

Development of a protocol to replicate the French Night of the 12th of June, 2022

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Abstract

Unreasonable food orgies, otherwise known as “nights”, are performed by the inhabitants of the 11th The Clothe, Cambridge, once in a few months or so. The proceedings and sociological aspects of those events are already widely documented ; however, little is known about the technical aspects of food proceedings and the preparation of the present dishes. Here, we propose an evidence-based protocol for the replication of the particularly spectacular French Night of the 12th of June, 2022, opening the gate to further investigations on the health effects, the caloric balance, the effect of these orgies on food intakes by the participants the next days of this kind of orgies.

Introduction

The food orgies or “nights”, especially those prepared by particularly talented cooks such as Maya Christophouros or Célestin Fragilix, have always been a source of great interest amongst the community of the Babraham Institute.

Usually preceded by the nationality of the cook in charge (e.g., “Greek night” for those prepared by Maya K. or “Romanian nights” for those prepared by Gabriel O.), these orgies are attended 4-10 people and last for about 4 hours for an estimated caloric intake of 9500 kcal/person. However, experimental evidence which is needed to investigate further these events is currently quite scarce. In this article, we developed a new and insightful methodology to retrieve the ways one of those, namely the French Night of July the 12th, 2022, was prepared, leading the way to deeper investigation.

Materials and Methods

Gathering of testimonies from eyewitnesses

Of the 9 participants of the French Night of July the 12th, 7 have been found and interrogated. Details were recorded orally and textually, respectively on Windows Recorder

and Microsoft Office to be further analyzed. Our raw data is available at <http://www.herearesomedata.com>

Historiographic analyses from written sources

Written returns from the participants, made from the beginning of the event to 48h after its termination. Such testimonies have been gathered from Whatsapp, Instagram and Facebook Messenger to be sent to the specialist department of Historiographic Analyses of Sigma-Aldrich, United Kingdom.

Results

The croque-monsieurs production was massified and standardized

C14 and infrared-radiation analyses performed by Xu *et al.* suggested that the croque-monsieurs consumed the 12th of June were entirely oven-baked, leading us to focus on the testimonies wherein it was present.

This element can be surprising ; croques-monsieurs are usually fried in a pan, at least in a first place before being oven-baked or *gratinés*. The usual procedure consists in making a sandwich of ham and cheese, with standard or seeded english bread then to fry it on both faces in a pan containing a generous amount of melted butter.

Once brown, the sandwich is withdrawn and topped with some béchamel - made from 20g of butter melted with 4 teaspoons of flour and 25 cL of cow's half-skimmed milk, salt and pepper, heated some min in a pan until the desired aspect is obtained-, itself topped with some more cheese. The final step of this standard procedure consists in baking the croque-monsieur in an oven for some minutes at 180°C for the cheese to be melted and slightly brown.

However, consistently with the literature, our data suggest that substantial modifications have been made to this protocol. In a first place, 9 slices of bread have been painted with olive oil – possibly with the goal of accomodating to Jaspreet B.'s lactose intolerance - then turned with their oily face down. Extra mature cheddar, grated from a 500g Tesco Cheddar Block, have been generously dropped on the 9 slices of bread. Turkey ham have then been deposited on the cheddar, and more cheddar have been dropped to form a second layer. Bechamel have been made replacing standard milk by lactose-free milk and butter with an equivalent quantity of olive oil and dropped on the top of the second slice of bread ; finally, some more cheddar have been dropped on the top of the béchamel layer to be melted 10 min at 180 degrees in the oven.

Salad was made to accompany it. Washed and cut radishes were mixed with cut cherry tomatoes and a mix of different kinds of lettuces. The seasoning was composed of olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

The duck à l'orange required 2 days of preparation and 8 hours of cooking

Testimonies from Célestin F., Lais L. and Gabriel O. are unanimous: the first element of the duck à l'orange to be made was its sauce.

An entire duck, as well as 6 duck legs, were purchased at Waitrose.

A duck glaze or brown sauce was made in the first place. Unappealing elements of the duck, such as its tail, its neck and some of its skin have been cut to be fried for some minutes at the bottom of a 5L cauldron. 3L of tap water have then been added into the cauldron.

Vegetables, namely 150 g of old Paris mushrooms, 1 whole branch of celeri, 1 can of chopped tomatoes, 1 big onion and 5 tall carrots have been approximately sliced to be boiled for 3 hours with the duck parts. Juniper berries, 4 teaspoons of thyme and 5 bay leaves have been added.

Once the boiling time was gone, the liquid was filtered to be kept apart. It was then boiled again for 1 hour to reduce its volume and give a strong meat flavour to the sauce.

The whole duck and the duck legs were deposited on the oven's grid for the bottom parts of the duck not to be immersed in grease, then cooked for 5 hours at 100°C - which is a relatively low temperature for an oven-baked dish, allowing it to get a unique taste and tenderness while making fat melt and giving it a crispy skin.

Meanwhile, the à l'orange sauce was prepared. 25g of white sugar were dropped in a pan and melted ; then, 30 mL of Balsamic vinegar were added and mixed with the resulting caramel. 200 mL of orange juice were then added and mixed while the fire was still running, before being mixed with the duck glaze.

The gratin dauphinois was cooked for 3 hours at a low temperature

3 kg of Pipper Mary's and King Edward's standard potatoes were peeled and sliced in thin slices before being stored in cold unsalted tap water.

300 mL of double-cream were mixed with approximately 1L of milk, then heated at a moderate fire (3/8) in a saucepan for 15 min, with 3 big grated cloves of garlic, 2 teaspoons of thyme, 3 bay leaves, salt and pepper. Meanwhile, 2 cloves of garlic were cut in half to be rubbed against the walls of the oven rack destined to contain the potatoes.

Potatoes were then positionned in an oven rack and covered in the cooked milk + cream mixture before being cooked for 3 hours at 100 degrees with the duck.

Before the dinner, it was removed from the 100 degrees oven, some gratted cheddar was added of the top of it and it was put back at 180 degrees for at least 10 minutes for the cheddar to be melted.

Red cabbage was cooked in 1L of Tesco standard red wine

1 entire red cabbage was sliced and boiled for 2 hours in 1L of Tesco standard red wine with salt and pepper. Tap water was periodically added to ensure the whole cabbage remained drowned in the liquid.

The cheese platter was entirely made with products from the Cambridge Marketplace

4 different kinds of cheeses have been bought at the Cambridge Marketplace - namely, Morbier, Saint-Nectaire, Comté and Tomme de Montagne.

5 whole fresh Tesco baguettes have been sliced to be eaten with it, 500 g of dried figs were added apart.

Significant changes have been made to the standard Strawberries Pie preparation protocol

The strawberry pie requires two elements to be made : a cooked paste or *pâte brisée*, and a baking cream or *crème pâtissière* to hold the strawberries.

The paste is made by mixing 200g of flour with 120g of butter and 40g of sugar. However, here butter was replaced with a similar quantity of olive oil. Once the elements were mixed to form a sandy element, a small quantity of water was progressively added to change the consistency of the paste until it forms a cohesive paste. It was then immediately spread on an oven rack, using a wine bottle to flatten it.

It is then cooked for at least 15 min at 180 degrees, until it is hard and tough. Meanwhile, the *crème pâtissière* is made by melting 250 mL milk with ½ teaspoon of vanilla extract, 33 g of sugar, 16g of flour and 1 egg in a saucepan, which are then heated at a medium heat (about 3/8) until it gets thick. It is then spread on the paste "*pâte brisée*" once it is cooked.

Finally strawberries are cut in half to be deposited as densely as possible on the cream.

Discussion

In this article we summarized the procedure for the preparation of the French Night of January the 12th. Previous research have already characterized the way of preparing isolated elements of such orgies, namely, the strawberry pie and the croques-monsieurs; however, to the best of our knowledge, no investigation have been carried out on the determination of the steps required for the preparation of a full French Night. These results will further allow researchers to replicate this event in laboratory conditions, leading the way to exciting perspectives such as the evaluation of health effects and precise measurement of the caloric intake taking place during these orgies.