

Issue Five | Summer 1995

A Noble Feast

Bob Dushay describes his attempt to create a Tsolyáni feast.

I’ve been threatening for years to hold a Tsolyáni-style dinner, and I finally pulled it off at my last game. I spice by eye and taste; any reader who wishes to duplicate this effort will have to experiment. I did not try to serve dishes in courses, but simply put everything out at once.

A platter of fresh fruit: Use anything exotic. We used mangos, cherry tomatos, and kiwi fruit.

A platter of pickles and relishes: We used tiny gherkins, mango chutney, and Tuscan peppers.

A platter of pita bread: The purist may prefer Nan or some other Indian bread, harder to find in United States supermarkets than pitas. The true purist may want to color it coppery-red. Red food-coloring only turns things pink.

Hmelu stew:

Ingredients: Beef chuck in chunks, squash (I used a small acorn and two tiny butternut squashes), three small onions, three kohlrabi (discard the leaves and stems), a handful of tiny red peppers, a "frying" pepper (about 4-6 inches long, narrow, and pale green), flour, and spices.

Preparation: Marinate chunks of beef in a mixture of red wine, vegetable oil and crushed garlic overnight. [Professor Barker says Hmelu resembles beef.] Halve the squash, seed it, and bake until soft. (Acorn squash got too mushy and completely disappeared into the stew. Butternut squash worked very well.) When done, cut each half squash into quarters, peel off the rind, and chop up the squash into cubes.

Take three Kohlrabi, skin the tubers, boil them for 8 minutes, and cut into thin slices. Remove the seeds and membranes from the peppers, and chop them into large chunks. Chop the onions into large pieces.

Brown the beef in a dutch oven, toss the leftover marinade over it, and sprinkle 3-4 tablespoons of flour over it. Mix the flour into the gravy thoroughly. Add the Kohlrabi, peppers, and onions. For spices, I added the following (to taste): salt, chili powder, cayenne pepper, ground cumin. I also added a couple of pinches of cinnamon (not enough to be recognizable, but enough to give everything an exotic flavor). [I discovered later that Thai Peanut Sauce goes very nicely with the stew, but use sparingly to keep the peanut flavor from being recognized.] After everything has stewed for about 10 minutes, add the squash and correct the spices.

Yafa: just use rice.

Drinks:

Chumetl. Add salt, chili powder, and a pinch of cayenne pepper to a quart of buttermilk, and chill. Be careful with the salt: I used a teaspoon, which was far too much! A little chumetl goes a long way: nobody took more than a couple of sips.

Tuor. Let a quart of lemon sherbet melt, add about 1 cup of water, and mix well. It’s refreshing.

Dessert: Greek-style pastries seemed appropriate, such as baklava and kataifi. Middle-Eastern Halva would also be exotic and sweet.

Alcohol and the powders: I put out a bowl of "Berry-blue Jello" and another of confectioners sugar. This was mostly for appearances. We also had a bottle of Tsuhorido (Chartreuse liqueur) and Mash (apricot brandy).