

1 oz of ginger

1 oz of grains of paradise

Grind them all together. To make hippocras add 1/2 ounce of the powder and 1/2 lb (1 cup) of sugar to a 2 quarts of boiling wine (the quart used to measure wine in Paris c. 1393 was about 2 modern U.S. quarts, the pound and ounce about the same as ours). Strain through a sleeve of Hippocrates (a tube of cloth, closed at one end).

Webbed by Gregory Blount of Isenfir