

# Medieval Mustard

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Mustard is a standard condiment that has been in use for thousands of years. The first recorded use was by the Romans (Columella, *De Re Rustica*. XII 57) Its use in the Middle Ages is clearly indicated by the number of times it is referred to in period cookbooks. *The Viandier of Taillevent* refers to it several times, and gives at least one recipe for making it. *Le Menagier de Paris* gives a recipe and says to buy it from the sauce merchant (depending on the version). Both *The Forme of Cury* and *Das Buoch Von Guter Spise* include recipes for a mustard sauce for preserving fruits and vegetables.

*Food and Drink in Britain* (C. Anne Wilson) quotes figures for a fifteenth-century English household which in a given year used:

- 3/4 lb saffron
- 5 lb pepper
- 2 1/2 lb ginger
- 3 lb cinnamon
- 1 1/4 lb each of cloves and mace
- **84 lb mustard seed.**

Mustard, after all, was locally grown and was a whole lot cheaper than spices which had to be imported from the Orient.

Mustard is a cool season broadleaf crop. The bright yellow flowers look a lot like canola when in full bloom. Mustard is a popular crop in crop rotations, since it enhances yields of wheat and barley, and breaks disease cycles in cereal grains.

Mustard is a nutritious food containing 28% to 36% protein. Mustard does not contain antigrowth factors like those found soybeans or the anti-thyroid compound common to related spices. Its higher protein content is of particular interest when applied to processed meats. The vegetable oil of mustard is nutritionally similar to other oils and makes up 28% to 36% of the seed. Tocopherols present in mustard help to protect the oil from rancidity, thus contributing to a long shelf life. Erucic acid is a significant component of mustard oil.

Mustard is widely known for its sharp flavor. This characteristic flavor is an essential component of many dressings and sauces world-wide. Unlike other "hot" flavors, the flavor profile of mustard does not linger. Rather it presents itself quickly, dissipates, and leaves little or no after-taste. Mustard oils are the characteristic flavor components of whole seed, ground mustard, and mustard flour (powder). The essential oil in mustard inhibits growth of certain yeasts, molds, and bacteria, enabling mustard to function as a natural preservative.

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The 13<sup>th</sup> century Arabo-Andalusian *Manuscrito anonimo* gives the following recipe for "Sinab":

*Clean good mustard and wash it with water several times, then dry it and pound it until it is like antimony [?]. Sift it with a sifter of hair, and then pound shelled almonds and put them with the*

*mustard and stir them together. Then press out their oil and mash them with breadcrumbs little by little, not putting in the breadcrumbs all at once but only little by little. Then pour strong vinegar and eggs over this dough for the dish, having dissolved sufficient salt in the vinegar. Then dissolve it well to the desired point, and clarify it thoroughly with a clean cloth; and there are those who after it is clarified add a little honey to lessen its heat. Either way it is good.*

The 14<sup>th</sup> century Catalan *Llibre de Sent Sovi* gives a recipe "to make mustard our way", with finely ground mustard seed, broth, and honey or sugar, pointing out that "the French style" is tempered with vinegar rather than broth.

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*The Forme of Cury*, compiled in 1390, provides a recipe for Lombard Mustard.

[ 69 ]

Lumbard Mustard.

xx.  
vii. v.

Take Mustard seed and waish it & drye it in an  
ovene, grynde it drye. farse it thurgh a farse. clarifie  
hony w wyne & vyneg & stere it wel togedr and make  
it thikke ynowz. & whan þ wilt spende þof make it  
thynne w wyne.

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*Le Menagier de Paris*, 1395, translated by Janet Hinson (Lady Maiorli Bhan). It was also translated as *The Goodman of Paris*, Power and Coulton. This recipes is from Hinson

Menagier p. M-36

*If you wish to provide for keeping mustard a long time do it at wine-harvest in sweet must. And some say that the must should be boiled. Item, if you want to make mustard hastily in a village, grind some mustard-seed in a mortar and soak in vinegar, and strain; and if you want to make it ready the sooner, put it in a pot in front of the fire. Item, and if you wish to make it properly and at leisure, put the mustard-seed to soak overnight in good vinegar, then have it ground fine in a mill, and then little by little moisten it with good vinegar: and if you have some spices left over from making jelly, broth, hippocras or sauces, they may be ground up with it, and then leave it until it is ready.*

In his *Miscellany*, Duke Cariadoc provides the following interpretation:

- 4 t mustard seed
- 1/2 c vinegar total; about 5T of it to soak initially
- spices: 1/4 t hippocras spices (see *Menagier* recipe for hippocras p. 87)

Soak the mustard seed overnight, then grind (we used a coffee mill) with the extra vinegar.

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From an old Icelandic Medical Miscellany ( supposed to be 15<sup>th</sup> century from a lost manuscript of the 13<sup>th</sup> century)

*One shall take mustard (seed) and add a fourth part of honey and grind all together with good vinegar. This is good for forty days.*

*One shall take mustard (seed) and a third of honey and a tenth part of anise and two such of cinnamon. Grind this all with strong vinegar and put it in a cask. This is good for three months.*

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Platina's *De Honesta Voluptate et Valetudine* (On Right Pleasure and Good Health) ca. 1465, Milham translation provides the following information:

#### *VIII. 12 On Mustard*

*We also use it in dishes, and there are three types of it: one slender, another like the leaves of rape, and another like rocket seed. The best grows in Egypt with no cultivation; however, an imported plant grows better. Pythagoras gave mustard a high place because of its strength, since nothing else penetrates more into the nostrils and brain. It is thought to dispel poisons of snakes and mushrooms on account of its warm and dry force. It is considered very useful to the stomach, drives out ill in the lungs, lightens a chronic cough, makes spitting easy, is given in food to those who are gasping, purges senses and head from sneezes, softens the bowels, stimulates menstruation and urine, and cuts phlegm. When smeared on an ailment of the body, it shows the force of its burning.*

The recipe for mustard sauce itself is a little too cryptic {"if you want it sweet, add sweet things; if sour, sour"}, but there is a "Red Mustard Sauce" recipe.

#### *VIII. 14 Red Mustard Sauce*

*Grind in mortar or mill, either separately or all together, mustard, raisins, dates, toasted bits of bread, and a little cinnamon. When it is ground, soak with verjuice or vinegar and a bit of must, and pass through a sieve into serving dishes. This heats less than the one above and stimulates thirst but does not nourish badly.*

He also has a recipe for portable mustard balls. Make the balls in advance and dry them, carry with you, and then add to vinegar or verjuice when needed.

#### *VIII. 15 Mustard Sauce in Bits*

*Mix mustard and well-pounded raisins, a little cinnamon and cloves, and make little balls or bits from this mixture. When they have dried on a board, carry them with you wherever you want. When there is a need, soak in verjuice or vinegar or must. This differs little in nature from those above.*

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From *Libro de Guisados* (Spanish, 1529). Translated by Lady Brigid ni Chiarain (Robin Carroll-Mann)

### **Mustard**

*You must take granular mustard; and clean it of the dust and the earth and the stones and grind it well in a mortar, and when it is ground, pass it through a cloth strainer: and then take the mustard powder and put it in a mortar with a piece of bread crumb\* soaked in meat broth; and crush it all together; and when it is well crushed, dissolve it with a little bit of lean broth without fat which is well salted and when it is gradually dissolved so that it should not be too thin, take honey which is good; and melted on the fire, and cast it in the mortar and stir it well until it is well mixed and prepare dishes. Some cast a little vinegar in the broth, you can add peeled crushed almonds with the mustard, toasted.*

\*note: the word here is "migajon" which means a chunk of the inside part of the loaf, ie., not the crust.

### **"French Mustard" (Mustard recipe # 2 from *Libro de Guisados*)**

*You must take a "cantaro" [a wine-vessel and/or unit of measurement for wine] of the must of wine, either red or white; and grind a dishful of mustard that is select and very good; and grind with it, if you wish, after passing it through a cloth strainer or a hair sieve, a little cinnamon and cloves and ginger and cast it all, very well mixed, into the mortar, into the cantaro or jar of wine; and with a cane stir it around a long while, so that it mixes with the must; and each day you must stir it with the cane seven or eight times; and you will boil the wine with this mustard and when the wine has finished boiling, you can eat this mustard; and when you want to take it out to cast it in the dish to eat, first stir it with the cane a little, and this is very good mustard and it will keep all year.*

### **"Another Very Good French Mustard Which Lasts All Year" (*Libro de Guisados*):**

*Take a caldron which will hold two cantaros, and fill it with red grapes and set it to cook upon the fire until it is reduced by half and there remains half a caldron which is one cantaro; and when the grapes are cooked remove the scum with a stick of wood; and stir it now and then with a stick; and strain this must through a clean cloth and cast it into a cantaro [used here in the sense of wine-vessel]; and then cast in the mustard, which will be a dishful well ground up, stirring it with a stick, and each day you should stir with it, four or five times a day and if you wish you can grind with the mustard cinnamon three parts, cloves two parts, and ginger one part; this French mustard is very good and lasts all year and is mulberry-colored.*

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From the Dutch *Eenen Nyeuwen Coock Boeck* (1560), written by Gheeraert Vorselman and translated by Lord Floris van Montfort (G.A. van heusden) of the Shire of Polderslot.

*Om drooghen mostaerd te maken. opt Rooms*

*Droocht nieuwe mostaertsæt in die heete sonne oft oven oft bijden viere, ende stoot dat in eenen vijsere tot cleynnen mele, ende maeckt hier af een deech met stercken azijn ende een cleynt luttel greynpoeders ende laet dan dat tot eenen stuck ligghen drooghen.*

To make dry mustard in the Roman way

Dry new mustard seed in the hot sun or in the oven or at the fire, and crush it in a mortar to fine flour and make a dough with this and with strong vinegar and a little grain powder and let dry to one piece.

*Anderen mostaert opt Rooms, wit*

*Neemt mostaertsæt ende legget twee daghen in water te weycke, ende veranderet water dicwil, so sal hi te witter ende beter zijn ende stootten oft wrijften wel cleyne. Dan doeter toe amandelen cleynt ghestooten, ende wrijvet weder tesamen met witbroot dat geweyct is; dan doeget samen door met stercken azijn oft verjus. Wildien sterc hebben, doeter stercke specerie in, wildien soet hebben, doeter soet in.*

Different mustard the Roman way, white

Take mustard seed and lay it two days to soak in water, and change the water often, so it will be whiter and better and crush them small. Then add almonds crushed small and rub it together with whitebread that has soaked; then mix it with strong vinegar or verjuice. IF you want it strong, add strong spices, and if you want it sweet, add sweet.

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*Delights for Ladies - Cookerie and Huswifery, Hugh Plat, 1609*

Mustard Meale

*It is usuall in Venice to sell the meal of Mustard in their markets as we doe flower and meale in England: this meale, by the addition of vinegar, in two or three daies becommeth exceeding good mustard: but it would be much stronger and finer, if the husks or huls were first divided by searce or boulder: which may easily be done, if you dry your seeds against the fire before you grinde them. The Dutch iron hand-mills or an ordinarie pepper-mill may serve for this purpose.*

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*The Closet of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digby, Kt Opened. 1669, provides two recipes for making mustard.*

*To make Mustard*

*The best way of making Mustard is this: Take of the best Mustard-seed (which is black) for example, a quart. Dry it gently in an Oven, and beat it to a subtle powder, and searse it. Then mingle well strong Wine-vinegar with it, so much that it be pretty liquid, for it will dry with*

*keeping. Put to this a little Pepper beaten small (white is the best) at discretion, as about a good pugil, and put a good spoonful of Sugar to it (which is not to make it taste sweet, but rather quick, and to help the fermentation) lay a good Onion in the bottom, quartered if you will, and a race of Ginger scraped and bruised; and stir it often with an Horseradish root cleansed, which let always lie in the pot till it have lost its virtue, then take a new one. This will keep long, and grow better for a while. It is not good till after a month, that it hath fermented a while.*

*Some think it will be the quicker, if the seed be ground with fair water, instead of Vinegar, putting store of Onions in it.*

*My lady Holmeby makes her quick fine Mustard thus: Choose true Mustard-seed; dry it in an Oven after the bread is out. Beat and searse it to a most subtle powder. Mingle Sherry-sack with it (stirring it a long time very well, so much as to have it of a fit consistence for Mustard. Then put a good quantity of fine Sugar to it, as five or six spoonfuls, or more, to a pint of Mustard. Stir and incorporate all well together. This will keep good a long time. Some do like to put to it a little (but a little) of very sharp Wine-vinegar.*

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### **Terafan's version of the Digby mustard**

I have modified the Digby recipe in a couple of ways. First I grind (puree) the ginger, the onion, and the horseradish, because I like hot mustard and I like the flavour it adds. I also throw it all back in the blender and puree it with some more vinegar just before bottling it. I find that this smooths out any remaining whole or partial seeds and makes it much creamier and smooth. Sometimes I eliminate the ginger altogether.

- 2 lbs brown mustard seed
- 1 large white onion
- 1 hand of ginger
- 1 horseradish root, approx 10" long
- 1 tsp white pepper
- 1 tsp sugar
- Apple cider vinegar

Grind the mustard seed as fine as you can. A blender works well if only grinding about 1/4 lb at a time. Puree the onion, ginger, and horseradish with vinegar in a blender. Add the pepper and sugar to the puree and then pour it over the ground mustard seed in a stone crock. Mix well and cover the crock with a towel. The mustard will mellow over time. It will also dry some. You may add more vinegar and mix it as required. For extra smoothness, puree in the blender with additional vinegar before bottling.

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### **Places to find lots of different (modern) mustard recipes on the web**

Make Gourmet Mustards at Home -- <http://www.geocities.com/NapaValley/5762/index.html> (17 recipes)

Arielle's Archives (Mustard) -- <http://www.neosoft.com/recipes/preserving/mustards.html> (11 recipes)

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