

## Commentary

# Creative Cooking to Meet Sensory Preference - The Reflection of the Catholic Dietary Rules on Recipes for Fasting in 16th and 17th Century Cookery Books in the Netherlands and Flanders

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*It is not at all directed toward the chastisement of the body and of sin, that is, toward serving God; rather with this fasting we serve the pope and the papists—and the fishermen [1].*

Martin Luther

## Introduction: A modern phenomenon with an echo in the past

In October 2017, the Dutch award winning vegetarian products brand 'The Vegetarian Butcher' was threatened with a possible fine by the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) for misleading consumers [2]. The argument the NVWA came forward with, was that the way the products were labeled, like 'vegetarian chicken pieces' and 'smoked bacon strips' [3], is not representing the actual product, since they don't consist any real chicken or pork. The products the Vegetarian Butcher has developed since 2010 are not meant to serve only vegetarians, but also

Environmental concerned 'meat lovers' [4]. In order to appeal to this target group, the products are 'mocking' meat products as much as possible, not only in taste but also in appearance. Therefore,

they are called likewise, but with a minor twist (the name 'Vegetarian Butcher' is also a witty joke, of course). The warning was eventually withdrawn by the NVWA and the Vegetarian Butcher is allowed to keep their product names and labels intact [5]. In the context of this historical paper, the story about a modern producer of vegetarian products is interesting. As much as we try to imitate meat products today, a historical equivalent is to be found in recipe books from Medieval times on, in the whole of Europe. In other words: mock meat and dairy products are of all times. But where the founder of the Vegetarian Butcher, Jaap Korteweg is concerned about large-scale meat production, its effects on the environment and meat industry related diseases like BSE [6],

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we find another inducement for the recipes discussed in this study. The imitations of and substitutes for meat and dairy dishes we find in cookery books from the past, are related to the Christian religious dietary rules for fasting.

## Research question and subtopics

I would like to focus on several questions that can hopefully give some understanding of the significance of recipes for fasting days in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. I will focus on this time frame because of both practical and substantial reasons. On the one hand, there is greater access to (transcripts of) sources with regards to the first printed cookery books, in opposition to handwritten recipe (note) books. On the other hand, it might be interesting to see how the emergence of the reformation since the 16<sup>th</sup> century has had its influence on recipes, since the Catholic fasting rules had been dominant until then. Another way of narrowing down this topic to keep it within the extent of this paper is to focus on the Netherlands during these centuries, and as such including modern day Flanders.

I would like to formulate my research questions and subtopics as follows; *how did the Catholic fasting rules manifest their selves in recipes from the first cookery books in print from the Netherlands and Flanders? Have these fasting rules led to inventive cooking techniques to match preferences in taste and texture, like modern day examples of mock meat? Is the influence of the upcoming Protestantism and its less strict fasting rules in the upper Netherlands noticeable in the recipe books?*

## Approach and structure

To answer these questions, I will start to contextualize the topic. First, I will outline the Catholic dietary rules, which are tightly connected to the church calendar and its division in 'fat' and 'lean' days. To furthermore contextualize these rules within the Christian moral, I will pay some

attention to the tension between restrictions and the pleasure of eating in the second part.

Subsequently I will move to the actual sources, which will be three cookery books published between ca. 1514 and 1612. First, I shall outline the background, spread and use of these books. The invention of printing will obviously be considered as an enormous factor in the spread of these recipes. Secondly, I will have a closer look at the recipes for the fasting days to analyze these in the succeeding part. I will also focus on the use of fish, which wasn't considered an animal product in the same sense as meat or dairy.

After this analysis, I will try to connect my findings to the possible influence of the Reformation, the presence of fish dishes and the creativity and inventiveness of Renaissance cooks, to make these dishes, like Jaap Korteweg, as close to the meat version to serve specific requirements, preferences, and conditions.

#### *The Catholic dietary rules, Christian moral, and the church calendar*

The origins of ascetic fasting are to be found in older times and places than the early Christian world, like ancient Greece and Egypt. Furthermore, theologians from the first centuries of the Common Era are not consistent. Many Christian scholars also derived on ancient medical thought, so the advocacy for ascetic fasting was not only connected to religion but also to thoughts about good health [7]. It is too complex within the extent of this paper to pay more detailed attention to the early religious ideas and origin of fasting within the Christian context, but for now I emphasize on a general thought that joins the virtue of controlling lust, thus sexuality and dietary restraint within the Christian moral, like in the writings of Basil of Ancyra [8].

In St. Thomas of Aquinas' world famous and influential, theological work *Summa Theologiae* [9], written in 1256, a chapter is dedicated to questions about the act of fasting. Aquinas deliberates whether it is virtuous to fast, and if so, of what virtue it is. Is it a precept? Can some people be pardoned from fasting? He derives from classic Christian texts, like the Lenten Homily by Gregory and the Bible to support and object these questions. His thoughts and contemplations –let alone that of other church fathers and writers- would form enough matter to write a whole, separate paper on, so I will try to summarize his most important suggestions to get an idea of the more general thoughts about the precepts of fasting in the Christian context.

It seems obvious that fasting is an act of abstinence, since when you are not eating, you are automatically restraining yourself from a bodily desire or need. Thomas comments on this, nevertheless.

*I answer that, Habit and act have the same matter. Wherefore every virtuous act about some particular matter belongs to the virtue that appoints the mean in that matter. Now fasting is concerned with food, wherein the mean is appointed by abstinence. Wherefore it is evident that fasting is an act of abstinence [10].*

Is fasting a virtue? It was most certainly considered to be, although not necessarily from the early middle ages on. As Massimo Montinari describes in his book about the connection between food and culture, over time, the ideal of eating meat or not, changed. He detects a shift from the perception of consuming (large quantities of) meat as a sign of power and physical strength [11] to the noble virtue to 'master self-restraint

and self-control' [12]. When he refers to the concept of 'Courtliness' that manifests itself during time amongst higher social ranks, it is interesting to point to the fact that for example 9<sup>th</sup> century warriors and rulers were expected to consume meat to gain respect, whereas in later centuries this could transfer to other ideas about diet, social hierarchy and moral. I will return to the tension between 'pleasure' and restrictions in the next part. To return to Thomas, the virtue of fasting served to control bodily desire:

*"Fasting was instituted by the Church in order to bridle the concupiscence of the flesh, which regard pleasures of touch in connection with food and sex.*

*Wherefore the Church forbade those who fast to partake of those foods which both afford most pleasure to the palate, and besides are a very great incentive to lust. Such are the flesh of animals that take their rest on the earth, and of those that breathe the air and their products [13]."*

Thomas is rather strict in his matter about who could be excused, where for example beggars are not pardoned for fasting if they are able to gather enough food for one meal. He makes an exception for poor beggars who have become too weak or have not been able to collect enough food [14]. It is also noteworthy, that a distinction was made between the obliged days of fasting, determined by the church, and voluntary fasting. In the case of the beggars Thomas meant fasting for the church [15]. To be clear, not all days apart from the lean days were automatically fat days. Only festive days, like the day before Ash Wednesday, were days on which one would really feast.

Let us have a look at the church calendar and fasting days. During Advent, which started at the fourth Sunday before Christmas, the last Sunday was a time to fast. More fasting days were set during Lent though. The period itself started on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, the day the angel Gabriel visited the Virgin Mary [16]. On Shrove Tuesday, you would be allowed to feast and celebrate Carnival until midnight, so this would be the last 'fat day' before the 40 days of strict fasting started that lasted until Easter. This period was an imitation of Christ's own 40 days of fasting, right after he was baptized [17]. Only one meal a day should be consumed during the 40 days fasting period [18], and as we will see, restricted to specific ingredients. Another interesting specification is to be found for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, where 'loaves and fishes' are prescribed. Easter followed Lent, but this period had its own fasting days, the strictest on Good Friday, and the day of Christ's crucifixion. The next day, on Holy Saturday, the fast would be broken at midnight and traditionally eggs were eaten on the Sunday that followed. Notably, these were not the only fasting days and periods per se. Other festive days, like the holidays for the Apostles could prescribe fasting [19]. What must also be mentioned are the so-called Ember Days, in Latin *quatuor tempora*, 'four seasons'. Specific Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays were connected to the start of each season. On these days, one was prescribed to pray, show gratitude to the fruits of the earth and fast [20]. In summary, during the liturgical year, most people were religiously bound to about 5 months of fasting. For Catholics, Fridays were in general 'fish days'- to commemorate the Friday on which Jesus died- but excluding meat from your cookery was not a strict obligation [21]. So, for almost half of the year there was a need for recipes to cook dishes that didn't contain any meat, and in some cases no dairy products and eggs. Instead, mainly bread, vegetables and fish could be used for cookery [22]. We shall see that these were often employed in creative ways, to create recipes that would come close to the original but would also procure the diner with a certain amount of pleasure.

It is quite understandable why meat was forbidden on every fasting day, since it was associated with the flesh and therefore with lust and carnality [23]. Since eggs and milk products derive from these same animals that are providing us with meat, during the 40 days fasting period, eggs and dairy were forbidden in general. To substitute dairy and eggs quite ingenious alternatives were developed: in a handwritten cookery book from Ghent, compiled during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we find a recipe 'om eyeren in die vasten te maken' ('to make eggs during Lent') [24]. Not a single egg is involved: fish blather and almond milk are mixed and then colored with saffron, to imitate the color of the yolk.

Since (most) modern day vegetarians also exclude animals like fish and shellfish as well as their byproducts from their diet, it is useful to end this chapter by briefly pointing out that in the Christian context fish was not considered as animal 'flesh'. As we can read in the quote by Thomas above that fish belonged to another category of creatures, since it was not on earth or in the air [25]. It remains partly unclear why exactly people thought fish was not "meat", but we also find this distinct categorization in Corinthians 15:39, in the first letter of Paul: *'Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another [26].'* Another possible reason is to be found in the common belief that fish were cold blooded, whereas warm blooded animals were prohibited because they 'sacrificed their selves' for humans to eat [27]. As Michael P. Foley puts it in his book about the origins of Catholic traditions, it is also somewhat contradictory: *"There is a certain theological appropriateness to abstaining from the meat of an animal whose blood has been shed on the day in which the blood of the God-man was shed, the absence of the former reminding us paradoxically of the latter"*. Some more detail about fish dishes for the fasting days will be given when the recipes from the cookery books will be discussed further on.

#### *The tension between pleasure and restriction*

As with a lot of 'mock' and imitation meat products from all over the world, like the products developed for (Buddhist) vegetarians in China that for instance imitate duck (including the texture of the skin) and scallops [28], the purpose is to give the person with a restricted diet an experience of taste, smell and appearance that resembles the original as much as possible. In other words, to enjoy it and experience sensory pleasure as is preferred by at least a group of vegetarians and vegans.

In his book about food and morals, John Coveney notes that already in the Greek world, it was considered as an essential custom to be modest when it came to eating. Excess and indulgence were criticized and condemned. The main point here was that to be virtuous, one had to develop a certain amount of controlling oneself with regards to pleasure, which was linked to political capacities [29]. Of course, there is a tension between the two: when does one know he or she is exceeding the narrow line between pleasure and daily need? And, with regards to eating, not every human being is experiencing the same amount of pleasure consuming certain food stuffs, due to taste and personal preferences. It is still noteworthy within the context of this study to have a closer look at the meaning of this field of tension, because I would argue that the aim of many of the recipes we will find for the fasting days, is to bring about (a certain amount of) pleasure.

Coveney argues that since early Christianity, a typical paradox was present: on the one hand, rigour, on the other joy, in this case by sharing and consuming food [30]. Over time, during the early middle

Ages, the severity took over and the importance of self-control like in ancient Greece grew. It had another justification than the Greek political connotation though because this form of self-control was meant to express abnegation. According to Coveney, many early Christian church fathers would have agreed that *'evil always resided within and, (...) all food represented evil'* and reminds us of the connection to the expulsion from Paradise that followed after the forbidden fruit was eaten [31]. Therefore, the field of tension is somehow converged in the act of fasting: it is a form of self-control and intentionally experiencing hunger is obviously not enjoyable. Its morality and virtuousness lie exactly in the rejection of pleasure and a feeling of penance: by fasting, you suffered, like Jesus Christ had suffered to make up for the eating of the forbidden fruit [32]. Referring to his famous work on the civilization process, Norbert Elias also characterizes a first period in this process, before the 15<sup>th</sup> century as based on 'order' and 'restrain' [33].

In the dishes that were meant for the 'lean' days, we might find a paradoxical attitude towards restrictions and the inventiveness to make these confined meals as pleasurable for the body as possible. That said, and to cite John Coveney once more, *"This relationship between hunger and appetite was especially problematic for the elite who could afford to indulge themselves"* [34]. In the next chapter, we shall see that the cookery books I will examine were -not surprisingly- published for a certain, high-class community.

#### *Recipe books and cooking in the Low Countries of the 16<sup>th</sup> century*

In this part I will try to outline the context of the three cookery books I will observe. The first book was published around 1514 in Brussels and is called *Een notabel boecxken van cokeryen*. Although the author is anonymous, the name of the publisher is known to be Thomas van der Noot. It is considered possible that he is the author and/or editor. This cookery book is the first printed Dutch book of recipes we know of, whereas before the invention of printing, recipes were only penned down in notebooks and journals. It was published soon after the printing press was invented and is therefore a rare, early example of the printed cookery book in this region. The categorization of the recipes is completely different from what you would expect from a modern cookbook: the book lacks any structure whatsoever [35]. It contains 175 recipes that follow each other up after a short foreword which defines what the book is aiming for. It basically says: *"A notable cookery book, which tells about the preparation of all foods, each with its own purpose, whether for marriages, for parties, banquets or other special meals and it is of need to everybody that wants to do things honorably"* [36].

The first recipe in the book is for chicken with a white sauce, followed by a recipe for 'blancmengier', an almond milk-based dish with chicken and spices [37]. This book draws upon several sources, of which the most significant was the printed, French recipe book *Le Viandier* from around 1490. Furthermore, a lot of similarities with a handwritten text with recipes from Ghent are notable, about 61 recipes are alike. It is uncertain which the chicken is and which the egg in this case though [38]. Later on I will have a closer look at a selection of recipes from this *'notabel boecxken van cokeryen'*.

The next book I will explore is titled *Eenen seer schoonen ende excellenten Coc-boeck* by Carolus Battus (or Karel Baten), published in Dordrecht in 1593. It was an addition to the second edition of a medical book, *Med'cynboec*, which was translated from the German original [39].

Like in the *Notabel boecxken*, the recipes (298 of them) are not categorized in any way. Since it was practically an appendix to a medical book, some recipes are specifically meant to cure the ill, like 'suypen' (drinks) to get strong again [40]. Another signal of the medical function of some of the recipes, is to be found in the different sauces that –following the classic theory of the four humors- could correct disturbances from other foods [41]. Very striking and maybe even more apparent than in the case of the *Notabel boecxken*, this book had a very elitist target audience. It deals with the most expensive meats (duck, pigeon, oxen, wild boar), many spices and seasonings (cinnamon, cloves, pepper, sugar) and luxurious, imported Italian vegetables (spinach, cauliflower, savoy cabbage) [42]. Apart from the health aspect, the main aim was perhaps also enjoyment and pleasure. This book is also remarkably international. The book was printed in Dordrecht, in the south part of the present-day Netherlands, but Carolus Battus was originally from Flanders. His recipes are based on cookery from Spain, France, and Italy, as well as Wallonia [43]. Finally, like many cookery books from the 1500s on, Battus used several sources. It is sure that one of them was the *Notabel boecxken* and yet again a handwritten recipe collection from Ghent [44]. Nevertheless, recipes for the fasting days are less present than in the *Notabel boecxken*, but there are still a few specifically meant for the lean days as we will see further on.

The third book I will discuss was published at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. '*Het Kookboek van Antonius Magirus*' was published in 1612 in Leuven, Flanders [45]. The turbulent times in which this cookery book was written, is worth noting. In the Netherlands, an ongoing war between Spain and the Dutch Republic saw a short period of peace between 1609 and 1621, with the Twelve Years' Truce. During these years, there was a fierce religious battle going on, in which two parties came to stand clearly against each other. Especially in the Southern parts of the Netherlands, a severe debate arose between the opposed Calvinist groups Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants. The latter group was supporting an ideal of moderation with regards to consuming food and drink. The oppositional standing point was of a more hedonistic nature: after all these years of war, people wanted to enjoy themselves and find pleasure in eating and drinking [46].

Within this context, it is interesting – but maybe not surprising- that Magirus took his own point of view about this discussion in a notably long introduction. Dinner delights or restraint? Magirus seems to opt for a mid-way solution: getting pleasure out of eating good food is no problem, but excessive drinking should be avoided:

'[...] ooc vreefe datse liever van drincken hooren kouten, als van eten, (ic segghe vele van hunlieden) welck my van naturen seer teghenstaet.'

('also fear that one likes drinking more than eating, (I say, that counts for many of them), which I am naturally opposed to') [47].

In his book, as we see in the citation above too, Magirus is writing in the first person and uses a very personal tone, which is quite exceptional for a recipe writer from that era [48]. He obviously doesn't leave out any of his personal critique and opinions, although his recipes are not all his own. Magirus based most of the book – like the two books discussed above – on a secondary source, in this case the famous cookery book by Bartolomeo Scappi, the '*Opera dell'arte del cucinare*', published in Venice in 1570. Scappi was a chef for at least three cardinals and several popes [49]. Hence, these recipes are once more aimed at an elitist public,

although Magirus also seems to be aware of the conservative tendency of his reading public: he wants to offer well-to-do ladies recipes that are relatively affordable, with which they can please their 'hard working husbands' [50]. In Scappi, relatively many recipes are especially developed for the lean days [51]. In the next chapter I will explore how many of these are taken over by Magirus and in which way he perhaps adjusted some of them.

#### *Selection of recipes and analysis*

##### *Een notabel boecxken van cokeryen (1542)*

To add some structure, I will be discussing the recipes from the three cookery books in a chronological order, starting with the *Notabel boecxken van cokeryen*. I will explain the method of selecting the recipes: first, every recipe that is explicitly meant for the lean days, 'in de vastenen' ('during fasting') will obviously be examined. Secondly, all recipes that seem to be 'fasting-proof', which means not containing any animal products except for fish, will be taken in consideration. Thirdly, I will give some specific attention to recipes that give two options intrinsically that is one recipe that provides both a normal or 'fat', and a 'lean' option, whether this is precisely indicated in the recipe itself. The use of spices will be furthermore reflected on, to see if – because of its high value- the use of expensive seasoning was considered unfit for the lean days, due to the goal of being frugal.

The first category of fasten-connected recipes in the *Notabel Boecxken* I would like to

distinguish, are four recipes that stand apart because they are explicitly called to be prepared 'buyten der vastenen' ('outside of fasting'). A recipe for 'kimmeneye' (a bread-based sauce) is given [52], followed by a version meant for fasting. In the latter the meat that is supposed to be soaked in the sauce, is replaced by fish. Strikingly enough, the fish-version contains as much expensive spices (cumin and saffron) as the meat-version, and the method description for the 'lean' recipe is far more extensive. Two other recipes [53] that are for 'buyten der vastenen', contain eggs, one for a sauce and one for pancakes. It seems as if these recipes are maybe aimed on the 'fat days', like Shrove Tuesday, since all the other recipes that do contain animal products are not specifically labeled for outside Lent. In one case, it is remarked that a 'jeleye' (jelly) [54] is meant to be eaten outside fasting-time, which imposes retrospectively that the two preceding recipes for 'jeleye' are indeed fasting-proof, although this is not mentioned directly [55]. One more notable recipe is for a sauce to accompany capon or heron, which one 'metten voeten braet na Paesschen' ('roasts after Easter') [56]. It seems to be an especially fat-day-recipe to be made after breaking the fast.

The second category is the most obvious: the recipes for 'binnen der vastenen' ('during

Lent'). Eleven recipes are labeled like this, or mention fasting time at the end of it, but they are completely scattered throughout the work [57]. Since there is no structure, I will discuss them in general and will emphasize on a few remarkable cases. The lean recipe following the 'kimmeneye' for outside Lent has been mentioned above already. The use of almonds instead of eggs appears in two successive recipes [58], in this case for sauces for fish during Lent and in a recipe for some sort of flan 'vastenvladen' (literally 'lenten vladen') [59] without a dough base. Here, eggs and milk are substituted with almond milk and cooked,

pureed rice [60]. Once again, the use of spices is striking; saffron, ginger, pepper, cinnamon, and sugar. Another sauce 'mocloock', containing garlic and sage and served with cod [61], is interesting to mention because it is specifically for fasting time but also tells that it should be served with 'eyeren die hert ghesoden sijn' ('hard boiled eggs') [62]. It suggests that this wasn't a recipe for the strictest fasting days, like the ones during Lent.

It isn't revealed in the 'title' of the recipe in the case of a 'brown sauce over carp' [63], but mentioned at the end of the recipe where we read: 'Dit ghiet men overe al den carpere in den vasten' ('One pours this over all carp during fasting time') [64]. When we have a look at a succeeding recipe, some ten prescriptions later [65], it gives the reader –a bit contradictory– a recipe for 'Sauce within fasting time for [over] carp'. Although with a slightly different description of the working method, this sauce comes down to the same as the before mentioned brown sauce, both making use of the fish broth, 'peperkoek' (a brown colored, spiced bread) and vinegar. It seems a moderated copy-paste of the same recipe. We find two more recipes that serve as substitutes for respectively pancakes (without the use of milk) [66] and for a kind of ravioli; 'roffioelen'. For Lent, the normal meat or marrow-based filling for the 'roffioelen' [67] was substituted with a sweet filling of nuts, dried fruits, and many spices. Again, valuable ingredients were clearly not omitted during fasting times.

A strikingly inventive replacement for eggs is recorded in a recipe for 'struyven' [68], a sort of pancake. Here, dough is made with flower and water but instead of eggs it is bound with granulated pike spawn. How this would have mocked the flavor of 'struyven' outside Lent is hard to imagine, since no additional sugar or spices were added. Not replacing or imitating a dish in particular, the last recipe marked as suitable for fasting-time, is to make 'goet rijs' ('good rice') [69]. The working method is extensively described (washing, soaking, rinsing, cooking, draining, cooling, stiffening) [70] the goal was to make some sort of rice pudding with almond milk and sugar, to eat 'in die vastenen na den ghebacke' ('in fasting-times after baked goods') [71]. It seems to be not the most modest course of events, having baked goods and afterwards a sweetened desert, also considering the use of a relatively exotic product like rice, imported from countries like Spain [72].

So far about the recipes in *the Notabel boecxken* labeled specifically for 'in die vastenen'. The third category that I would like to give some attention to, exists of the thirty recipes that don't contain animal products except for fish, and are therefore basically suitable for fasting time, but do not point out to the reader that they are. I will not discuss all thirty recipes separately but will summarize some general characteristics. One of the most comprehensive recipes from the *boecxken*, is one for a savory jelly or aspic, regularly made of animal skins and bones, but in this case with toasted bread as a binding agent [73]. One might think that the enormous number of spices, as in at least thirteen recipes in this category, indicate that these are not called suitable for fasting because of the use of such luxurious ingredients. But, as we have seen in the fasting-time recipes, the use of spices was quite prominent in many cases. Mustard sauce for carp however, seems both suitable (containing only fish) and moderate (no use of spices) enough for even the stricter fasting days [74]. We see the same with a basic recipe to make almond milk (which is on itself an ingredient for several 'vastenen'-recipes) [75] and one quite general recipe for salted or unsalted fish [76]. It seems that in general, whether or not during Lent or other lean days, already at the beginning of the 16th century, the use of spices was not considered too inappropriate. As well,

it is at least noticeable that these dishes are not labeled as lean recipes.

A last category of recipes that perhaps overlays some former ones, is formed by two cases in which the cook is given two options at once. One is a basic rice recipe, with cow milk or, optionally, almond milk [77]. The other one, this time with specific instructions when to choose the one or the other, gives directions for making a 'gruen sause' ('green sauce') to accompany either beef, or a seafish called 'elfste' (allis shad) for during Lent, continuing with 'ofte buyten der vastenen tot hamelenvleesce' ('outside Lent with wether') [78]. The title of this recipe is therefore almost as long as the actual recipe itself.

The efforts made in the *boeckxen* to imitate original meat-based recipes in shape and appearance are maybe not very grandiose. Nevertheless, the writer has been trying to make the recipes for Lent appetizing in taste by using many spices in almost every dish. There is one recipe that reminds us of the modern attempt to replace the valuable nutriment in vegetarian products. A pea puree containing bread, called 'pareye' was basically meant to substitute animal protein, thanks to its high nutritional quality [79].

#### *Eenen seer schoonen ende excellenten Coc-boeck (1593)*

This book by Carolus Battus, has apparently less recipes for 'in die vastenen' than the *Notabel boecxken*. Instead of eleven recipes, there are only four dishes explicitly called suitable for fasting-time and one that mentions an alternative version for lean days, which I will discuss below in more detail. As mentioned before, this book was an appendix to a medical work, so it contains several recipes meant to cure the sick. It is striking though, that these are only six out of a total of 298 recipes. The very last recipe in the book prescribes a drink for the ill, which is advised to fast for two hours after intake. So, here fasting is mentioned as a medical practice instead of a religious one.

Furthermore, this book includes a very high number of recipes for meat dishes, but also lots of offal, rich sauces with butter, eggs, cream and –which is also different from the *Notabel boecxken* – marrow. There are only a few dishes in the *Coc-boeck* that do not contain butter. There are also around twenty recipes for fish that contain butter, so these seem not be suiting for (strict) fasting times. The frequent use of spices is obvious, like in the *Notabel boecxken*, but it seems to have become less elaborate over time [80].

The four recipes that state to be suitable for 'in den vasten', ('during fasting-time'), are quite different and therefore interesting to have a closer look at. First, a recipe for 'blaumangier' (like the blancmangier from the *Notabel boecxken* different from the modern, sweet dessert) is separated from the succeeding recipe for the same dish: 'Om blaumangier in de vasten te maken' ('to make blaumangier during fasting-time') [81]. Very different though, is that Battus uses sweet milk and mentions that you can add eggs to the dish if you wish. So, this fasting dish does contain animal products, whereas one of the two recipes for 'blancmangier' from 1514, only contained fish, and no dairy. The next recipe for fasting times is for a 'hooge pasteye' (a 'high pie') [82]. Its filling is made of cod heads and salmon, spices, currants, and wine. The cook is supposed to put this in 'wit deegh' ('white dough'), but what this dough contained remains unclear. Next up, is a 'Jacopijnetaerte' for fasting time [83], a recipe that succeeds the one for a 'normal' version [84]. The word Jacopijn emanates from the Parisian clergymen called 'Jakobijnen' [85]. In the original Battus uses oxen marrow to mix in with the filling of spices, currants, sugar,

and rosewater. In his fasting-proof version, the marrow is substituted with salmon and eel. For modern taste buds, this sounds probably quite abhorrent, since the rest of the mix is of the same sweet ingredients as above. Once again, Battus doesn't flinch to use dairy: 'ende doet er dan by caneel, suyker, gengeber ende corinten met wat boter [...]' ('and add cinnamon, sugar, ginger and currents with some butter') [86]. The fourth recipe for lean days is the most interesting, because this seems to really 'mock' an animal protein dish: 'Eyeren Lombaerts', an egg dish from Lombardy and a precursor of the Italian custard *zabaione* [87]. This time, there is no sign of any egg. Instead, the dish is made of coursed almonds, thickened with rice and bread, with added sugar and saffron. Since the egg-based custard would be of a light, yellow color, the saffron is not only a flavoring agent but would have made the dish look closer to the colored original as well.

I will end this part with two recipes that are singled out in a different way. First, the

somewhat complicated recipe for 'dorpsche spijs van appelen' ('village dish of apples') [88]. Battus basically gives three options: making the apple sauce with sugar, cinnamon, and butter, one version for fasting-times, but – strikingly enough – with the addition of egg yolks and ginger and then baked in a crust. The third version has wine added, as well as the butter and eggs. Another recipe, for almond butter is worth mentioning at last. This is a 'mock butter', principally vegan, but Battus mentions that it is suitable for both within and outside fasting times [89].

As in the *Notabel boecxken*, I have counted the recipes that are practically suitable for fasting

times. More than 30 recipes do not contain dairy or meat, like a 'ajuynsoppe' ('onion soup') [90] and several fish dishes without butter [91]. Several times, an option is given to either use butter or oil [92] or to add butter if 'wildy ghy' (if you wish) [93]. Another unusual dish is one for 'cleyn pasteykens in den vischtijt' ('little pies for during fish time') [94]. Is this a suggestion for eating fish on 'fish time' - Friday?

In a way, Carolus Battus leaves us with some obscurities. His book doesn't seem to be serving the virtuous Christian who prospects suitable fast friendly dishes too much. His elaborate use of butter – in many fish dishes as well- and especially in his 'vasten'-recipes make it a bit confusing to be guided well. The dishes that I selected –always without butter- that seem to be appropriate for strict periods like Lent are not labeled that way. The use of 'deegh' in several recipes leaves us without information about whether it contained butter, milk, or eggs. Just the inventive translation of eggs 'Lombaerts' into a vegan version gives away some inventiveness. Paradoxically, the use of eggs in some of the other lean recipes is now completely omitted. Further on, when I try to shed a light on the influence of the rise of Protestantism, it might become more clear how the regions where the cookery books were printed -in this case reformed Dordrecht-, are linked to the way recipes for fasting came about [95]. Since eggs and dairy were permitted in most cases except during strict fasting times, it is mostly the options for Lent that are very scarce.

#### *Het Koochoec van Antonius Magirus (1612)*

Like the *Notabel boecxken* and unlike Battus' *Coc-boeck*, *Het Koochoec* by Antonius Magirus (his last name is the Greek word for 'cook'), was printed in the southern part of the Netherlands. It was first printed in Leuven, followed by two editions in Antwerp [96]. As we shall see in more

detail further on, it is sensible that Magirus himself, as well as his target audience, was Catholic.

First, I will recapitulate the -very few- fasting recipes in this book. Then, I will make a short comparison with the main source Magirus used for his book, the *Opera* by Bartolomeo Scappi. Although it is evident that Magirus borrowed 141 of his 170 recipes from Scappi and despite his Catholic target audience, he did not take over the most creative recipes from his Italian example, like a fake ricotta and butter made of almonds and fish stock. Or did he take over recipes that Scappi named 'for a fasting day' [97], but found it self-evident enough that he only mentions the word 'vasten' twice in the whole book, within the same recipe? [98].

I'll start with that very recipe. It is for a method of drying artichokes, and it is the second recipe in the book. The goal is to preserve the vegetable for either 'tot den winter' ('until winter') or 'tot den Vasten' ('until fasting-time') [99]. If you did so, in winter you would have to soak the dried artichokes in water and then stew them in butter of 'hamelensop' ('the cooking juices of a wether'), but during fasting, in butter and water [100]. The addition of verjuice, pepper and mace counts for both options and make it -according to Magirus himself- a pleasant delicacy.

This might be the only recipe in which Magirus uses the word 'Vasten', but he does make use of the term 'fish days'. In his preface to the reader, he mentions that it is sometimes hard to know for a good housewife what to cook, especially on fish days, when inspiration and variation are lacking. Magirus appears as a knight in shining armor: even on meatless days, he offers great options in the form of cakes, pies and soups, even without fish [101]. Surprisingly often, he frankly tells his readers fish is not healthy, unpleasantly slippery, 'sad' and even worse than meat [102]. Scappi however, dedicates the whole '3<sup>rd</sup> book' of the *Opera* to fish, and explains the use as well as the benefit of it during fasting and days of abstinence [103]. A recipe that mentions fish days too, is one for a 'toert', some sort of pie that Magirus distincts from a 'taert', which is still quite similar but with another goal: you will bake 'toerten' on lean days and for the sick, you should bake 'taerten' for a moody husband or for unexpected guests [104]. This 'toert van eerten' ('pea pie') [105] seems to be an option for a lean day, although Magirus also recommends using meat instead of cheese and 'hamelensop' instead of water for days outside fasting-time. Once more, we see that this is not a recipe for Lent or other strict days since cheese is included as an ingredient.

Because there are no other recipes in Magirus' book that either mention 'fasting' or 'fish days', I think it is of some value to have a look at some recipes that are literally meant for fasting days in Scappi's *Opra*, taken over by Magirus, but without him mentioning this. First, there are four clear examples of fish recipes from book 3 of the *Opera*, and according to Scappi's introduction to the fish chapter, they are suitable for lean days. Magirus took over a method for roasting sturgeon [106], how to cook a carp 'op een ander maniere' ('in another way') [107], how to prepare pike [108] and cooking pike 'op sijn Frans' ('the French way') [109]. Although this French cooking method contains butter (also in Scappi's version), the other recipes seem perfectly suitable for meatless and even strict fasting days. A recipe in Magirus for a 'toerte' with artichokes and cardoon [110] also appears to be based on Scappi's version [111], which is for a fasting day. Magirus however, prescribes optional butter, marrow and meat stock. His way of selecting the recipes –there was more than enough choice; the *Opera* contains over a thousand recipes- doesn't seem to have much to do with strict fasting rules, but more with offering food to enjoy.

As mentioned before, it is also obvious that Magirus did not attempt to label the lean recipes he took over from Scappi, like the 'suppa dorata', an Italian almond-based sauce to accompany fish. He calls it 'sunderling' ('special'), but not for 'on a fasting day', like Scappi does [112].

As Jacques Meerman notices in his book about Dutch culinary history, Magirus' *Cookboeck* reflects its Catholic environment. Something remarkably Catholic indeed appears in a recipe for eggs: the timing is measured by reciting a Credo, a Catholic prayer during worship services [113]. This wasn't Magirus' original idea, but literally taken over from Scappi [114], who worked in the heart of the Catholic world: the Vatican.

#### *The Reformation of fasting rules*

In this part, I will try to expound the subject matter of the three cookery books that I have discussed above, in the context of several changes in the society of the Netherlands during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Therefore, I will deal with the rise of Protestantism and the ideas about fasting as known from reformists Martin Luther and John Calvin.

At least before Luther pinned his 95 theses on a church door in Wittenberg in 1517, we can generally, speak of a church-controlled food system within the Christian world. According to Caroline Walker Bynum, food was:

'(...) not only a fundamental material concern to medieval people; food practices – fasting and feasting – were at the very heart of the Christian tradition. A Christian in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was required by church law to fast on certain days (...) [115]'.

Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was a strong influence of religious leaders that emphasized on the sinful side of eating, connecting it to the Fall of Man and the eating of the forbidden fruit. Symbolically eating the body of Christ during Eucharist was the way for the believer to achieve salvation. I am not trying to suggest that everything changed from one day to the next, but the way both Luther and Calvin thought about fasting did differ from the Medieval tradition. Luther in particular –although scattered throughout his work - wrote quite a lot about his view according to eating and drinking in a religious context [116]. Broadly speaking, Luther thinks fasting is a way of getting your body in control, to be sober and to be able to concentrate [117]. It is up to the individual person to decide when and how frequent to fast, since it is not considered as 'an act of worship' [118].

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), John Calvin dedicates eight paragraphs reflecting on fasting practices. One of his main issues is that fasting can be of use to concentrate while praying. Thus, and in line with Luther, it is not a pious act on itself, but helps to be more 'alert and disencumbered' for prayer [119]:

'We certainly experience that after a full meal the mind does not so rise toward God as to be borne along by an earnest and fervent longing for prayer, and perseverance in prayer [120].'

Moreover, fasting for Calvin should not be bound to specific periods of the year, but should help to obviate luxury and lavishness during the 'whole course of life' [121]. For him, fasting in the Catholic sense of the word is therefore more an act of hypocrisy instead of integrity [122]. Calvinism is obviously pro sobriety and against any form of extravagance and indulgence. Calvin directly links this to the Catholic fasting manners of his age, when he observes that fasting on itself is exercised to be able to feast even more abundantly and 'make a mock of God' because of the 'exquisite delicacies' that are consumed during fasting [123].

This last point is especially interesting in the context of this article, since it seems that the cooks and recipe makers of the Renaissance certainly tried their hardest to make the dishes for lean days as pleasurably as possible. We have seen this in Magirus' introduction for instance, in which he claims to offer a 'survival guide' for fish days, in the abundant use of spices in all three books and the attempt to imitate certain dishes in both taste and appearance. In general, it is quite clear that in the Reformed parts of the Netherlands, the practice of fasting was not obligatory for protestant Christians anymore; it became an act of individual, voluntary piety. As Jacques Meerman concludes, since published in the Northern, Protestant environment of Dordrecht, in Battus' *Cocboeck*, recipes for Catholic fasting habits were included out of 'tolerance', in Magirus, they are 'self-evident' [124]. Broadly speaking, after the Reformation was more or less a fact in the Northern parts of the Netherlands, but also in Northern Europe, a great many people were free to choose what and when they ate. Hence, the need for mock dishes and substitutes for meat and dairy tapered off, although these dishes didn't disappear [125]. In contrary, some scholars also point out that with the Reformation a 'more widespread intolerance towards indulgence' arose in Europe [126]. So, while the reformed were freer in their choices, it didn't mean there was no notion of self-control and confinement.

We should also keep in mind that, aside from the make-believe dishes for lean days, it was also common and popular to make dishes appear as something they were not: in the *Nyeuwen coock boeck* (1560) by Gerard Vorselmans we find a recipe for an apple dish shaped like a fish [127] and, for example, in England it was custom to create a mock dish out of sugar that looked like a piece of marble [128].

## CONCLUSION

It would take more extended writing to give a full overview and insight in printed cookery books in the Netherlands and Flanders during the period discussed. Therefore, I had to select both the books and the recipes. By analyzing the recipes for 'lean days' and their context, I was hopefully able to give an impression of the influence of the Catholic fasting rules on the recipes in the first cookery books in print from the Netherlands and Flanders. With regards to the *Notabel boeckken*, quite a lot of recipes are literally labeled suitable for fasting times, whereas in Battus' *Cocboeck* there is less of them. Moreover, most of the fasting recipes in the *Cocboeck* contain dairy and eggs. Battus only included one recipe that seems to really mock the original and which is suitable for the strict fasting days: 'Eyeren Lombaerts'. It seems as if Antonius Magirus had a different take on categorizing the recipes and selecting them from (mainly) the *Opera* by Scappi. His aim, as he himself explains to the reader, is to provide the readers with pleasantly tasting food. Although Magirus derives from some of Scappi's recipes for 'lean days', he does not name them like that, except for one recipe for dried artichokes.

I think we can consider the Catholic food system of moderated 'lean days' on the one hand, and 'fat days' with rich dishes, highly symbolic. With regards to the Christian context, it is reminding the devoted of Christ's own fasting in the desert and his suffering on the cross. The religious but also social context of eating can increase a feeling of group identity. Via the spread of recipes made possible due to the invention of printing, more people were cooking the same dishes from these printed cookery books and eating the same food.

If we think about the inventiveness of meat and dairy free dishes,

it is also interesting to consider the role of high prized ingredients like spices. Meerman reminds us of the often-mistaken idea that the medieval kitchen was characterized by extreme sweetness and elaborates use of spices. This wasn't so much the case, but during the years and with a zenith in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, dishes did become highly seasoned with sugar and spices [129]. What is striking, especially in Magirus' recipes, but also in the other two books, is that the use of spices wasn't necessarily omitted in recipes for fasting- days, not even for the strict ones. It did objectively make the lean recipes more interesting and sometimes even enhanced the appearance. So, these dishes were not exactly very austere. Furthermore, the use of dairy products like butter, milk, cream, and eggs was obviously permitted on fasting days that were less strict. So, the recipes that are labeled 'binnen der Vasten' may contain dairy to make them enjoyable but are not considered suitable for during Lent.

Finally, the role of fish is striking. Since it was permitted to eat fish during fasting time, it is clearly a very useful substitute. Not only as a dish to stand in for meat versions, but also as a surrogate for eggs and dairy and as a binding agent. Sometimes these recipes are outstandingly creative and inventive in their attempt to 'mock' the original, for instance when saffron is used to imitate the color of egg yolks. The sensory qualities of the food that is preferred but restricted due to the Christian dietary rules are being imitated with great effort.

With the rise of the Reformation, the fasting rules changed gradually. They were obviously less strict than the Catholic food rules. Consequently, reformed Christians had more freedom of choice what and when to eat. Still, there is a sense of paradox; in contrast to this liberty, a sober lifestyle of restraint, devoted prayer and self-control was encouraged by the Reformed theologians. According to Paul Freedman, 'the Reformation would diminish further the cultural impetus for fasting in Protestant countries [130]'. Although it might be possible to consider Battus as being 'tolerant' towards the Catholic need for fasting recipes, the influence of these rules was still so much embedded in the Christian world, they would not vanish in Reformed countries from one day to the next.

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