

Buñuelos

A Fritter From the Manual de Mugerres

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The Recipe with My Translation

A doce onzas de masa, una libra de almendras blanqueadas. Las seis onzas majadas y juntas con la masa, y las otras hechas leche. Cuando majardes las almendras para echar con la masa, majaréis con ellas media libra de azúcar; y junto esto, juntad la masa con la leche en un lebrillo, y haced la masa como se suele hacer para esotros buñuelos. Y hecha la masa, freiréis los buñuelos con buen aceite. Y fritos, los enmendaréis. Ponedles después su azúcar y canela por encima, y si quisiéredes poner piñones blanqueados por encima será mejor.¹

*My (Rough) Translation*²

To 12 ounces of dough, a pound of blanched almonds. The six ounces pounded and together with the dough, and the others made milk. When you pound the almonds in order to cast them with the dough, pound with them a half pound of sugar, and unite this together the dough with the milk in an earthen pot, and make the dough as one usually makes it for that other fried cake. And made the dough, you will fry in a heavy pan the fried cakes with good oil. And fried, smear them with honey. Put to them after your sugar and cinnamon over the top, and if you wish to put blanched pine nuts over the top, it will be better.

*My (Refined) Translation*³

To 12 ounces of dough, add a pound of blanched almonds. Grind 6 ounces of the almonds to mix with the dough, use the other almonds to make almond milk. When you grind the almonds in order to put them into the dough, grind with them a half-pound of sugar. Put the almonds, sugar, and dough together in an earthenware bowl with the almond milk, and make the dough as one usually does for those other fried cakes. Once the dough is made, you will fry the cakes with good oil. After frying, coat with honey. Then put sugar and cinnamon over the top, and, if you wish to put blanched pine nuts over the top, it will be better.

My Redaction

10 ounces flour, by weight
2 ounces sugar, by weight
1 ½ teaspoon salt
Water

6 ounces almonds by weight, ground
6 ounces sugar, by weight
6 ounces almond milk, by volume

1. Weigh out flour and sugar
2. Add salt and mix
3. Slowly add water to make a stiff dough. It took about 1 cup for my trials.
4. Weigh out almonds and sugar.
5. Grind together

6. Work this mixture into the dough.
7. Add 6 ounces of almond milk to dough.
8. Mix well.
9. Drop by tablespoon into hot oil
10. Serve hot. Topped with cinnamon and sugar. Pine nuts are optional.

The Redaction Process

Step One: Translation

For this dish I was starting with the actual Castilian recipe as transcribed on the Cervantes Virtual Library

(<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/01371074322363763092257/p0000001.htm#61>).

Thankfully, 16th century Castilian is relatively similar to modern Spanish so my first step of translating was easier. I made a rough, word-for-word translation before refining it in an attempt to smooth out the flow of the language.

After that, I compared my translation to that of Karen Larsdatter in order to judge the accuracy of my work. (See Appendix A for her translation.) There are a few differences in word choice that we made. The most obvious of these being blanched vs. whitened as a translation of *blanqueador*. We also disagree on the translation of *lebrillo*. I used earthenware bowl. She used washtub. In neither case do I think these differences are of major importance so I have not changed my work.

Step Two: Examination

Next I began to examine any other recipes for fritters that I could find. See Appendix A for a listing of other recipes that I looked at.

Unfortunately, I was starting with a misconception. I looked at recipes for other words that could be translated as “fried cake”. None of the recipes I found were truly for buñuelos. Until I obtained a Spanish copy of Martino of Como, I had no idea how far off the mark I was. I had to come back to this step again and start over before I was done.

Step Three: Write/Plan

Cindy Renfrow discusses just how to go about redacting a period recipe¹. I followed that process faithfully by writing down what ingredients are called for in the recipe and what processes are to be used on them. (See Appendix B for this.)

Step Four: Cook

Step Five: Taste/Refine

I actually went through these two steps numerous times. This was to be entered in our local A&S competition in June, 2007, but I wasn't happy with the way the recipe was progressing. I did enter it at the local A&S display day after several revisions. After comments from the cooks there, I refined the recipe some more. Finally, I scrapped what I had done because I received a copy of Martino that gave me new information, as stated above, I had to go back to step 2 at this point.

Appendix A: Other Recipes Consulted

Another Translation of the Buñuelos recipe

by Karen Larsdatter

Recipe for making fritters¹

To twelve ounces of dough, a pound of whitened almonds. Six ounces (of almonds) ground and mixed

together with the dough, and the other (six ounces of almonds) make (almond) milk. When you crush the almonds for mixing with the dough, crush with them a half pound of sugar; and together with this, join the dough with the (almond) milk in a washtub, and make the dough as one usually does for those other fritters. And when the dough is done, fry the fritters in good oil. And when they're fried, smear them with honey. Then put on your sugar and cinnamon on top, and if you desire to put whitened pine nuts on top it will be better.

A "Redaction" from A Drizzle of Honey

By David M. Gitlitz & Linda Kay Davidson

Buñuelos²

Dough:

1 package dry yeast	2 eggs, well beaten
1 1/3 cups warm water	1/2 teaspoon salt
3 cups unsifted white flour	1 tablespoon olive oil

I've put redaction in quotes because the book is not based on actual recipes. Gitlitz and Davidson studied the Inquisition records of the Sephardic Jews in Spain and the New World and put together approximations of what the dishes might be based on testimony of the witnesses against the Jews.

A Translation of a Rissoles recipe from Ruperto de Nola (1529)

By Vincent Cuenca

Rissoles Called Robioles a la Catalana³

Take goat's milk, and almond milk, and then take the best wheat flour and rose water, and sugar, and egg yolks, and all this should be well mixed; and make from them a dough which should not be very soft or very hard, but of a good fashion; make little cakes from them, and take hazelnuts, and pine nuts and hard egg yolks; and grind them all together, and then take raw eggs, and mix them with the aforementioned hazelnuts and pine nuts, and this should be done in a good fashion, so that it is neither poorly mixed nor very heavy, and then take sugar and rose water and cinnamon, and a little ginger and make little cakes of all this mixed with the dough, and fry these little cakes with lard and melted fresh pork fat, in a tinned copper pot and when the lard is very hot toss the cakes in, and once they are fried remove them with a skimmer, and put them on a plate, and pour rose water and honey over them and when they are to be eaten sprinkle sugar and cinnamon over them.

Three recipes from Take a Thousand Eggs or More

By Cindy Renfrow

Harleian MS. 279 (c. 1420)

lj. **Cryspes.**⁴ Take Whyte or Eyroun, Mylke, & Floure, & a lytel Berme, & bete it to-gederys, & draw it ¶lorw a straynoure, so ¶lat it be renneng, & not to styf, & caste Sugre ¶ler-to, & Salt; ¶lanne take a chager ful of freysshe grece boyling, & put ¶lin hond in ¶le Bature, & lat ¶lin bature renne downun by ¶lin fyngerys in-to ¶le chafere; & whan it is ronne to-gedere on ¶le chafere, & is y-now, take & nym a skymer, & take it vp, & lat al ¶le grece renne owt, & put it on a fayre dyssche, & cast ¶ler-on Sugre y-now, & serue forth.

Harleian MS. 4016 (c. 1450)

115 **Cryspes.**⁵ Take white of eyren, Milke, and fine floure, and bete hit togidre, and drawe hit thorgh a streynour, so that hit be rennyng, and nought to stiff; and caste there-to sugur and salt. And then take a chaffur ful of fresh grece boyling; and ¶en put thi honed in the batur and lete the bater ren thorgh thi fingers into ¶e chaffur; And whan it is ren togidre in the chaffre, and is ynowe, take a Skymour, and take hit oute of the chaffur, and putte out al the grece, And lete ren; And putte hit in a faire dish, and cast sugur thereon ynow, and serue it forth.

Harleian MS. 4016

132 [**Lesenges Fries.**]^{6,7} Take floure, water, saffron, sugur, and salt, and make fine past ¶er-of, and faire thyn kakes; and kutte hem like lozenges, and fry hem in fine oile, and serue hem for the hote in a dish in Lenten tyme.

Chapter 5 of The Art of Cooking.

Note: This entire chapter is devoted to the making of fritters (buñuelos). It corresponds to Chapters 5 & 6 in Martino's book as reprinted in La cocina mediterránea en el inicio del Renacimiento

Specific recipes consulted from Martino:

More Fish-Shaped Fritters⁸

Crush some almonds and thin with rose water and sugar; and take some flour that has been thinned with plain water and sugar; and make the fritters by mixing all these things together, shaping them like fish as described above. Note that these fritters should be cooked dry in a pan like a torte.

176. Otros buñuelos en forma de peces.⁹

Wind-Filled Fritters¹⁰

Take some sifted flour and some water, salt, and sugar; thin the flour, thus making a dough that is not overly hard, and roll it out as for lasagne on a table; using a round wooden mold or a glass, cut the dough and fry it in good oil. Be careful that your dough has no holes; in this way, the fritters will puff up and will appear to be filled but will be empty.

179. Buñuelos rellenos de viento¹¹

Appendix B: Cook's Notes

Examining the Recipe:

<i>Ingredient</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Cooking Process</i>
Dough	12 oz.	Base measurement
Almonds	1 pound	Blanched, per measure of dough 6 oz. ground with sugar and mixed in "the rest" make almond milk
Sugar	½ pound	Ground with almonds Combine all with almond milk
"Good Oil"		Used to fry dough
Honey		Coat fried dough
Sugar/Cinnamon		Sprinkled over honey
Blanched Pine Nuts		Optional to go over honey/sugar/cinn

When I first began this project, I only had the Manual de Muges and the translation of de Nola from which to work. The biggest trouble I had was trying to determine whether buñuelos would have been more like a stiff dough that I could mold like a modern doughnut or be a runnier batter like a modern funnel cake. Looking at my translation, it seemed as though the batter was expected to be thin, as I was to add 6 oz. of almond milk to the dough, but this just seemed to rankle at me for some reason.

The MdM recipe states to make these like you would those "other" buñuelos. Since I was working with the English version of de Nola, scanning through the recipes didn't help much in determining consistency because several words could be translated "fried things" or "fritters". There were thin batters to coat things like apples and sage leaves and thick doughs to be wrapped around other things. I finally decided to attempt to keep it as thick as possible by basing my "dough" recipe on the Rissoles recipe. (See Appendix A)

Examining the Rissoles Recipe:

<i>Ingredient</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Cooking Process</i>
Goat's milk		
Almond milk		
Wheat flour		
Rose water		
Sugar		
Egg yolks		Mix all of the above well Make a dough that is neither hard nor soft Make little cakes
Hazelnuts		
Pine nuts		
Hard egg yolks		Grind all together
Raw eggs		Mix with nut mixture "in a good fashion"
Sugar		
Rose water		
Cinnamon		
Ginger		Make little cakes of this with the dough
Lard/melted fresh pork fat		Fry the cakes
Rose water/honey/sugar/cinn		Toppings for the fried cakes

The week before Kingdom A&S, I received three, long-awaited books from Spain. These provided me with my own copies of Maestro Martino of Como and Ruperto de Nola to examine in Spanish. I discovered that I had discounted Martino for no good reason. He had two chapters devoted to buñuelos; one for regular season and one for Lenten times. Could these be the “other buñuelos” that the MDM refers to? Although I had been refining this project for over a year at this point, I went back to the drawing board yet again in light of this new information.

Examining Martino's Buñuelos Recipes:

More Fish Shaped Fritters

<i>Ingredient</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Cooking Process</i>
Almonds	“some”	Crushed
Rose water		
Sugar		Use these two to “thin” the crushed almonds
Flour	“some”	
Plain water		
Sugar		Use these two to “thin” the flour
		Mix all of these together
		Shape like fish
		Cook in a dry pan like a torte

Wind-Filled Fritters

<i>Ingredient</i>	<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Cooking Process</i>
Flour	“some”	Sifted
Water	“some”	
Salt		
Sugar		Use these three to “thin” the flour
		Make a dough that is not overly hard
		Roll out like lasagne
		Cut the dough
		Fry in good oil

I ended up using Stone-Ground Whole Wheat flour and regular granulated sugar. Several of the recipes that I read through specified wheat flour though others just said “flour”. Wheat was definitely what I considered to be the most obvious choice since wheat had been a main crop since Roman times in Spain. As to the sugar, again, this has been a major crop in Spain since the Arab invasions. It would not have been as expensive to a Spaniard as to the rest of the European peoples.

I decided to weigh out my flour and sugar to make the “12 ounces of dough” rather than try to make a dough of flour, sugar, and water that weighed 12 ounces. It ended up working better for me to make a reasonable number of fritters that way.

Appendix C: What I Learned

The first thing that I learned was that I would not have wanted the job of almond peeler in a medieval kitchen. It is much easier to buy pre-blanch almonds. I soaked them in hot water to loosen the skins, but still needed longer nails than I have in order to facilitate the peeling.

The most important thing I learned was that although there were lots of recipes for fritters once

I started looking, there was just as much variation in how they were to be made. Some used leavening, but most didn't. (I also learned that just because someone speaks the language, don't trust their translation. One of the recipes translated by Parzen called for yeast. After looking up "levantad" on the RAE website for its medieval usage, I discovered that it should have been "a bit of dough" that would have been saved from a previous day's bread.) The differences between regular season and Lenten recipes were the use of eggs and milk or almond milk.

I decided to base my redaction on the Lenten recipes because many theorize that this cookbook was written around the time of the expulsion of the Jews and although anonymous, may have been written by a Jew. This is also my reason for using olive oil.

End Notes

The Recipe with My Translation and Redaction

¹This is the original recipe from the Spanish as transcribed on the website:

<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/01371074322363763092257/p0000001.htm#61>

²As closely as possible, this is my word for word translation of the recipe at hand.

³This is a more readable translation taking into account inherent meanings and modern phrasing. I have also compared it to the translation by Karen Larsdatter (found in Appendix A) to ward against error.

The Redaction Process

¹Renfrow, Volume 2, p. 357

Appendix A: Other Recipes Consulted

¹<http://www.larsdatter.com/manual.htm>

²Gitlitz & Davidson, p. 271

³Nola, p. 54-55

⁴Renfrow, Volume 1, p. 192

⁵Renfrow, Volume 1, p. 192

⁶Renfrow, Volume 2, p. 283

⁷Renfrow has a note on this recipe that it was “added from Douce by T.A.” T.A. is Mr. Thomas Austin who originally published Two Fifteenth-Century Cookery Books in 1888. Douce is the Douce Manuscript 55 from c. 1450 which were also studied and transcribed as part of the work by Mr. Austin.

⁸Martino, p. 94

⁹Cruz Cruz, p. 195

¹⁰Martino, p. 95

¹¹Cruz Cruz, p. 196

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Online Resources

Manual de Mugerres

<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/01371074322363763092257/p0000001.htm#61>

Translation of Manual de Mugerres

<http://www.larsdatter.com/manual.htm>