

Unto our Most Noble Guests for this Yuletide Celebration, a few words regarding your meal this eve:

This meal takes recipes and inspiration from two fine chefs of Italy, Maestro Martino of Como, and Scappi, Chief Chef to popes and bishops. We can but hope our meal will be as well received by you.

In these dark winter months, it is easy for the humours to be out of balance, and we are aware some of you may have, on the advice of your physician, or perhaps for reasons of penance, limited certain aspects of your diet.

In the first course, the cheese in the pasta is a simple handmade smoked ricotta salata, made by artisans within the Barony, who have passed the secrets of its construction down from generation to generation. The sausage was similarly made by the Barony, with the meat being provided by Lord Klaus von Saarbruke, Head Huntsman to the Court of Roberto and Monique. We are told it was a wily wild boar, which he took down BY HIMSELF.

The Friccassee of Chicken is so made as to balance those of you of a melancholic temperament as it should nicely balance your cold and dry humors brought on this time of year. If your celebrations find you too phlegmatic (in the other direction), the Pye of Beefe and Artichokes should restore that balance to you. Should your personal penance require that this be a lean day for you, the pottage of turnips will satisfy that need.

With the third course, the Roast of Pigs with Relish is nicely mixed to strengthen the sanguine disposition, which as we all know from Galen, is what we should be striving for in our health. If you find that you have an excess of choler, perhaps due to your natural temperament, or a powerful spleen, we hope that the ceci con ove (chickpeas with egg) will help you. Lastly, if your humours are already so out of balance that you are ill, you will find the soup of greens to be most efficacious in aiding your digestion and health, while being suitable for even the most restrictive fast day.

The ginger rice tart, fruit cheese, and simmered dates all were designed to bring closure to the meal and your stomach, allowing you to digest well, so that you may leave the hall in the best possible health.

Borrowed from the text of *Galateo: The Rules of Polite Behavior*, by Giovanni della Casa in 1558, in hopes that everyone would have a more enjoyable time together.

- “It is not polite, while at the table, to scratch your head or somewhere else. A man should also, as much as possible, avoid spitting, but if he must, he should do it discreetly.”
- “Nor should one gnaw or chew such that you hear the sound or noises, since there is a difference between the eating of men and pigs. We must also be careful not to gobble up our food and occasion a hiccup or some other unpleasant result, as happens with people who hurry and so gasp for air or breathe so heavily that they annoy their companions.”
- “Also, you must not do anything to proclaim how greatly you are enjoying the food and wine, for this is the habit of tavern-keepers. To encourage those who are at the table with you with words such as “Are you not eating this morning,” or “Is there nothing that you like,” or “Taste some of this” in my opinion is not laudable, even though the majority of people do it. Though in doing so they show concern for their guest, very often they are also the very reason why he eats so sparingly, for it will seem to him that he is being observed and so he is embarrassed.”
- “It is inappropriate, I do believe, to offer something from one’s own plate, unless the person who is presenting it is of a much more exalted rank, whereby the person receiving it will consider this an honor. Between men of equal rank, it will seem the person offering somehow or other holds himself superior to the one receiving, and sometimes the guest may not even like to eat what was offered. Not to mention this shows that the banquet does not have sufficient dishes and that they are not evenly distributed, for one person has too much and another not enough, and this could humiliate the lord of the house. Nevertheless, in this matter we must do what is done, and not what should be done, for it is better to blunder with others than be good alone. But whatever the case may be, you must not refuse what is brought to you, as it will seem that you either despise or rebuke the man who has brought it.”
- “Also inappropriate is the habit of putting one’s nose over the glass of wine someone else is drinking or on top of the food others must eat, so as to smell it. Besides, I would not want someone sniff even what he himself has to drink or to eat; the reason is that from his nose could fall those things that men find disgusting, even though this is perhaps unlikely. Nor would I recommend that you offer your glass of wine to someone after you have had your lips to it and sipped, unless it were to someone more intimate than a friend. And even worse should you offer a pear or other fruit from which you have taken a bite. And don’t be looking like you consider the things discussed above trivial and of small moment, for even light blows, if they are many, can kill.”
- “In conversation one can sin in many and various ways, starting with choice of subject: it should be neither frivolous nor vile. Listeners will not pay attention or take pleasure in it, but they will scorn the talk and the talker both. Also, one must not pick a theme too subtle or too arcane, for it is exhausting to hear. Instead, one must really diligently select a topic so that no will turn red or feel ashamed. Not should you talk about something dirty, even though it could be pretty amusing to hear, for decent people should try to please others only with respectable subjects.”
- “One should not, for the sake of making someone laugh, say obscene words or indulge in such vile or perverse acts as distorting one’s face and eyes or gesticulating like a dope, for no one should debase himself in order to amuse others. This is the habit not of a gentleman but of slapstick actors and professional buffoons. So don’t imitate that vulgar, plebeian language of Dioneo: ‘Monna Aldruda, come, lift up your tail.’ Nor act like a lunatic or a numbskull, but if possible say at the proper time something clever and new, something no one else has thought of, or else keep quiet.”

--Translation by M.F. Rusnak