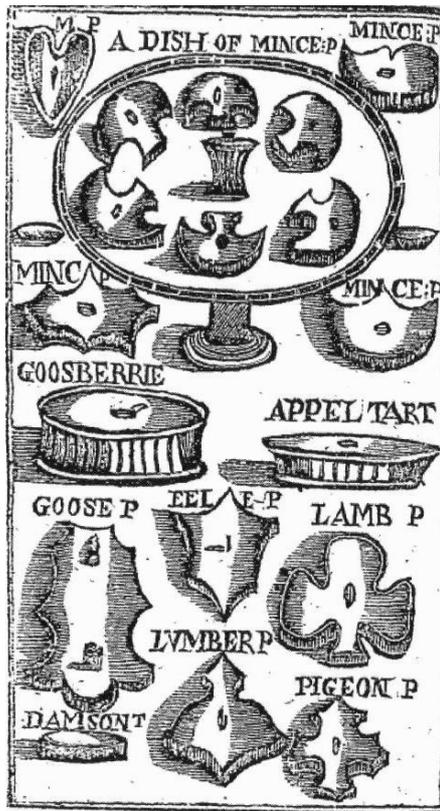


RECIPES FOR KIT-CAT PIES¹



Background: English pies in the 1690s/1700s

Mr Christopher (Kit) Cat's original pie recipe, sadly, does not survive. Though some sources speak of Cat baking all sorts of sweet and savoury pastries, several specify that the Kit-Cat Pie was a form of mutton pie.

Mutton pies in the 1690s would have been a type of 'sweetmeat', involving a great deal of fruit and sugar – sometimes to disguise less than perfectly fresh meat, and always to assist with preservation. Since 1660, French cookery had been tending towards our modern separation of sweet and savoury, but English pies and puddings still mixed the two in a style that we find today mostly in Moroccan or Persian cooking. When cut open, the sweet, spicy fragrance of an English meat pie would have hit you deliciously in the face. English pie lids of this date were also highly decorative (see illustration above left), and would have been presented as table centrepieces (see illustration of a winter table layout below).

The below selection of recipes are taken from two English cookery books in the decades immediately following the end of the Kit-Cat Club (c.1720), but as recipes were then always recorded with some time lag – immortalising food that had been tried and tested during preceding decades – and as culinary fashions, like all fashions, changed more slowly in the eighteenth century than in later centuries – we can be fairly confident that these recipes date from the time when the Kit-Cat Club was meeting, and eating, in London.

Original recipes, taken from Edward Kidder's *Receipts of Pastry and Cookery* (1740), followed by modern 'translations':

ORIGINAL PASTRY RECIPE

Paste for a high Pie:

Lay down a peck of flour and work it up with 3 pound of butter melted in a Saucepan of boiling liquor and make it into a stiff paste.

MODERN TRANSLATION (for such 'hot-water-crust pastry')

¹ With thanks to Michele Field, without whom the 'translations' to modern recipes could not have been done, and to Tom Jaine, for his advice on hot-water pastes and 'caudles'.

NOTE on quantities: A ‘peck’ is equivalent to a quarter bushel (or 7½ lbs or 3.33 kgs) – an amount appropriate for an eighteenth century cook making massive pies for his/her master’s entertaining. The recipe below is for 900g or 2 lbs only – approximately enough to make two of the pies below according to their ‘translated’ (and thus scaled down) recipes. For a single pie of no great size, you could half the ingredients.

NOTE on sequence: When it comes to lining the pie tins and also sealing on the pie lids, it is necessary to work while the pastry is still somewhat warm and moist, therefore it is wise to prepare the fillings for the pies before making the pastry. If cooking in large quantities, it may be useful to make one batch of pastry for the linings and then another fresh batch for the lids.

NOTE on edibility: While the below pastry recipe makes a perfectly edible pastry, largely thanks to the extra ingredient of sugar, it should be noted that the hot-water pastry of the 1690s/1700s was intended primarily to serve as a cooking vessel and as decoration. Do not, in other words, feel bad if your diners leave a lot of the pastry on their plates.

Ingredients:

300ml water
200g lard
200g unsalted butter
900g plain flour
2 egg yolks
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons icing sugar
And an extra egg, beaten, to glaze

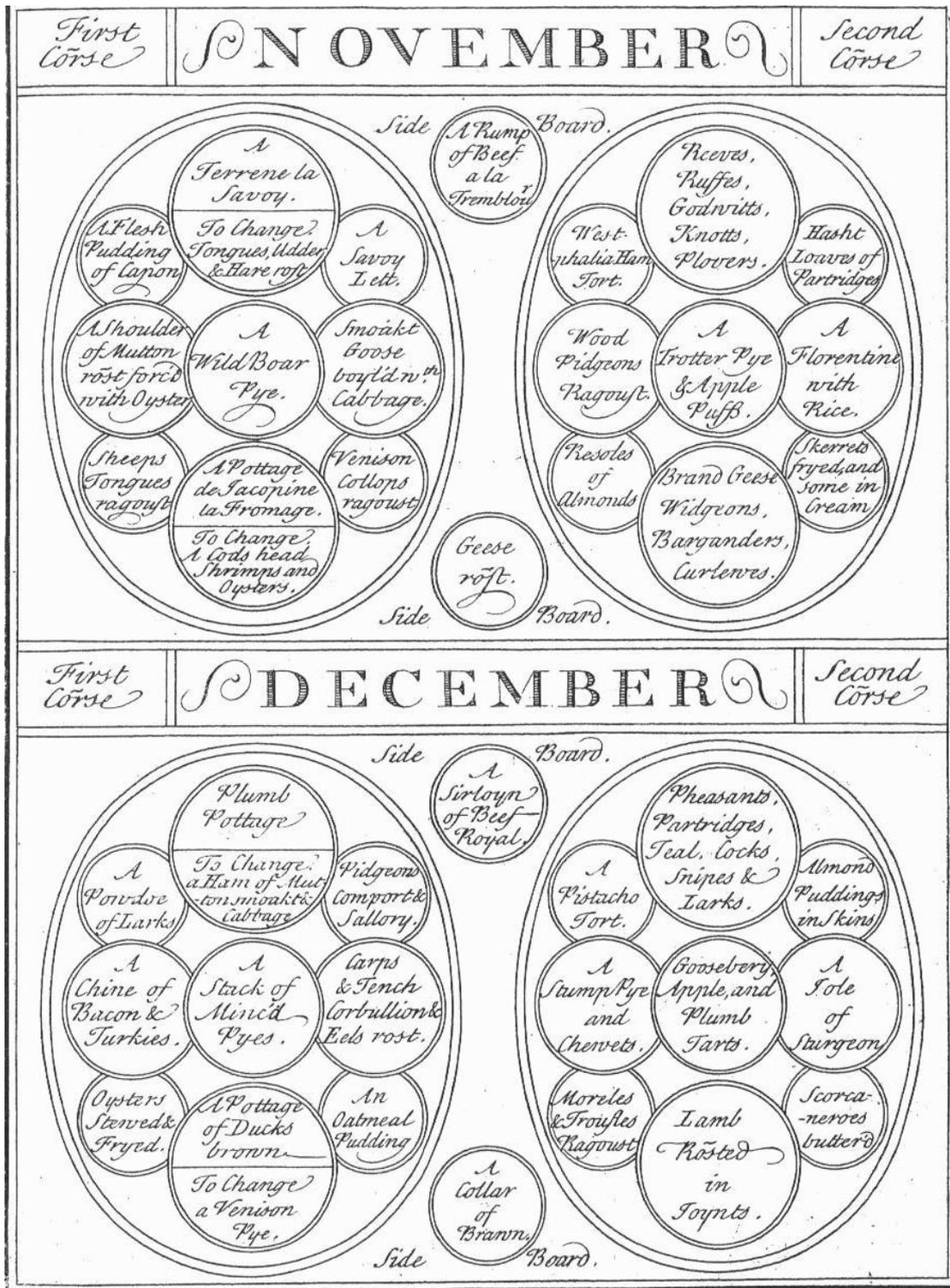
Instructions:

Bring the water to the boil, then add the lard and the butter and stir until melted. (Butter can replace the lard if necessary, though this will make for less solid pastry.)

Pour flour in a mixing bowl, then add the egg yolks, salt and sugar. Mix well.

Gradually pour in the hot water and melted fats, mixing constantly. Mix until dough is smooth and can be handled. If it remains far too wet and sticky to roll, add more flour.

Roll out to about ½ cm in thickness, ready for use.



Pies as centrepieces of a winter table setting in the early 18th century.

ORIGINAL PIE RECIPE NO.1

Sweet Lamb Pie:

Cut a hind quarter of lamb into thin slices

Season it with sweet spice [Sweet spice is Cloves, Mace, Nutmeg, Cinnamon, Sugar and Salt] and lay it in the pie mixed with half a pound of raisons of the sun, stoned, half a pound of currants, 2 or 3 Spanish potatoes boiled, blanched and sliced or an artichoke bottom or two, with Prunella, Damsons, Gooseberries, Grapes, Citron and Lemon Chips, lay on butter and close the pie. When tis baked make for it a Caudle.

MODERN TRANSLATION

- Ingredients:
- Pie pastry (as in recipe above)
 - ½ leg of lamb, cut off the bone and cut into small cubes
 - ¼ teaspoon crushed cloves
 - ¼ teaspoon mace
 - ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
 - ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
 - ½ teaspoon sugar
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - ¼ lb (or 110g) sultanas
 - ¼ lb (or 110g) currants
 - 2 small sweet potatoes (or 2 artichoke hearts), boiled and sliced
 - 2 prunes
 - 2 plums, preferably Damson
 - ¼ lb (or 110g) gooseberries
 - 1 lemon
 - ¼ block (c.60g) of butter

A deep-sided, medium-sized pie dish or cake tin (e.g. 15-25cm diameter, 5cm deep). NOT an American pie dish with shallow sloping sides.

Instructions:

Set the dried fruit to soak in bowl(s) of lukewarm water for at least an hour.

Preheat oven to 150°C (300°F)

De-stone and roughly chop prunes and plums.

In a mixing bowl, combine the spices (crushed cloves, mace, nutmeg, cinnamon, sugar, salt) with the sultanas, currants, chopped prunes and plums, gooseberries, and the zest of the lemon. Cut the same zested lemon in half and squeeze in the juice of one half. Add the chopped meat and mix thoroughly with hands.

Make pastry (as in recipe above), roll and line pie-dish, ensuring that some overlaps the edge on all sides. Also, preserve sufficient dough to make a lid.

Layer in the meat/fruit mixture, with slices of the sweet potato or artichoke heart and thin slices of the other half of (peeled by zesting) lemon, pips removed.

Distribute three dessertspoons of butter around the top of the pie filling.

Roll remaining pastry to lay over the dish as a lid.

Fold excess from sides of pie tin in towards the centre of the pie. Paint these flaps with beaten egg as glue. Lay over the pie lid and pinch edges tightly closed. Make a hole in the centre and place a small funnel/hollow-cigar of rolled tinfoil or writing paper into it (or use a ceramic 'pie bird' or 'pie funnel' for the same purpose).

Paint lid with beaten egg to glaze, and stick on other pastry bits of decoration if wishes, using the egg as glue.

Place in centre of oven and bake for about 3 hours. If the lid becomes overly brown, place a sheet of foil on top.

The 'Caudle' in the original recipe was a kind of custard or 'liaison', which was made separately and poured into the pie after it was baked, to thicken the juices within. Whether or not you wish to take this final authentic step will depend upon how solid your pie is – can its lid be removed and replaced? – and upon how sweet/thick you like your gravy.

ORIGINAL RECIPE FOR CONDIMENT (to go with pie no.1)

To make 'Catchup': Take a pint of Claret, a pint of Vinegar and 6 ounces of Anchovies and whole Spice. Boil it together till it is dissolved. Strain it through a fine sieve and keep it in a bottle.

MODERN TRANSLATION

They did not eat tomatoes in the 1690s/1700s as these imports were considered 'the Devil's food'. The above recipe therefore makes an extremely sour condiment that is basically a cross between mulled wine and spiced vinegar. A very small drop goes a long way in cutting through the heaviness of the pie, so you may want to halve the quantities. Any red wine can be used instead of claret and using red-wine vinegar is recommended. 'Whole Spice' is what we call allspice or pimento. Simmer for at least 30 minutes, not only to dissolve the anchovies but also to reduce the mixture.



ORIGINAL PIE RECIPE NO.2

Minced Pies:

Shred a pound of neats tongue parboiled with two pound of beef suit, 5 Pippins and a green Lemon Peel. Season it with an Ounce of Sweet Spice, a pound of Sugar, 2 pound of Currents, half a pint of Sack, a little Orange flower water, the juice of 3 Lemons, a quarter of a pound of Citron Lemon and Orange peel. Mix these together and fill your pies.

MODERN TRANSLATION

NOTE: The proportion of sugar in this recipe has been significantly reduced since we no longer need its preservative function and the fruit tastes more like fruit without so much. These pies, however, are still surprisingly dessert-like – fruit pies with added meat, rather than meat pies with added fruit.

Ingredients: Pie pastry (as in recipe above)
½ lb (225g) calves tongues
1 lb (450g) beef suet ('Atoira' brand works fine)
2 cooking apples
1 lime
1-2 lemons

1 orange
1 lb (450g) currants
¼ teaspoon crushed cloves
¼ teaspoon mace
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
5oz (150g) sugar
¼ pint (or 135ml) of dry sherry
and a dash of orange flower water if available

Ideally, a muffin tin with deep (e.g. 7-8cm) moulds and loose, push-up bases to help get them out easily. Alternatively, several small pie tins or dishes with deep sides.

Instructions:

Set the dried fruit to soak in bowl(s) of lukewarm water for at least an hour.

Parboil the calves tongue – 30 minutes for the whole thing, less time if cut in half while raw.

When cooled, peel the calves tongue shred/grate/finely chop it or put it through a mincer.

Preheat oven to 150°C (300°F)

Mix the tongue together with the suet.

Peel and shred/grate/finely chop the apples and add to meat.

Add the zest of the lime and the orange.

Add the cloves, mace, nutmeg, cinnamon, sugar, sherry, currants and orange flower water.

Squeeze and add the juice of the lemons and a little of their zest.

Make pastry (as in recipe above), roll and line several small pie dishes or muffin moulds, ensuring that there is some extra lying over the edges. Reserve sufficient to make lids for each.

Mix all the filling ingredients together and then spoon the filling into the piecrusts.

Fold edges of each pie in towards centre, then paint flaps with the beaten egg, as glue. Seal pastry lids onto each pie, puncture with a good hole in the centre to release steam.

Glaze with beaten egg.

Bake for around 2 hours in centre of oven. If the lids become overly brown, place a sheet of foil on top of the tray.



ORIGINAL PIE RECIPE NO.3

Savoury Mutton Pie:

Season your mutton steaks with savoury spice [Savoury spice is pepper, salt, cloves, mace and nutmeg]. Fill the pie, lay on butter and close the pie. When it is baked, toss up a handful of chopped capers, cucumbers and oysters in gravy, an anchovy and drawn butter.

MODERN TRANSLATION

- Ingredients:
- Pie pastry (as in recipe above)
 - 1 small leg of mutton, removed from the bone and chopped into small cubes, or several similarly cut mutton steaks, fat removed
 - ½ teaspoon crushed cloves
 - ¼ teaspoon mace
 - ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - ½ teaspoon ground pepper
 - 1 stick (250g) of butter
 - ½ small jar of capers
 - 1 anchovy chopped, or ½ teaspoon anchovy paste
 - Chinese oyster sauce
 - 1 large dill pickle (or 1 small cucumber), finely diced

A deep-sided, medium-sized pie dish or cake tin (e.g. 15-25cm diameter, 5cm deep). NOT an American pie dish with shallow sloping sides.

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 150°C (300°F)

Toss mutton cubes in the mixture of crushed cloves, mace, nutmeg, salt and pepper.

Make pastry (as in recipe above), roll and line pie-dish, ensuring that extra flaps hang over the sides. Preserving sufficient dough to make a lid.

Pile meat into piecrust and place three dessertspoons of butter on top.

Fold flaps of pie lining in towards centre of the pie and brush them with beaten egg, as glue. Roll and fit pastry lid to the pie, pinching sides well closed.

Make a large hole in the centre of the lid to release steam and a particularly wide chimney out of tinfoil or rolled writing paper – big enough to pour liquid into afterwards. Decorate and glaze lid with beaten egg.

Place in centre of oven for 2 hours. Cover with a sheet of foil if it begins to brown.

While pie is baking, clarify the remaining butter (warm in pan and spoon off the top, clear liquid, leaving the solids in the bottom) and mix the clarified butter in a bowl with the capers, chopped anchovy or anchovy paste, some dashes of oyster sauce, and the diced pickle.

When pie is cooked and still hot, cut open the centre of lid and pour the above mixture into the pie. Alternatively, if there seems no room inside the pie for the mixture, serve the pie and pour the mixture to the side, as a condiment.

Original recipes, taken from Charles Carter's *Complete Practical Cook* (1730), followed by modern 'translations':

ORIGINAL PASTRY RECIPE NO. 2

Hot Butter Paste for raised baked Meats:

Take a peck of fine Flour, lay it on your Board, and spread it ready for your Liquor. For a peck of Flour you must have a Pound and a half of Butter. Put it in your Liquor and let it boil, let it cool a little, and then work up your Paste with it, and work it up pretty stiff and close. Then put it in a dry Cloth and let it sweat a while, and then work it into what you please.

MODERN TRANSLATION

Same as previous 'hot-water-crust pastry' recipe – see above.

ORIGINAL PIE RECIPE NO.4

A Mutton Squab Pie:

Take a Neck of Mutton, or a Loin, and cut it into Cutlets pretty thin. Season it with Pepper, Salt, and Nutmeg, Thyme and Parsley minced. Raise a round Pie, put a little Beef Suet in the Bottom minced and beat, lay over your Mutton. Then take six or eight large Pippins, and a Dozen of large Onions, and first put in a good Handful or two of Raisins, then put on your Apples and Onions, put over butter, close it and bake it. Cut up the Lid, take out the Fat, put in some Gravy, and a little thick Butter, and shake it well together. Garnish with the Lid and serve it.

MODERN TRANSLATION

Ingredients: Pie pastry (as in recipe above)
1 leg of lamb, carved from the bone and cut into large chunks.
(or mutton cutlets, carved from loin or neck and with the bones removed)
4 tablespoons beef suet

1-2 teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon pepper
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
2 sprigs thyme
Small handful of parsley
3 cooking apples
3 onions
1 lb (450g) raisins
1 block (250g) butter

A large, deep-sided pie dish or cake tin (e.g. 25cm diameter, 5cm deep). NOT an American pie dish with shallow sloping sides.

Instructions:

Set the dried fruit to soak in bowl(s) of lukewarm water for at least an hour.

Preheat oven to 150°C (300°F)

Strip the thyme leaves and chop the parsley.

Roll the lamb or mutton in the salt, pepper, nutmeg and herbs.

Peel and thickly slice the onions. Slice the unpeeled apples into rounds – either rings, or remove the pips as you go.

Make your pastry as in the recipe above and then line the pie-tin, ensuring that extra hangs over the sides. Thickly grease the inside with suet.

Arrange the meat in the pie dish as a bottom layer.

Scatter the soaked raisins over the meat.

Layer the apple and onion rings above the raisins and meat.

Put 4-6 dessertspoonfuls of butter on top.

Fold in the excess pie lining over the filling, and paint with beaten egg to act as glue. Roll out the pastry lid and seal it over the pie, pinching the sides together well. Make a hole in the centre and place a small funnel/hollow-cigar of rolled tinfoil or writing paper into it (or use a ceramic ‘pie bird’ or ‘pie funnel’ for the same purpose).

Glaze with the beaten egg.

Bake on a centre shelf for around 4 hours. Cover with a sheet of foil if it begins to brown.



An ersatz Kit-Cat Club coat of arms on a copper and silver serving bowl.

ORIGINAL GRAVY RECIPE (to accompany pie no.4 above, or pie no.1)

To draw Gravy of Veal, Beef or Mutton:

Take Part of a Buttock of Beef, a fillet or Veal, or a Leg of Mutton. Cut it in Collops as thick as your little Finger, and hack it well. Take a broad Stew pan and lay in the Bottom some Butter and some Slices of bacon, then lay over your Beef, Veal or Mutton. Cut three or four large Onions in Slices and lay over and a Carrot sliced. You may strew over a little fine Flour or not. Set it over a moderate Fire and let it stove, being close covered, till it be very brown, stirring it sometimes to keep it from burning. And when it is worked very brown you must put in your Broth, as much as you have Occasion for; that is, as much as your Meat will brown and give a good Colour to. Let it boil pretty well, put in a Faggot of Sweet herbs and when boiled slice in a Lemon, and strain it out for your Use. A good Pan of Meat will make six Quarts or two Gallons of good Gravy.

MODERN TRANSLATION

Ingredients:

- 2-3 escalopes cut from beef or veal rumpsteak or mutton/lamb leg
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 4 strips bacon or pancetta
- 3-4 onions
- 1 carrot
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- 1 lemon
- 1 lamb, beef or vegetable stock cube

Several sprigs each of basil, parsley and mint, tied together into a bouquet with (uncoloured) thread or string

A saucepan or casserole dish.

NOTE on quantities: This recipe has been scaled down primarily by reducing the amount of liquid added. More liquid can be added if more gravy is desired. The whole lemon makes this gravy taste primarily like a lemon sauce, so reduce to a squeeze of lemon if a more meaty flavour is preferred.

Instructions:

Chop the meat into small cubes and the bacon into pieces.

Fry the bacon, add the butter and then brown the meat inside a deep, thick-bottomed stewing pan or casserole dish, over a medium heat. Do so until it is very well browned.

Roughly peel and chop the onions and the carrot and add to the pan, along with a cup (250ml) of water.

When simmering, sprinkle in the flour and stir well, dispersing lumps.

Cover and leave to simmer over a moderate heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Dissolve the stock cube in two cups (500ml) of hot water and add to the pan, along with the sprigs of basil, parsley and mint. Bring to a boil.

Slice the lemon and add. Continue to boil for 20 minutes.

Strain and reserve the gravy. Pick out the meat pieces with a fork and re-mix with the strained gravy, ready for pouring into or over the pies (see above).

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