

The Aerie



The influences of the planet Venus; from the block-book *The Planets*, Hiedelberg, 1470-75.

JUNE A.S. LIII (2018)

Cum An Iolair Calendar
(Events in bold are local)

June 2018

- 1** Shire Meeting: St. Thomas the Apostle 12251 Antioch Rd.-7pm
- 9-17** Lilies War—Calontir (Smithville Lake, MO)
- 15** Cook's Guild 7:30 at Marguerite's 7216 Cottonwood Shawnee, KS **Note: This is a new addition**
- 23** Swords for St. Jude—Theobald College (Arkansas City, KS)
- 30** Merchants in Venice—Axed Root (Ames, IA)

July 2018

- 4** Shire 4th of July Party at St. Thomas
- 6** Shire Meeting: St. Thomas the Apostle 12251 Antioch Rd.-7pm
- 7** Regional War Practice—Flinthyll (Burlington, IA)
- 13** Cook's Guild 7:30 at Marguerite's 7216 Cottonwood Shawnee, KS
- 14** Summer Coronation—Lonely Tower (Omaha, NE)
- 20** Shire Meeting: St. Thomas the Apostle 12251 Antioch Rd.-7 pm
- 21** CalonCon—Forgotten Sea (Belton, MO)
- 28** **Feast of Eagles**—Cum an Iolair (S. Johnson County, KS)
Summer Slaughter—Coeur d'Ennui (Des Moines, IA)

August 2018

- 3** Shire Meeting: St. Thomas the Apostle 12251 Antioch Rd.-7pm
- 4-12** Pennsic—Aethelmarc (Slippery Rock, PA)
- 10** Cook's Guild 7:30 at Marguerite's 7216 Cottonwood Shawnee, KS
- 11** Regional Fighter Practice—Crystal Mynes (Joplin, MO)
- 17** Shire Meeting: St. Thomas the Apostle 12251 Antioch Rd.-7 pm

- 18** Heraldshill Annual Event—Heraldshill (Charles City, IA)
- Masters of the Duel—Oakheart (Springfield, MO)
- 25** Cattle Raids—Mag Mor (Lincoln, NE)

Shire Birthday List

June

- 13 Briana Etain MacKorkhill

July

- 23 Marguerite des Baux

August

- 12 Dunstan Godricson
- 24 Garsiyya al-Andalusi

Note from Chronicler

We need articles, book reviews and event reports for *The Aerie*. Please submit those by the 25th of each month to chronicler@shireofcai.org. It would be especially helpful if people wrote event reviews. It is so simple to write them since you go to events already. We are having a Cook's Guild meeting in June after all. Also, we are doing a 4th of July party at St. Thomas. I think we are starting to cook at 1 pm. There are many jobs that need to be done a Feast of Eagles. Please consider volunteering for one of them. We need people to sit at gate, sell sodas, help cook, serve and help with fighting. Hope to see you at this fun event!

Letter from the Cook's Guild

by HL Fiona nic Gormliatha
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Cook's Guild meets the second Friday of every month at Her Excellency Marguerite's (7216 Cottonwood, Shawnee, KS) give her a call at (913) 268-0416 for directions.

We were using recipes from "The Culinary Heritage of Lebanon" by Chef Ramuzi (English Edition 2006); to celebrate summer with warm weather foods. We had two entrees of sorts, Chicken in Tahineh Sauce (for those not into Middle Eastern cooking tahini or tahineh is sesame seed butter) is the first we will cover. Start with 1 3 lb. Chicken, bones & cut into pieces, 3 Tbs. Minced onion, 2 tsp. Minced garlic & 1 C. cooked peeled chickpeas (take some out of the can & rub off the transparent covering); heat 2 Tbs. Vegetable oil over medium heat & add the onions, garlic & chicken & finally the chickpeas. When it starts sticking to the bottom of the pan, deglaze with 3 Tbs. Lemon juice, after 15 mins. Mix in 2 C. tahini, bring to a boil over medium heat & then add 1 C. orange juice (Seville oranges if you can), or the orange juice can be whisked into the tahini & added to the chicken. Lower the heat & simmer half an hour to "bind the sauce" (love the way the recipes are written!). Serve it forth. We rather liked this way of having chicken, the sauce was velvety, & the chicken was very tender. Next was Lamb with Yogurt Sauce: Have ready 12 small whole onions, 1 lb. Each lamb shoulder or legs, cubed & lamb bones: put the bones on to roast in the oven. Meanwhile heat 4 Tbs. Vegetable oil in a stewpot & brown the 12 small onions (we just cut up an onion & sauteed it), then replace with the lamb &

Our Daily Bread
An Essay on food & Work in the Middle Ages

by HL Fiona nic Gormliatha
(Used with permission)

brown likewise. Add back the onions & the roasted bones, & cover all with water, when the liquid comes to a boil, skim the surface repeatedly & add your spices: 3 cinnamon sticks & bay leaves, & 1 Tbs. Whole cloves used to stud an onion—as soon as this onion is cooked through, strain the broth (reserving it of course!) & put the lamb (take out the bones!) & onions back in a pot & cover with 2 lbs. plain yogurt (made with goats milk if you can find it), that has been mixed with 1 Tbs. Crushed garlic, 2 Tbs. Starch (we used rice flour instead, more period) that has been dissolved in a cup of broth; & 2 egg whites, heat until yogurt thickens into a sauce & serve with rice. The yogurts sort of takes the gamy taste out of the lamb & makes it fork tender, Yum!

For a side dish, there was Fried Spinach with chickpeas: Take 2 lbs. Spinach & if it is not baby spinach, cut off the stems & cook them in boiling water for 10 minutes longer than the rest of the chopped spinach. When all is cooked, strain & squeeze out all water, then heat 3 Tbs. Vegetable or olive oil in a skillet & fry 3 Tbs. Sliced onion & 2 tsp. Crushed garlic until the onions are translucent. Add 1 C. cooked chickpeas (or one can, with skins rubbed off), the spinach, salt, cumin & cinnamon to taste, mix well & cook for 10 minutes, then drizzle with ½ C. lemon juice (or vinegar) mix well & simmer for another 5 minutes. Serve hot or cold, one can also garnish the dish with caramelized onions & lemon slices. This is a pretty good side dish, very tasty!

Another side dish is brown lentils & rice: start by rinsing, draining & boiling 2 C. lentils until tender (save the cook water!), soak 1 C. rice for 30 minutes, then drain. Heat ½ C. olive oil in a pot over medium heat, then stir in rice until it is completely coated with oil. Add the lentils & 4 C. of their cooking water to cover all & simmer with the lid on. Meanwhile heat 1 C. (seems like a lot!) & fry 1 C. sliced onion until translucent, stir in a little of the lentil's cooking water & then pour over the simmering rice & lentils. Continue simmering until the liquid is absorbed, garnish with caramelized onions. This is a very good way to have lentils, the onions really make the dish.

And finally, dessert: Semolina Cake: Semolina is better known here in the US as farina or “Cream of Wheat”, have ready 6 C. (about 1 standard sized box) of Cream of Wheat, take 1 cup of it & process in a blender until it is fine, then mix with 2 tsp. Baking powder, 2 C. melted butter & the other 5 C. of semolina. Then take other 2 ½ C. water—if using water dissolve 2 C. sugar in it before mixing with the semolina if using yogurt instead of water, just mix it & the sugar on in the batter. Prepare a 12 inch pan by spreading the bottom & sides with 2 tsp. tahini, then pour in the batter, & garnish the surface with 1 C. blanched, peeled almonds. Bake at 380o 30-45 minutes. Have ready 3 C. syrup (3 C. sugar or 1 ½ C. each sugar & honey mixed with 1 ½ C. water & cook to a simple syrup—flavor with rosewater, orange flower water or almond extract if desired) & pour over the cake. Let cool, cut into squares & serve. This is a pretty good cake, a bit dense, but the honey/sugar mix makes it really tasty, but not too sweet.

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Nowadays we take for granted that we can just go out & buy us some bread, something to put on it. (maybe cheese, maybe butter), some veggies to have with maybe some meat & something to wash it down with—wine, beer, other. But in the Middle Ages, this was achieved with all sorts of back breaking work that we have forgotten, so come with me to see what the common people of those times went through to eat a simple meal; starting with bread.

It is believed that cultivating grain began in the stone age, when hunter-gatherer tribes would thank the spirits of the place where they had gathered good grains by scattering the grains they liked on the bare ground as they left to move to a place with more game & food to gather. They would of course, return to find the grains growing & that is how farming began!

Work to grow grain in medieval times started in April, once manure & marl (a sand, clay or silt loaded with calcium carbonate-shells, basically) had been worked in to amend the soil. This was usually done by plowing, before 900 C.E. (Current Era), an ard, or “scratch” plow was used, which was great for already fertile places like the Nile Valley or other floodplain areas, but not so much for others. It also left an unplowed strip of land next to each furrow, so once a field was plowed vertically, it was often plowed horizontally! After 900 C.E. came the invention of the iron moldboard plow that had a sort of shelf that flipped the soil over so that you had a deeper furrow that would bring up better soil & protect the seed & hold water better. And you only had to plow the field once! By the way, this is how the acre measure got started, it was the amount of land one man with a yoke of oxen (or horses, or mules) could plow in one day. An acre of grain can feed a family of four for 10 years with bread—if everything goes well!

Once plowed, the seed would be planted—if grains, it would be broadcast, the classic pose of a farmer with a bag of grain over one shoulder tossing the grain into the furrows with his wife behind with a hoe to cover it over. Sometimes, herd animals with small hooves, like goats or sheep were driven across the field to set the seed. It is said that 4 seeds might yield 1 stalk of wheat—1 falls on stone or barren ground, 1 for the birds, 1 to rot & 1 to grow! Other crops like peas or beans would be dibbled into the ground with a pointy stick. Then the fields must be protected from birds or grass-eaters, (or trampling) weeds must be hoed—until ripening & harvest time in August, (July was called the hungry month, while waiting for the new grain). Wheat was usually cut with a sickle two hand hand spans below the head of grain, to leave a long stubble that was used for weaving, thatching or in stables as bedding for the herd beasts.

The wheat was often tied into bundles called sheaves, then stored head inward in stacks protected by a tarp or small roof—usually lifted off the ground by 4-6 toadstool like legs, to keep out the mice (I saw them all over in Ireland, I have a picture of one with a cat under it, waiting for dinner!). Usually the Church required a tithing of one out of every ten sheaves of wheat & the lord of the manor got a portion of the harvest as well, depending on whether the tenant was serf or freedman. Celts by the way, really appreciated cats, one Welsh king made a law that anyone that killed a cat had to pay a fine that underlined its value, the

dead cat was suspended by its tail & covered with grain to the very tip of its tail, to show what it would have saved from mice, if alive!

Other grains were used of course, rye, barley (beer!), oats, millet (mostly in Africa & Asia), but wheat (also called “corn”) was king.

Once harvest was over, grain processing began. There would be people going into the fields after harvest to glean them of any leftover grain they could use, then the herds might be allowed into to feed.

Then it was time to thresh the grain, it was put on hard ground or stone (the threshing floor) & beaten with a pair of sticks that were linked together with thongs, called flails, to get the grain off the head & shell the grains. Other methods were used to thresh grain, driving sheep or oxen over it, as in the Biblical proverb to “not muzzle the ox that threshes the grain”. There was usually a board at the doorway to the threshing floor meant to hold the grain in to be processed, it was called the threshold, and since the house was the center of the home it became attached to all doorways. The custom of carrying the bride over the threshold was once an indication that the husband could afford to feed his wife & children.

Then the grain would be winnowed to remove the chaff, one would choose a day that was moderately breezy & the grain would either be tossed up in the air or sprinkled from one basket to another so the lighter chaff would be carried away by the wind. Then the grain would be stored, usually in some rodent-proof room, stone, hardwood maybe—in ancient times in the chalk Downs of England they would carve bins into the chalk, store the grain & place another slab of chalk over it to keep it safe.

Now the grain is waiting to be ground & made into bread. & there were several ways that grain could be ground, the most ancient way was between two more or less flat stones. Sort of mortar (bowl-shaped rock) & pestle (round rock that could be comfortably held in the hand), at first. Over time, this design was refined by drilling a hole in center of the top stone to pour the grain into (rather than lifting said stone top, scoop up the ground grain & add more to grind) & enclosing the whole in a frame or box to keep the stones on top of each other, or the bottom one fixed in place & hold the ground grain, & maybe a sort of groove to allow the finished grain to fall into some sort of collection point. Add a handle of some sort to turn the stones against each other & you have yourself a quern, which was much easier on the knees & shoulders to use than the mortar & pestle sort.

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