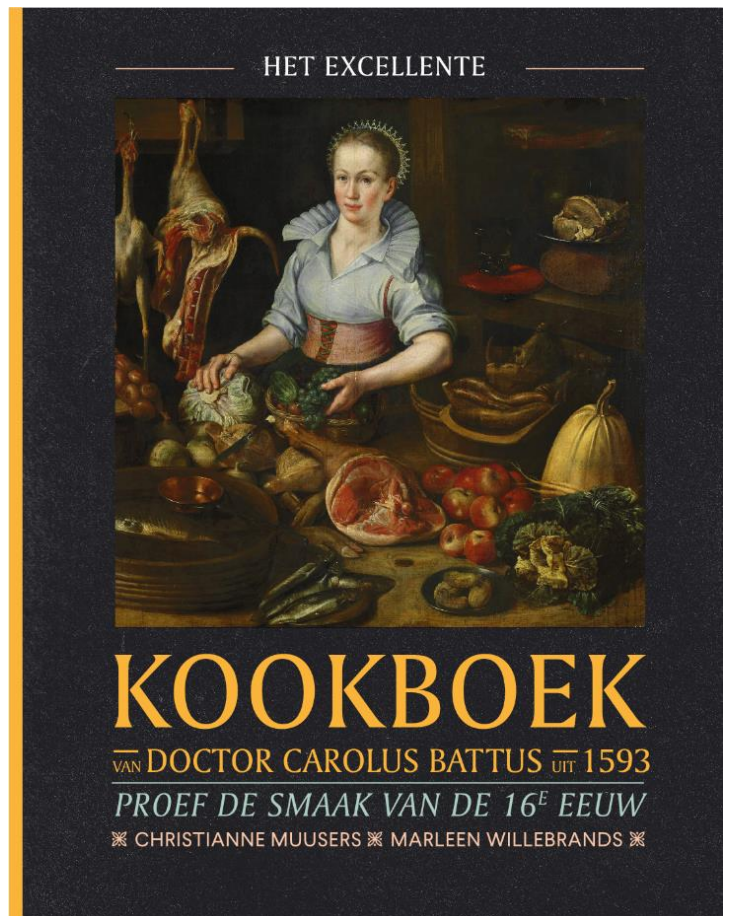


Christmas with Carolus Battus (Dutch, 1593)

I have prepared a simple but festive menu with recipes from *The excellent cookbook* by Carolus Battus, 1593 (ISBN 9789056156497). The Dutch edition of this book was written by Marleen Willebrands and me (Christianne Muusers). Marleen could not contribute to this menu due to other engagements, so I have prepared this feast on my own, which means that any mistakes are also my own.

The edition consists of an introduction on the life of Battus, his works, contemporary views on health and diet, kitchenware, the cuisine of Battus, tableware and table manners (a contribution by Alexandra van Dongen), a facsimile, an edition in modern Dutch with glossary and thirty adapted recipes, richly illustrated and extra special because of the many images that are interlaced with the translation from contemporary botanical and zoological works, and objects from the Museum Boymans van Beuningen where Alexandra is conservator. We hope that an English edition will be possible. Within a month after publication, our book won the Gerrit Komrij-award 2020. This award is for people or organizations that have succeeded in popularizing historical literature.



I present a selection of adapted recipes, plus an example of how to lay the table. The original recipes with an English translation are at the end of this document. Because of my very busy schedule, I have kept the menu simple. The menu has two starters, in the main course there are options for meat, fish and vegetarian, plus a side dish, and two dishes for dessert with two extra dishes. In the edition of *The excellent cookbook* the menu with adapted recipes consists of three 'tables', each with about ten dishes. One of the adapted dishes from the main course in the edition is Battus' version of the white marzipan dish that can be seen in the banner of the Feast Challenge page on FB. I have used a detail with the marzipan dish from this painting by Alonso Sanchez-Coell from 1579 as illustration in the book.



Of course these recipes are meant to be shared and used, but please credit the source of the recipes (*The excellent cookbook* by Carolus Battus) and the adaptor of the recipes (Christianne Muusers). Also, use your own pictures of the feast rather than mine.

One remark: I am Dutch, and here we measure solid ingredients in weight and not in volume.

Moreover, for liquids we use decilitres, not cups. In short: the metric system. I did not have the time to adapt the amounts in the lists of ingredients to imperial or US units.

I would love to hear from you what you think of the menu and the dishes.

Have fun cooking, enjoy the feast!

Christianne Muusers
coquinaria@gmail.com
19 December 2020

The menu

First course

Stewed onions

Veal in saffron sauce

Second course

Quail pie

Salmon with seville oranges

Spinach roll (vegetarian)

Pears of Germolles

Dessert

Quince custard

Buttermilk cheese

Anchovies

Old Dutch cheese

The adapted recipes

First course

Stewed onions

For 4 to 6 persons as a side dish. Prep. time 10 minutes; Cook. time 30 minutes.

500 gr onions
 crust of 2 slices of bread
 4 Tbsp olive oil
 1 dl red wine vinegar
 3,3 dl sweet ale (1 bottle)
 1 Tbsp sugar
 1 tsp powdered ginger
 salt to taste
 1 Tbsp flour

Peel the onions, cut in half lengthwise, and slice them. Cut the bread into small cubes.

Heat the oil in a pan and braise the onions for 15 minutes at very low heat. Add sugar and ginger and raise the heat. Stir-fry until the onions start to caramelize. Sprinkle flour over them and mix well. Then add beer and vinegar and simmer until half of the liquid has vaporized. Taste to see whether salt needs to be added.

Fry the bread cubes separately and sprinkle them on the onions just before serving, so they keep their crispiness.



Veal in saffron sauce

For 4 to 6 persons. Prep. time 2,5 hours; Cook. time 25 minutes.

500 gr veal, cubed
 250 gr chopped carrots, leeks and parsley
 mace leaf, thyme sprigs, crushed pepper corns
 ½ Tbsp salt

The sauce

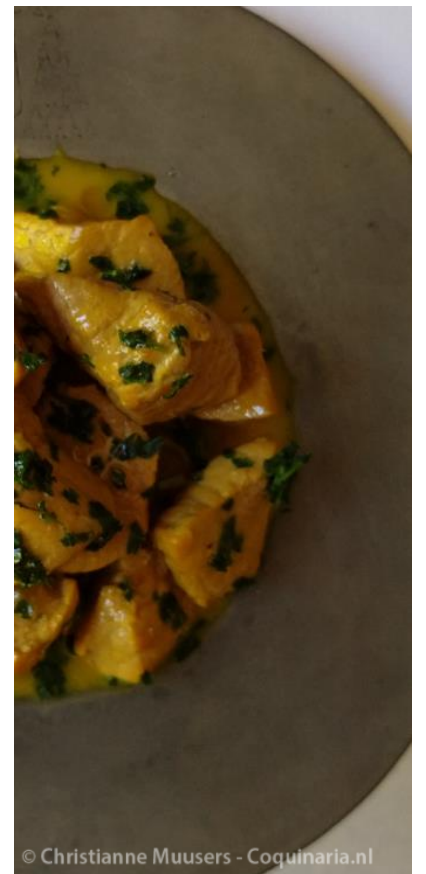
1 dl white wine
 3 slices of white bread without crust
 ¼ tsp saffron powder
 ½ tsp ginger powder
 ½ tsp grains of paradise, powdered
 1 Tbsp verjuice

Finishing touch

parsley

Cook the veal in 1,25 liter water with salt, vegetables and mace, thyme, and pepper. Simmer the veal in a closed pan on low heat for about 2 hours. Take out the meat. Strain the stock and reduce to 5 decilitres.

Now prepare the sauce. Toast the bread light brown. Pour wine and reduced stock in a pan. Bring to the boil, then take off the heat. Add the bread, and



after 5 minutes use a blender to make a smooth sauce. Add the spices for the sauce and the meat and simmer for 15 minutes. Add verjuice just before serving.
Serve the veal in a deep dish, sprinkled with fresh parsley.

Second course

Quail pie

For 4 to 8 persons, a spring mould of 8,5"; Prep. time 40 minutes; Cook. time 80 minutes.

Dough

500 gr flour
10 gr salt
2 Tbsp hot water
¼ tsp powdered saffron
60 gr butter
4 eggs (M)

Filling

4 quails
12 dried prunes
2 Tbsp currants
1 tsp ginger powder
1 tsp cinnamon powder
1 tsp sugar
salt to taste
25 gr marrow, prepared and chopped

Finishing touch

1 egg yolk
2 to 6 Tbsp verjuice



Make dough with the ingredients listed under ‘dough’. It should be a supple elastic dough. Too dry (crumbly): add some water. Too moist (sticky): add flour. Keep at room temperature until use. Or one can use ready-bought pie dough.

Quarter the quails, or debone them. Sprinkle them with ginger, cinnamon, sugar, and salt. Add prunes, currants, and marrow.

Preheat the oven to 200 °C (390 °F). Butter the spring mould. Roll out the dough in two third and one third. Dress the mould with the largest sheet. Fill the mould and cover with the smaller sheet of dough. Baste with some stirred egg yolk and bake in the oven for about 60 minutes. Cover the pie with aluminum foil if the cover is getting too dark.

Take the mould out of the oven, let rest for five minutes and demould the pie. Cut the upper crust around the sides loose, as if opening the lid of a pan (see picture). Sprinkle verjuice over the filling just before serving.

The pie is not to be cut into slices if served in a contemporary manner. Guests take the filling out of the pie with their fingers or a spoon. They can break off some of the crust to eat.

Salmon with Seville oranges

Main dish for 4 persons; Prep. time 20 minutes; Cook. time 10 minutes.

1 or 2 salmon steaks, about 3 cm thick (1¼ " - about 500 gr)
4 Tbsp juice of fresh Seville oranges

1 Tbsp dried peel of Seville oranges
 fine kosher salt
 4 Tbsp white wine
 100 gr butter
 1 tsp ginger powder
 ½ tsp cinnamon powder
 pinch of cinnamon

Heat the wine and add the dried peel. Let this steep for 15 minutes, then blend wine and peel. Put in a wide pan that is large enough to contain the fish, with ginger, cinnamon, and butter. Heat until the butter is just melted, but not brown. Whisk well, then put the salmon in the sauce. Cover the pan, and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes until the salmon is just done. Turn the fish over after 4 minutes.

Pour the sauce in a wide serving dish, and put the salmon slices on it. Sprinkle with some cinnamon and serve.



For a creamy sauce, simmer the salmon in 50 gr butter, keep the remaining butter in the refrigerator. Take the fish out, and whisk the cold butter in small pieces into the sauce. Instead of salmon steak one can use salmon fillets. However, skin and bones give a richer taste.

Spinach roll

Side dish or vegetarian dish for 4 persons. Prep. time 10 minutes; Cook. time 20 minutes.

600 gr spinach, washed
 1 sharp apple, peeled and grated or chopped
 30 gr butter
 3 Tbsp white wine
 1 Tbsp verjuice
 1 tsp sugar
 1 tsp ginger powder

The omelette

3 eggs
 salt and pepper to taste
 1 Tbsp flour (optional)
 15 gr butter

Put the spinach in a pan on the stove. Adding water is hardly needed, the spinach will release a lot of water. When the spinach has gone limp, squeeze out all the water. Chop the spinach and add apple, wine, verjuice, sugar, and ginger. Melt the butter, and add the mixture to the pan. Braise slowly until all liquid has been absorbed by the spinach or evaporated. Put the spinach in a sieve to drain any excess liquid that has remained.

Meanwhile, beat the eggs with salt and pepper, and some flour if desired, and bake a thin omelette with it. A square pan would be ideal, but round is no problem. Take care that the omelette does not turn colour, it must remain bright yellow. When done, spread the spinach evenly over the omelette and roll it up. Let it cool some (preferably packed in plastic foil to firm it up), then cut the roll into slices. In the picture I have added some fried bread cubes in the centre of the dish.



Coloured pears

Side dish for 6 persons. Prep. time 15 minutes; cook. time 80 minutes.



Red, oven-braised pears

6 cooking pears with stalks
 5 dl red wine + 2 extra Tbsp
 15 to 30 gr sugar
 75 gr almond flour
 1 drop bitter almond essence (optional)
 1 to 2 Tbsp wheat starch (or corn starch)

Braise the pears – Do not peel the pears. Wrap the stalks in aluminum foil. Braise them in the oven on 180 °C (355 °F), or in a kettle barbecue until soft (about 1 hour). Pull off the peel when the pears have cooled enough, remove the aluminum foil, and cut a small slice off the bottom end so the pears will stand firmly in the dish.

Make the sauce – Put red wine and almond flour in a pan and bring to the boil. Take off the heat, and let it stand for 20 minutes. Then strain the sauce, pressing the almonds to get as much liquid as possible. Take 3,5 decilitres of this wine and pour it back into the pan. Add sugar to taste, and bitter almond essence if desired. Heat to boiling point. Add starch, prepared with some cold wine, and thicken the sauce. The sauce must be thick enough to adhere to the pears when poured over them.

Yellow, cooked pears

6 cooking pears with stalks
 5 dl white wine + 2 extra Tbsp
 1/8 tsp saffron powder
 15 to 30 gr sugar
 2 Tbsp wheat starch (or corn starch)

Cook te pears – Peel the pears, and cut off a small slice at the bottom. Put the pears in a fitting, high pan so they remain upright. Add enough white wine to cover the pears up to two thirds of their height. The stalks may not touch the wine. Bring to the boil and let simmer on a very low fire, closed with a lid, for about 1 hour. The pears will be soft by then, but not yet started to turn colour. Add the saffron five minutes before turning off the heat. Take the pears out of the wine.

Make the sauce – Take 3,5 decilitres of this wine and pour it back into the pan. Bring to the boil, add sugar to taste. Add starch, prepared with some cold wine, and thicken the sauce. The sauce must be thick enough to adhere to the pears when poured over them.

Serving the red and yellow pears

Place the pears on a plate and scoop the sauces over them, but not over the stalks. On the picture, I have used leaf gold to decorate the stalks. Take the pears one by one and set them on a serving plate. The pears can be served warm or at room temperature.

Third course

Flan in a dish

Dessert for 4 persons. Prep. time 10 minutes; Cook. time 1 hour.

3 eggs
 1½ Tbsp flour
 3,75 dl milk (full fat)
 45 to 60 gr sugar
 ½ tsp cinnamon powder
 butter for greasing the dish
 granulated sugar

Preheat the oven to 150 °C (300 °F). Beat the eggs to a froth with sugar, cinnamon, flour, and milk. Grease a wide, shallow dish that can contain about 8 dl with butter, and pour the beaten eggs into it. Put in the oven (centre) and bake for about 50 minutes until the flan has set. Then sprinkle well with granulated sugar and burn the sugar under the grill or with a kitchen blow torch. Take care that the sugar caramelizes, but does not burn.

Serve at once. If one waits too long, the crisp burnt sugar will turn soft.



Buttermilk cheese

Dessert (or breakfast) for 4 to 8 persons. Prep. time 12 hours + 6 hours; Finishing 5 minutes.

1 liter buttermilk
 3 egg yolks
 2 Tbsp sugar
 ½ Tbsp rose water
 1 dl double cream

Pour the buttermilk in a finely-woven cheesecloth or kitchen towel and hang the cloth overnight over a large bowl. The next day, scrape what is left in the cloth into a clean bowl.





Beat the eggs with sugar and rose water, and temper the buttermilk cheese with it. This cheese now has the consistency of mascarpone. It can be served in a dish, but if you happen to have a small cheese mould (perforated), put a small cheesecloth in it, and scoop the buttermilk cheese into it. Put this on a dish in the refrigerator for six hours. Then demould the cheese on a serving dish. Pour some cream around it, and garnish with red summer fruit.

Cheese

Dutch cheeses are famous all over the world. These cheeses are mostly made from cow milk, but goat cheese and sheep cheese are also produced. In the sixteenth century one could already buy the salty, old hard cheeses that are now known as Gouda cheese, and Leyden cheese (with cumin and/or caraway seeds). Both made from cow's milk. There was also green cheese, which in this case is not cheese with mould or herbs, but cheese from sheep's milk that is coloured by steeping sheep dung (really!) in water that is strained and added to the milk. This cheese was traditionally made in the most Westward of the Frisian Islands, Texel. Nowadays there are still excellent cheeses from Texel, but not with sheep dung. One could choose a cheese with nettles instead.

Anchovy

The small fish are now mostly sold in tins or jars, packed in brine or oil. For *The excellent cookbook* I have used a manner of serving that I saw in a [still life painting](#) from 1657 by the German painter Sebastian Stoskopff. The fillets remain attached to the tail and fish bone, which is curved back onto itself. The fillets are spread out from the centre like rays from the sun.

To be able to do this, I had to pickle fresh anchovies myself. I bought fresh anchovies, emptied them but left the fishbone intact. I then made a dry brine from kosher seasalt with dark moscovado sugar, pepper and juniper berries. I used them for this dish after a week, but they keep for months. This is the result:



Laying the table

For the pictures of the prepared dishes in *The excellent cookbook* we were inspired by a painting by Flemish painter Lucas van Valckenborch, *The 'banquet'* (1593). On the right is a detail from this painting ([wikimedia](#)). All the dishes are pewter. The table is laid with white damask, covered with fresh flowers. The diners have their own, round pewter plate, a spoon, a knife and a small, two-pronged fork. The small low salt cellar is copper or bronze, or maybe even gold. The poultry on the dishes is served whole, the diners are to cut off what they want with their own knife. The table cloth may be changed between courses.



Table manners are as described in many of the texts in the sixteenth century and earlier. Battus does not write about this but it will be the same as elsewhere.

For the three courses in our edition, we chose to decorate the table according to season, as described by another Dutch cookbook, the *Nyeuwen coockboeck* (New Cookbook) from the Flemish physician Gheeraert Vorselman, 1556/1560. His source was the Latin *De honeste voluptate et valetudina* from Bartolomeo Sacchi or Platina, printed nearly a century earlier.

Below are details from the spreads in the edition of *The excellent cookbook* of the prepared dishes from the adapted recipes in our book. From left to right First course (Spring and Summer), Second course (Autumn) and Third course (Winter). These pictures were shot by Belgian photographer Roos Mestdagh.



The original recipes

The English translation is not 1 on 1, I have allowed myself some liberties. In an English edition, the translation will be more strict. And done by a professional translator, which I am not.

First course

Stewed onions (recipe #19)

Om een Ajuyn-soppe te maken

Neemt Ajuyn, snijt die in schijuen, ende roost hem in Olye met de corsten vanden brooden, als dit nu wat gesoden heeft so doeter wat Azijns by, wat Byers, wat suyckers, ende wat Gengeberpoeder, laet dit te samen sieden tot dat het begint dick te werden, ende alsdan inde schotel ghedaen ende gegeten.

To make stewed onions

Take onions, slice them and fry them in oil with bread crusts. Add a little vinegar as soon as it is fried, with some beer, sugar and powdered ginger. Let it boil until it thickens. Then put it in a dish and serve.

Veal in saffron sauce (recipe #91)

Om Bruet fuleet te maken

Neemt Hoenderen of Calfs-vleesch tot bussepot morwe gesoden, verslaget, neemt dan wittebroot, root ende niet swart gebraden op den rooster, ende legget te weycke int selue sop, doet het door ende doetet dan by vleesch, ende doeter dan ooc by wat Wijns, Gengeber, Greyn, ende wat Saffraens, latet tsamen wat stouen; opt laetste wat Veriuys, ende als ghyt oprechten wilt, so scherft wat Peterselie, doetse in den pot, rechtse op ende dienet.

To make ‘bruwet fulleet’

Take pieces of cooked chicken or veal, and drain them. Then take white bread, whicj has been toasted to a golden brown (not dark brown) on the roasting grid. Let [the bread] steep in the cooking liquid [of the meat]. Work it through a sieve and add to the meat. Also add some wine, ginger, grains of paradise and some saffron, and heat it gently for a while. Just before serving, add some verjuice. When it is served, add some chopped parsley. Put it in a dish and serve.

Second course

Quail pie (recipe #253)

Om een Quackel-pasteye te maken

Neemt Gengeber, Pruymen, Corinten, Caneel, Sout, Suycker, ende March diet begeert, oft boter, gelaeft met Veriuys.

To make quail pie

Take ginger, prunes, currants, cinnamon, salt, sugar, and marrow if so desired, or butter, and sprinkled with verjuice.

Salmon with Seville oranges (recipe #189)

Om een stuck Salm te stouen met Arangeschellen

Neemt gedroochde Arangeschellen, ende sietse in schoon water, een weynich het bitter af, snijtse in cleyn stucckens, ende doetse in eenen schoonen aerden pot, doeter op, Wijn, Boter, Gengeber, Caneel, ende laet dit tsamen in sende comen, legter een schoon gewasschen dick stuck Salm in, ende latet soo suyuerlick t’samen staen stouen, tot dat genoeg is, dienet dan ter

Tafelen: maer keert den Salm altemet om inden pot, ghy moechter oock by doen inden pot, sop van Arangeappelen, latet stouen, als ghyt op dient, stroyter Caneel op.

Spinach roll (recipe #205)

Om Spinagie te stouen

Neemt Spinagie, ende sietse morwe, dout dan t'water schoon wt, neemt dan geschelde appelen, captse wel cleyn met de Spinagie, setse te samen te stouen met wijn, ende een weynich Veriuyts, Suycker, Gengeber, ende Boter, laet dit tsamen stouen tot dat ghenoech is, rechtet dan in schotelkens, ende stroyter Gengeber ouer, dientse dan dese spijse, ghy moecht oock ronde Taertkens backen, ofte ronde Coecxkens in de Boter gefruyt.

To cook spinach

Take spinach and cook until soft. Squeeze out the water, then take peeled apples and chop them with the spinaach. Let them simmer with wine and a little verjuice, sugar, ginger and butter until it is done. Then put in small dishes, sprinkle ginger on it and serve. One may also bake round tartlets, or round patties fried in butter.

Coloured pears (recipe #53)

Om te maken Peeren van Geerinol

Neemt van de beste braet-peeren, laet de stelen daer aen, ende bewintse met werck, op datse onverbrant bliuen, ende braeytse dan in heete colen, ende scheltse dan, ende maecter een sause ouer met rooden wijn, suycker, ende gestamte Amandelen, dat te passe dick sy, ende ist te bleeck, so verwet met Tornisol, maer maket soet genoegh, ende het moet soo dick zijn, dat het op de Peeren blijft liggen, ende legt daer op lanck bancket-suycker, ende dan ghedient.

Noch op een ander maniere, de peeren geschelt, ende de stelen daer aen gelaten, ende gesoden in witten wijn, tot datse morwe zijn, neemt dan de Wijn, daer de Peeren in gesoden zijn, ende doeter wel Suycker inne, ende wat Ameldonck ende wat Soffraen, laet dit tsamen op sieden, totdat dick is, ende gietet dan op de Peeren, het moet so dick zijn, dat op de Peeren blijft hangen, maer wacht wel dattet niet en clontere.

To make Pears of Germolles

Take the best baking pears you have, with their stalks. Wind twine around the stalks to prevent them burning. Bake the pears on hot coal, then peel them. Make a thick sauce with red wine, sugar and ground almonds. If the colour is too weak, add tournesol, and make sure it is sweet enough. The sauce must be thick enough to adhere the pears. Sprinkle with oblong comfits, and serve.

Another way. Peel the pears, leaving the stalks on. Cook them in white wine until soft. Then take the wine in which the pears were cooked, and add a lot of sugar, some starch and saffron. Boil this until it has thickened and pour it over the pears. It must be thick enough to adhere to the pears, but take care that there are no lumps.

Third course

Flan in a dish (recipe #200)

Om een Quede Vlade te maken

Neemt dry, ofte vier Queden, sietse wel morwe in water, ende neemt dan Room, Eyeren, ende wat bloeme, ende menghelet onder een, wilt ghy so moechdier Suycker, ende cruyt by doen, ende maect hier een Vlaey af, in een schotel, ofte Cop, ende latet backen.

To make quince custard

Take three or four quinces, and cook them in water until done. Then take cream, eggs and some flour, and temper this. If you like, add sugar and spices. Make a custard of this in a dish or cup, and bake.

Buttermilk cheese (recipe #221)

Om een platten Keese van Botermelck te maken

Neemt so veel Botermelck als v goet dunct, maer het moet versch, dick ende goet zijn, al ist wat amper, daer en leyt niet aen, ende hanget des daechs te voren als ghyt den anderen dach maken wilt, in schoon seruette, oft ammelaken te verleken al de weyde wt, bindet vast aen de melck toe, ende hangt de seruet aen eenen nagel te verleken, ende alst wel drooghe is, neemt dan tot het dick van eenen stoop melck twaelf doyers van Eyeren wel cleyn geclopt, wel Suycker, ende wat Roosenwater, ende temperet onder een, doetet dan by de drooge melc die ghy wt de seruette neemt, temperet wel onder een, legget dan met eenen lepel in een schotel op eenen boep gelijk een platte Keese, ende gieter room ouer, ende dienet, ghy meucht de Eyeren wt laten, wilt ghy, ghy meucht oock wel fijn doeckens in schoon water wtgedout in kase-teylkens, of kase-bordekens leggen, ende leggen daer de getemperde Botermelck in, latent daer wat in verleken, leggent wt de doeckens inde schotelen, ende gietender den Room ouer, ende dienet.

To make fresh cheese from buttermilk

Take as much buttermilk as you like, but it must be fresh, thick and good, even if it is a little sour, that does not matter. To make the cheese the next day, hang the buttermilk a day earlier in a clean napkin or table cloth to drain all the whey. Bind the cloth just over the milk, and hang it on a nail to drain. Mix together for each 'stoop'(2.6 litres) milk, twelve stirred egg yolks, a lot of sugar and some rose water. Add this to the thickend milk from the napkin and temper well. Scoop it with a spoon onto a dish in a heap like fresh cheese, pour cream over it and serve. The eggs can be left out if so desired. One can also cover cheese moulds with wet cheese cloth and put the tempered buttermilk in it to drain some more. Take the fresh cheese from the cloths and put them on dishes. Pour the cream over them and serve.

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The authors of the edition of the cookbook

The edition has its own website, battus.nl/en/ (English version), with more information and news concerning the edition.

Christianne Muusers, MA Dutch literature, food historian.

Website: coquinaria.nl/en (English)

Marleen Willebrands, dietitian, MA Dutch literature, food historian.

Website: kookhistorie.nl

Alexandra van Dongen, art historian (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen).

Website museum: boijmans.nl/en (English)

Roos Mestdagh, photographer.

Website: roosmestdagh.com (English)