

ADMIN Tim00:01

Well, hello everyone and thank you for coming to the chatroom this evening/morning! Tonight we have Riognach (Rhi for short) who is an expert on Tudor and medieval spices. She is also a "medievalist" who tries to recreate history in the modern day. Please feel free to say hello and ask your questions...

Lorna Wanstall00:01

Tis a good place to be, we have a lot of fun, and everyone is very friendly.

Riognach O'Geraghty00:01

Hello Everyone!

Roland Hui00:02

What was perhaps considered the 'rarest' spice back then as it was really hard to obtain in Europe?

Lorna Wanstall00:02

Were spices such as saffron used Rhi?

Dawn Hatswell00:03

When I was listening to the video and the blood and sugar treat came up, and I would think most folk would be grossed out by that, but how many of those eat black pudding, lol. That's as old as the hills I believe, ever since man slaughtered animals they have used the blood as food..

Riognach O'Geraghty00:04

Hi Roland. I believe that there were a few spices that would fit into that category: saffron, cloves and black pepper in particular. Certainly saffron and black pepper were considered to be worth more than their weight in gold.

Dawn Hatswell 00:05

Saffron is still there most expensive isn't it

Riognach O'Geraghty00:05

Hi Lorna. Yes saffron was used to colour both sweet and savory foods. Owing to its price it only ever really appeared on the tables of the ruling monarch and the very rich.

Roland Hui00:06

It's interesting how we take our spices for granted nowadays. Medieval food must've been so bland without any seasonings.

Camille Green00:06

what about cinnamon?

Lorna Wanstall00:06

There were 4 spices that were considered quite rare, Cubeb, Mastic, Spikenard, and Sumac.

Roland Hui00:06

I read that spices also served to disguise the smell of meal starting to spoil? True?

Michelle Nasello00:07

Hello everyone, were many spices used in medicine? Are any of the treatments still useful today?

Lorna Wanstall00:07

Ronald, actually medieval food was heavily spiced,

Riognach O'Geraghty00:07

Blood and sugar does gross many people out. Not something that usually makes its way into medieval reenactment feasts, for some odd reason 🤔

Dawn Hatswell00:07

Is it Tue that if you had a Nutmeg to sell you could live out your life in comfort?

ADMIN Tim00:07

Sumac... nasty stuff! Not heard of Cubeb or Mastic.

Riognach O'Geraghty00:08

HI, Roland. I know what you mean. However, I've come across some recipes that use spice in incredibly odd combinations, often with a truly disgusting result.

ADMIN Tim00:09

Certainly, all the things that Claire has cooked from Tudor recipes are very flavoursome. Quite strong tasting.

Michelle Nasello00:09

Lorna, what would those rare spices be used for?

Doc Clark00:09

Cubeb is a variety of pepper; mastic is one of the aromatic gums like asafoetida

Dawn Hatswell00:09

Sumac. A very invasive shrubtree are you ha ing pro s with it Tim haha

Lorna Wanstall00:10

Hello Doc, haven't seen you for a while, how are you?

ADMIN Tim00:10

@dawn. Yes. Impossible to get rid of in our garden.

Claire Ridgway00:10

The recipes I've used have tended to have cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and cloves in.

Riognach O'Geraghty00:10

I've succeeded in finding Mastic (gum mastic), cubebs and sumac here in Oz, nut spikenard still evades me. Interesting that sumac is considered an endemic weed in its native homes.

Doc Clark00:10

busy...trying to get the bio written and all that...

Claire Ridgway00:11

Sumac is the bane of our life!

Doc Clark00:11

What part of the sumac plant was used as a spice?

ADMIN Tim00:12

I can't even stand the smell of sumac now. It really is horrible stuff.

Camille Green00:12

I was wondering too....I have only heard it referred to as poison sumac

Doc Clark00:12

so sumac must be a seed plant in Spain...

Doc Clark00:12

sorry Weed plant in Spain

Riognach O'Geraghty00:12

Roland, I have heard conflicting stories that spices were used to disguise off meats. Not overly sure which one is right, however I can easily believe that they would fulfil that role very effectively.

Lorna Wanstall00:13

Sumac is supposed to have a acidic taste and is used to flavour meat or fish so I believe

ADMIN Tim00:13

Don't get me started. Seeds, tubers underground. It is invincible. Enough 🤔

Dawn Hatswell00:13

All out winter/ Xmas baking is full of cloves cinnamon etc, a part from the sugardo these spices have preserving properties?

Lorna Wanstall00:13

Tim In other words, they are triffids..

ADMIN Tim00:13

I think poison sumac is something else.

ADMIN Tim00:13

I think poison sumac is something else.

ADMIN Tim00:14

@dawn, yes ... good question. What was used for preserving?

Riognach O'Geraghty00:14

Actually Roland, just thinking on that subject. In the modern context, some meats that are hung (esp game) are often heavily spiced when cooked

Doc Clark00:14

salt and sugar were the two biggies for preserving

Lorna Wanstall00:14

Dinosar knows all about Triffids, he had a lot of fun trying to rid the garden of them..stubborn little blighters they are.

Doc Clark00:15

honey too

Claire Ridgway00:15

I would have said salt too.

Riognach O'Geraghty00:16

Dawn I don't see why not, however, I'd have thought that perhaps mace would have guaranteed comfort given its ratio to the nutmeg proper

Michelle Nasello00:16

Honey, to preserve? Really?

ADMIN Tim00:17

Honey - definitely. It is excellent. Didn't they find it preserving things in the Egyptian tombs.

Claire Ridgway00:17

Honey is good for so many things.

Dawn Hatswell00:17

@ doc yes you are right there I just wondered if any of the spices did do, because weren't certain spices used in embalming too

Michelle Nasello00:17

Learn something new everyday

Lorna Wanstall00:17

Although salting the meat was a good idea, when you started to get further into the barrel the meat had started to go off.

Doc Clark00:17

like all sugars, honey is really good but you need to store it such that it can't be attacked by molds

Dawn Hatswell00:18

It never goes off apparently honey Claire, and full of antibiotics too

ADMIN Tim00:18

And what was the main source of Tudor sugar ... they seemed to love it so much, but HVIII didn't have the Americas on his map?

Doc Clark00:18

some of the oleoresins can also preserve but they were too expensive to use for that

Claire Ridgway00:18

I read that cinnamon has preserving properties.

Riognach O'Geraghty00:19

Doc, the berries are used in a spice. Astringent, tangy. I use it as part of my dukkah and za'atar mixes. Works really well with lemon to bring it to life so to speak

Lorna Wanstall00:19

The mummy of a person was usually stuffed with spices, and peppercorns were shoved up a mummy's nose, I suppose this was a way of making sure the nose had some sort of shape. But it was mainly natron that dried the bodies out.

Camille Green00:19

what about lemons and oranges? Did they have those ?

Doc Clark00:19

sugar came from the middle east

Michelle Nasello00:19

What about mulled wine, which were spiced and Were ales spiced

Rioghnaich O'Geraghty00:20

Honey is truly magical stuff

Doc Clark00:20

in the high gothic, one of the crusaders' big cash cows was sugar

Dawn Hatswell00:20

@ Tim I heard about the tombs and honey, and that it was as fresh as it was when put in there...I will take their word on that lol

ADMIN Tim00:20

Middle east for sugar ... but what is the source? Not sugar beet from there ... nor cane?

Doc Clark00:21

cane sugar, no kidding

Claire Ridgway00:21

@Tim, from sugar cane in southern Spain and Venice apparently.

Rioghnaich O'Geraghty00:21

Coriander, mastic, especially in embalming. Potentially any of the spices that are resinous in nature. Even asafoetida aka devil's Dung

Lorna Wanstall00:21

Dawn, yes they has oranges and lemons, they often stuffed cloves into oranges and used them as an air freshner (Loosely worded)

ADMIN Tim00:21

Thanks @claire

Claire Ridgway00:22

The Moors introduced sugar cane in Spain I believe.

Lorna Wanstall00:22

Molasses I think was used a trading commodity.

Dawn Hatswell00:23

Think you meant Camille there laurna. Lol

Claire Ridgway00:23

Devil's dung? What's that?

Camille Green00:23

what about mint? was it favored by the Tudors?

Riognach O'Geraghty00:23

Excellent question Tim. Medieval and Tudor sugar was in the form of honey and fruits that had been cooked down to a paste ie quince paste and apple butter.

Dawn Hatswell00:24

I make orange pomanders about 20 yr ago and I still have them in my potpourris bowl laurna

Lorna Wanstall00:25

Dawn, that the word "pomanders"

Doc Clark00:25

I've never heard of asafoetida being called devil's dung (learn something new everyday) but it's a oleoresin that comes from the mountains in Afghanistan

Claire Ridgway00:25

Thanks!

Riognach O'Geraghty00:25

Sugar as in cane sugar first makes its appearance during and after the Crusades. Very coarsely refined, often quite treaclely and sticky. Sold as sugar loaves. The rich shaved off the uppermost layers and left the semi-soft centre for everyone else who could afford it.

Lorna Wanstall00:26

was turmeric used?

Lorna Wanstall00:27

Marmalade was made in a loaf like form as well wasn't it? I believe our "enry used to have a fondness for marmalade

Riognach O'Geraghty00:28

Hi, Camille. Citrus was another import from peri and post-Crusades. Had to be grown in things called 'orangeries' - glass enclosures that collected as much sunlight as possible and protect the trees and fruit from frost. Hampton Court Palace had an excellent example of an extant orangery

Camille Green00:29

Thank you

Roland Hui00:29

If the lower classes had access to any sort of spice (because it was cheaper and easier to get) - what would that be?

Doc Clark00:30

the leafy herbs - they can be grown in the garden

Riognach O'Geraghty00:30

Hi, Michelle. Yes, wine, ales, and meads could all be spiced. Wine frequently had sugar added to it. I think this might have led to the inclusion of sugars of lead being used later on in history.

Dawn Hatswell00:31

@ Lorna its a French word for apple of amber, a ball used for perfuming just like Wolsey carried and sniffed, basically an orange studded with cloves in my case

Lorna Wanstall00:31

I think the lower class basically relied on what spice they could grow. plants such as mint or basil etc, exotic spices would be way out of their price range

Doc Clark00:31

oh yum, sugar of lead...nothing like a little lead acetate to soak your brain in...

Lorna Wanstall00:31

Thank you dawn

Riognach O'Geraghty00:31

Devil's Dung is one of the medieval names for asafoetida; one I rather like 🤔

Lorna Wanstall00:32

Yes our "enry was fond of sugered wine

Doc Clark00:32

devel's dung...makes sense given what it smells like...good thing it tastes better than it smells...

Riognach O'Geraghty00:33

Roland; what Doc said. If you could grow it in your garden it was yours: mint, thyme, fennel, dill, onion, leeks, garlicks

Dawn Hatswell00:34

Mine you the wine was a little sour/vinegar like by all accounts..if you could afford the sugar can't fault him really

Riognach O'Geraghty00:34

@ Doc, agreed!

Doc Clark00:34

don't forget horseradish, the poor man's pepper

Michelle Nasello00:34

Were there any health issues from ingesting so many spices everyday?

Lorna Wanstall00:35

There are a lot of things I can find fault with about our "enry" breathing is one of them.

Doc Clark00:35

though I have no idea if you can grow horseradish in colder climes

Laurie has joined the channel

Dawn Hatswell00:35

Angelica? That the same family isn't it

Riognach O'Geraghty00:36

@ Dawn, there was a series on TV here in Oz where the presenter attempted to recreate wine from different periods. Romans and Tudors seemed to have a thing for very sweet and spiced wine. I believe because the initial results were so bad.

Michelle Nasello00:36

I believe it can grow here in Canada, horseradish.

Dawn Hatswell00:37

@doc , yes you can, I grow mine in a large pot because its rampant like Sumac Tree, lol.

Doc Clark00:37

hmmm...you must not live in Yellowknife, Michelle 🤔

ADMIN Tim00:37

I'm sure horseradish grows in the wild in the UK.

Lorna Wanstall00:37

I can't remember the name of it, but I believe there is a plant, that looks and tastes like horseradish, but can cause serious illness when it is eaten.

ADMIN Tim00:38

Yes... I suppose we should have a health warning on this chat ... please consult with an expert before picking and eating wild things. There you go.

Riognach O'Geraghty00:38

@Michelle, I'm not sure on that, but I'd have thought so. We all know the results of too much pepper, ginger etc on the stomach etc. Think of the morning-after-the-curry-the-night-before

Michelle Nasello00:38

@Doc, no I live in southern Ontario, outside of Toronto.

Doc Clark00:38

Rio, what can you tell me about grains of paradise? I've seen it in a couple of medieval cook books

Doc Clark00:39

@Michelle, only 12 hours away from me in northern Maine

Riognach O'Geraghty00:39

Has anyone here experimented with spices and medieval/Tudor cooking? If so how'd it go?

Michelle Nasello00:39

@Rhi , hehe I bet it was interesting.

Claire Ridgway00:39

I've done a few!

Dawn Hatswell00:39

Well Claire has, haven't you)

Doc Clark00:39

I've actually done a lot of medieval cooking - have been doing the living history thing for years

Doc Clark00:40

my favorite is Platina's armoured turnips

Dawn Hatswell00:40
Yo beat me to it Claire

Claire Ridgway00:41
Ha!

Michelle Nasello00:41
@Doc, I love Maine, so beautiful. I have driven through it many times going to N

Lorna Wanstall00:41
It's all good to use herbs and spices in cooking, and I think a lot of the reason to why some people don't is that they are afraid to experiment.

Riognach O'Geraghty00:41
@Doc, grains of paradise is a member of the pepper family. AKA Malegueta (sp?) pepper, guinea pepper. I've had a lot of difficulty finding it here in OZ, but now many North African shops sell it. My local brewer has even started using it in one of his 'boutique ales"

Teri Fitzgerald00:41
Platina's armoured turnips, sounds interesting 🤔

Michelle Nasello00:41
New Brunswick to see family

Doc Clark00:42
You've then driven very close to where I live, Michelle

Dawn Hatswell00:43
I think Christmas cooking is the closest I have come, but I do cook a lot of what we would call stews, for want of a better word, with fruit added, mace. Etc. Made a lovely homemade pork pie with mace, took and age to find it in the shops though

Riognach O'Geraghty00:43
@Doc I've not come across armoured turnips. Do tell....

ADMIN Tim00:43
There is a "meetups" section in the forum, if you want to organise get-togethers..

Doc Clark00:44
Armoured turnips: boil turnips (the white ones, not the rutagegas), slice. Put a layer down of turnip. cover with butter, ginger, cinnamon, pepper, cheese. repeat the layering at least three times, then bake.

Michelle Nasello00:44
Sorry Tim, thanks for the info

Teri Fitzgerald00:44
@Doc, that sounds delicious.

Michelle Nasello00:44
@Doc sounds delicious, making notes

Lorna Wanstall00:45

One of the things I hae found is if I have a mug of warm milk with cinnamon in it, I sleep like a log.

Doc Clark00:45

It's kinda like apple pie but with veggies. First time i made it, I fed it to my undergrad wage-slaves at my lab and they all told me I needed more sugar in the apple pie

Dawn Hatswell00:45

Do you use Mace Ri, being as it is the outer shell of the nutmeg?

ADMIN Tim00:46

Is that what mace is? You learn something new every day!

Claire Ridgway00:46

@Lorna, turmeric in warm milk with cinnamon is good.

Rioghnaich O'Geraghty00:46

Speaking of turnips and the like, my first disaster in the medieval kitchen was neeps (I used parsnips) with Poudre Douce (sugar, cinnamon, ginger, cardamon, and cinnamon) with added black pepper and beef stock, in a 'coffin of fine paste' - so a pie in other words. Absolutely foul!! Not one to 'cook until done and serve it forth'!!!! 🤢

Dawn Hatswell00:46

@ doc Lol...

Doc Clark00:46

more detailed armoured turnips

at <http://gallowglass.org/jadwiga/SCA/cooking/recipes/armoredturnips.html>

Lorna Wanstall00:46

Have to give that one a try Claire.

Teri Fitzgerald00:47

@Lorna, hot milk with powdered cloves and honey does it for me.

Camille Green00:47

I think that sounds good, Teri!

Lorna Wanstall00:48

I do love Honey I must admit.

Dawn Hatswell00:48

Be mashing the ol' neeps this week coming with a bit of nutmeg for Burns Night

Rioghnaich O'Geraghty00:48

@ Dawn and Tim, mace is the 'flower' of the nutmeg; a beautiful thin red lacy layer. has a completely different aroma and taste to the nutmeg proper. Bought some powdered mace yesterday - AUD\$65 for 1Kg 🤢

Teri Fitzgerald00:48

@Camille 😊

Lorna Wanstall00:49

Dawn don't forget the haggis, with a wee dram, and make sure you only cut the haggis with a claymore.

Michelle Nasello00:49

Cloves and hot milk? My Mom used cloves in the ham sometimes. Never had it in milk, must try

Claire Ridgway00:49

Have a great Burns Night Dawn!

Teri Fitzgerald00:49

@Lorna 😡

Riognach O'Geraghty00:50

I love the difference between mace and nutmeg. A lot like the difference between Cassia and Cinnamon (different trees), and green and brown cardamoms.

Dawn Hatswell00:50

Thanks Ri, it does have a completely difference taste , but not easy to find locally here

ADMIN Tim00:50

Ten minutes to go ... keep your questions coming in!

Doc Clark00:51

there are two different cardamoms???

Teri Fitzgerald00:51

@Riognach, I'll be giving mace a miss then, ouch!

Riognach O'Geraghty00:51

@ Dawn I think we're seeing a reflection of the sort of prices paid for spices in the past, in the modern day

Dawn Hatswell00:52

NEVER forget the WEE dram Lorna and one for the Haggis itself, and in the sauce, and the PhD...HIC!!!

Dawn Hatswell00:53

Meant PhD..not PhD...too many drams ha

Teri Fitzgerald00:53

@Michelle, hot milk with nutmeg and honey is just as good.

Dawn Hatswell00:53

PUD!! for crying out loud

Michelle Nasello00:53

I guess they used spices and dried items to scent the home as well?

Doc Clark00:54
don't you mean FUD?

Lorna Wanstall00:54
was Garlic widely used in cooking

Dawn Hatswell00:55
Pudding...DON'T use the word Fud in Scotland doc...its a very rude word!! Hahaha

Camille Green00:55
I read in a novel that the Tudors kept bowls of potpourri in their homes, to freshen the air.....true?

Riognach O'Geraghty00:55
@Doc strictly speaking green cardamom (elettaria cardamomum) is not related to brown cardamom (amomum subluatum), aka poor man's cardamon. Where green is light, spicy and zingy, brown is dark and earthy. Indian grocers and the like sell both

Dawn Hatswell00:56
They shrewd the floor with herbs, I know that amongst the reeds on the floor to keep away vermin, fleas and freshen the air Camille

Lorna Wanstall00:56
Camille very likely, they also used herbs to sweeten the air, when they cleaned out all the old rushes

Riognach O'Geraghty00:57
@Camille and Michelle; yes and they'd need too. I don't believe that medieval and Tudor houses and cities smelt very good at all. Personal pomanders and nosegays were carried to ward off the stench and the 'bad humours'

Doc Clark00:57
don't forget the flowers as spices and air fresheners

Dawn Hatswell00:57
Great minds Lorna...lol

Lorna Wanstall00:57
things like fleabane were used to try and keep the fleas awa.

Lorna Wanstall00:58
Dawn yes indeed

Doc Clark00:58
I believe there's a recipe for coffin dough in Sabina Welserin that uses rose water for the fluid to make the dough...makes yummy pasties

Riognach O'Geraghty00:58
@Doc I've finally succeeded in growing the original Cambridge Pink from seed - an original medieval flower and the ancestor of the carnation. Beautiful clove scent to it.

ADMIN Tim00:59
I would like to thank everyone for attending this evening. Fun, wasn't it! Thank you Rhi, for your

time and expertise. I am very happy to announce that Rhi has stepped up to be a regular contributor to the Tudor Life magazine. Thank you so much everyone!

Lorna Wanstall00:59

I believe rose petals were used in cookery recipes too

Riognach O'Geraghty00:59

@Doc, agreed that would be nice, but possibly not with parnsips etal!

Doc Clark00:59

Okay, now I'm jealous

Roland Hui00:59

Camille- I read that Cardinal Wolsey kept potpourri spices wrapped in a orange that he held to his nose when he had to travel to smelly places around London.

Dawn Hatswell00:59

Sweet Woodruff was another, t

Doc Clark01:00

and candied violets were a sweet!

Claire Ridgway01:00

Thank you so much Rhi and I can't wait to read your articles.

Doc Clark01:00

Thank you everyone!

Dawn Hatswell01:00

Got a recipe for rose petal jam!! Not sure how old that is though

Dawn Hatswell01:00

Got a recipe for rose petal jam!! Not sure how old that is though

ADMIN Tim01:01

This chatroom software works well .. everyone get on with it OK_

Riognach O'Geraghty01:01

So much history is kept alive by what we do now. Tansy by the door to keep the flies away; fleabane in the cat's bed to help protect against fleas; wormwood in absinthe; grains of paradise in gin etc

ADMIN Tim01:01

?

Michelle Nasello01:01

Wonderful chat and very interesting. Thanks to Riognach, Claire and Tim for you time. Goodnight everyone

Teri Fitzgerald01:01

@Dawn, that sounds delicious.

Lorna Wanstall01:01

Thank Rhi, please feel free to drop into our forum and make a comment on any post that tickles you fancy..

Dawn Hatswell01:01

Good night michelle

Michelle Nasello01:01

it works better now, no lag on the refresh

Riognach O'Geraghty01:02

@Clarie and Tim, thank you both very much for the opportunity to contribute.

Dawn Hatswell01:02

Yep, cracking Tim, well impressed..

Michelle Nasello01:02

@Dawn, good night

Teri Fitzgerald01:02

Thanks Riognach, Claire and Tim. Good night everyone!

ADMIN Tim01:02

Thank you Michelle for the feedback. I agree. Much more responsive. And thanks again Rhi!

Riognach O'Geraghty01:02

@Lorna - thanks for the invite, shall do

Claire Ridgway01:02

Good night everyone! Thank you for coming!

ADMIN Tim01:03

We're off now. Thanks all!