CHAPTER SIX

FEAST-DAY MEAT

Spices typify the genre of mediaeval western European cuisine - indeed, so intrinsic were spices that to isolate particular and typical regional patterns of preference is well-nigh impossible. As social markers subject to the caprices of fashion, spices were non-essentials; unlike bread and wine, the fundamentals of the diet, they were non-foods, contributing no nutrient value. To discover the tastes and traditions which characterised the various national or regional cuisines of the mediaeval era, one must look between the breadline and the spice summit, at the foods which combined - in diverse proportions - both nutritional and symbolic functions.

In this and subsequent chapters, the mediaeval usages of meats, fish and vegetables will be examined in an attempt to identify the preferences and practices particular to a region and a society. For if cuisine is on the side of culture - that is, to the extent that aesthetic elements take precedence over nutritional properties - then its expression is seen in choices made by the society, in both ingredients and manner of preparation and serving. The preferences of similar social

groups from different regions can be compared in order to uncover differences of cultural origin.

It has already been stated that, for the purposes of the present work, mediaeval cuisine is a 'higher' cuisine. This study, therefore, is not concerned with the conditions of the majority, the average 95% massed under the hump of the normal distribution, but with the asymptotic minority at the upper end. It is not concerned with the nutrient composition of the average daily diet but with the choice of ingredients and the skills and arts applied to them. Its perspective is not so much the common features which characterise as the singularities which distinguish, and its population is the same wealthy, educated, appreciative minority for whom cookery books were written and through whom the art of cuisine could progress: the town-dwelling merchants and professionals, who could buy whatever they fancied in the town market; the nobleman, whether in the town or on his estate, with the privileges and and rights to its products; the ecclesiastical authorities, whose rights and lifestyle were not far removed from those of the nobleman. Between the bourgeois and the aristocracy, at one level, and the journeyman and peasant farmer at another, was an enormous disparity.

Thus Braudel's characterisation of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as "a riot of meat" is not altogether accurate; not all shared equally in this relative abundance.[1] Yet meat was the traditional, and most typical, 'companage', the supplement to the daily

ration of bread and wine which were the primary energy sources of the basic diet. Meat belonged to the domain of the nutritionally less essential and the symbolically more important, in which the expression of preferences demonstrates the taste of a society. In this study of cuisines, choice of meats and of the style of their preparation and serving offers one of the most valid areas of comparison.

HIERARCHY OF MEATS: REGIONAL PREFERENCES

The symbolic prestige of meat has a source in popular mythology and folklore, which rank meat higher than cereals and vegetables. In the mediaeval period this prestige was evidenced by the association of meat with religious festivals, of which the most regular was Sunday, the day of leisure in the working week.[2] Sunday was a day of high meat consumption; in fifteenth-century Carpentras, the quantities of meat sold on a Sunday were almost twice as high as the weekday average, and Sunday was the only meat-day in less affluent households.[3] Christmas and Easter, the principal feasts of the ecclesiastical calendar, were celebrated with both more meat, and meat of a higher quality or status. Thus the canons of the Nice cathedral received two kinds of meat plus mortadella at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, while on ordinary meat-days they managed on mutton.[4]

Similarly, outside the Church calendar, special occasions meant greater quantities of more prestigious

meats on the festive table. The feasts in honour of important guests given by the court of Burgundy or by the Consuls of Avignon , and the wedding feast offered by Guillaume de Murol offer illustrations of this custom.[5]

The prestige of meat, in general, was confirmed by the association of meat with nobility and wealth, through the traditions of 'la chasse' and of seigneurial rights to certain products of the estate, although by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries these prerogatives had all but disappeared. However, not all meats shared equally in this prestige, nor were the same preferences demonstrated in all societies.

Prices can serve as a guide to the relative ranking of meats, since they do not seem to have been necessarily dependant on supply. In Southern France, mutton was typically more expensive than beef (or cow) meat, even though both were available year-round and supplies of mutton usually exceeded those of beef.[6] Lamb and kid seem to have been slightly more costly than mutton, probably as a result of their strictly seasonal appearance; veal also was a highly-priced meat, more a consequence of its scarcity than its quality.[7] The meat of old cows and ewes, past the age of reproduction, was usually at the bottom of the price scale and not highly prized; in Arles, butchers caught selling 'brebis' for 'mouton', or adulterating mutton with the cheaper ewe meat, were penalised and fined.[8]

In Tuscany the most expensive meat appears to have

been veal.[9] Veal was second to fat wethers ('castratus pinguis') in the price hierarchy of mediaeval Piedmont, followed by mutton ('montone'), ewe ('pecora'), goat ('capra'), lamb and kid.[10] In mediaeval Pistoia the highest prices were paid for veal and steer beef (presumably young); lamb, pork and then mutton were next in price, and the cheapest meats were from oxen and bulls.[11] However, it is impossible to know how these compare with the beasts slaughtered in Provence, nor whether 'montone' is equivalent to the Provençal 'mouton' of 14kg.[12] The mediaeval livestock industry had its own vocabulary to suit the system of management, and it is difficult to make valid price comparisons between countries and regions.

Comparable price details for the north of France are scarce. It is significant, however, that whenever the anonymous bourgeois diarist of the fifteenth-century Paris recorded food prices, he noted only the basic, standard ingredients and rarely included such luxuries as spices. From its absence, one might suspect that veal was among the luxury meats, beef and mutton ordinary fare.[13] In the Poitou region, beef was the most expensive and most esteemed meat, mutton the most common meat, less appreciated than either beef or pork, since sheep were raised primarily for wool.[14] The author of Le Menagier notes some prices for meat in Paris but, as was then common, they related to the piece, not to a unit of weight. Half a 'poitrine' of beef cost about 3 sous, the same as a quarter of 'mouton' or a goose; yet for a

quarter of veal the price was 8 sous. [15]

These price hierarchies suggest that meat preferences varied from region to region, and were probably a consequence of different systems of livestock management, themselves geographically determined. A preference for sheep meats has been proposed as characteristic of the Mediterranean diet, and the preference for mutton in southern France appears to have been shared in neighbouring Catalonia and in some regions of Italy, such as Sicily. Mutton was a clear favourite in Catalan cuisine; in the Sent Sovi, recipes using mutton far outnumber those for pork, kid, beef and veal. The sophistication of many of the recipes confirms the prestige of this meat, since the more expensive and elaborate preparations were usually reserved for higher-ranked ingredients. Of mutton, the leg, shoulder and loin could be roast, the shoulder and belly stuffed.

In Arles, the archbishop regularly ate roast joints of mutton; indeed, mutton appeared on his table almost every meat day, while beef was offered only once or twice a week and pork even more rarely.[16] Since roasting was generally considered a more prestigious method of cooking, it was therefore appropriate to both the archbishop and to the ingredient. The Frères mineurs of Avignon also enjoyed roast mutton, and one might thus assume that roasting was commonly associated with mutton, in accord with the prestige implied by its price.[17]

From the Italian texts the pattern of preferences is not clear. [18] In both Anonimo Toscano and Anonimo

Meridionale/A, 'castrato' and 'castrone' are more frequently called for than any other meat except pork, which was more likely salt pork. Only in Martino is veal predominant, which might indicate a fashion which was relatively localised, geographically and socially, and more typical of the later mediaeval period.

On the other hand, when mutton appears in the menus of Le Menagier, it is almost inevitably boiled. Although all the northern French texts advise roasting for the shoulder of mutton, boiling may have been more common for other cuts. The few recipes which have mutton as the main ingredient, such as Mouton au soerre, Pasté en pot de mouton and Mouton au jaunet are for lowly dishes of boiled meat in a simply seasoned broth.

It thus seems reasonable to assume that the preference for mutton in southern France, and the prestige accorded this meat, illustrate a difference between the cuisines of southern and northern France, and signal the Mediterranean character of southern French cuisine.

MEDITERRANEAN ATTITUDES TO PORK

The pre-eminence of mutton in fifteenth-century Provence is illustrated in the meals provided by the papal school at Trets, where mutton was effectively the only fresh meat the students ate.[19] It was certainly not for reasons of economy that mutton was preferred; pork was slightly cheaper, but strictly seasonal in supply, and beef was cheaper again.

Stouff remarks that the preponderance of sheep meats in Provence is not at all surprising; it corresponds to what is usually seen as the traditional Mediterranean economy.[20] Even in Roman Gaul, sheep meats were far more frequently eaten in Mediterranean provinces - about half the total meat consumption, compared to about one-tenth in other parts of the country.[21] Likewise the Provençal attitude towards pork was, he proposes, that of all Mediterranean peoples; it is unhealthy, particularly in summer.[22]

His conclusion is apparently corroborated by the remarks of a fifteenth century Provençal lawyer, who praised mutton but expressed doubts about the value of pork and beef.[23] This distrust, however, applied only to fresh pork; and it was fresh pork that Francesco Datini's doctor specifically proscribed.[24] It is more accurate to say that the Christian societies of the Mediterranean region preferred to eat pork in salted form - with the exception of sucking pig.

Curiously, neither the early Romans nor the physicians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries appear to have shared this 'Mediterranean' attitude towards fresh pork. The poem Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum praised pork as one of the best nourishing and fattening foods, but added that 'If you eat pork without wine, it is worse than mutton. If you add wine to pork, then it is food and medicine.'[25] (It is clear that fresh pork is meant, for immediately before these lines is a reference to salted meats which are 'melancholic and harmful to the

sick'.) Similarly, Aldebrandino in the thirteenth century ranked pork next to mutton, and superior to beef, in terms of nourishment.[26] If, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Mediterranean peoples considered pork unhealthy, there must have been a change in popular belief or medical opinion.

It is possible that a wealthy, urban population chose to disdain a meat that had strong peasant and farm associations, that not to eat fresh pork was one way for rich merchants and nobles to distinguish themselves. A preference for meats other than pork may indicate an evolution of taste in the later mediaeval centuries; in fourteenth-century Florence, a shift in preferences away from pork towards mutton and kid has been interpreted as part of a general trend towards quality discrimination in the diet.[27] It is also possible that a distrust of fresh pork filtered into the Mediterranean mentality through Jewish and Muslim contact. The different populations were supposed to be segregated, and Christians were not allowed to consult Jewish doctors and apothecaries, any such contact being severely punishable.[28] In practice, however, economic and intellectual relations may have continued outside the law (as demonstrated in an earlier chapter), and in the large towns of southern France Christians and Jews probably had good relations with one another.[29]

Further detail on the status of pork in Mediterranean regions can be found in the recipe books. The Catalan _Sent Sovi_ mentions fresh pork summarily in the introductory

section (it could be either boiled or roast, and cow meat likewise), but gives no specific recipe. Martino declares fresh pork to be unhealthy however prepared, although he suggests roasting the loin, with onions. The earlier Anomimo Veneziano includes one recipe for roast loin of pork in a sauce, plus a few for pies and torte using fresh pork, and in the fourteenth-century Anonimo Toscano the recipes for 'ordinary' vegetable dishes often call for a proportion of meat, which could be either fresh or salted pork, or mutton, or even beef. If the datings of these texts are accurate, their evidence provides some justification for the assumption that fresh pork was gradually edged out of the 'higher' Mediterranean cuisine towards the end of the mediaeval period.

In northern France fresh pork, although never specifically included in any of the menus of Le Menagier, could be prepared in a number of ways - roast, boiled, baked in a pie, minced (with mutton) to make a kind of rissole. (Most of these recipes are repeated in the fifteenth-century printed Viandier.) Pork may not have been the most prestigious meat, but there is no indication that it was disapproved, or considered unhealthy.

Sucking pig, incidentally, was viewed in an entirely different light in both northern France and Mediterranean regions. It was too small and too lean for salting, and was always roast, whole, often with a stuffing. Almost all the mediaeval texts include a recipe for stuffed sucking pig, and in Burgundy, at least, it was a 'mets de choix'.[30]

SALT PORK AND HAM

Some justification for the Mediterranean attitude towards fresh pork is offered by Platina: "Pork meat is so moist that it cannot be kept long unless it is salted."[31] Dietary sources confirm this classification (though there is some disagreement as to whether it should be hot or cold). Thus the recommendations of Martino - roast the fresh loin and salt the remainder - are totally in accord with dietary prescriptions.

The frequency with which salted pork appears in the recipes of the Sent Sovi tends to confirm that the same custom prevailed in Catalonia; some of the pork was eaten fresh, but most of it was salted. ('Carnsalada' almost certainly referred to salted pork, rather than salted meat of any description, in the same way as 'chair salée' in modern French means specifically salted pork.) Preservation by salting, especially of pork, was a time-honoured practice in the Mediterranean; Roman Italy imported large quantities of salted pork from its Gallic outposts, and the hams of Narbonne, for example, were prized. Such a tradition may well have persisted despite barbarian invasions, so that Froissart could describe the coastal plains near Montpellier, in the fourteenth century, as a land of wine, salted meat and ship's biscuit.[32] In Marseilles, too, fresh pork rarely featured on the butcher's stalls; it was generally salted on the farms and delivered, in this form, to merchants and

butchers who supplied ships.[33]

Salting was not, however, a practice confined to the Mediterranean regions; the argument here is that in Mediterranean countries, pork was more often used in salted form. In northern France, too, the pig-killing ritual took place at the same time of year, and what was not eaten fresh was similarly preserved. When the price of salt was raised in Paris in 1440, and supplies strictly controlled, the anonymous bourgeois diarist noted: "Very many of the pigs slaughtered in Paris (in January and February) were lost for lack of salt".[34] (Not that pork was the only meat salted - beef, mutton and venison are mentioned in Le Menagier.) Many noble and bourgeois households would have had a 'lardier' a large wooden chest in which to store salted meats (and which, in the fabliau of 'Le Prestre qui fu mis an lardier', served to hide the priest-lover, surprised by the unexpected return of the husband).[35]

The author of Le Menagier sets down in glorious detail the customary practices in which no part of the pig was ever wasted - 'boudins' from the blood or liver, 'andoulles' from the intestines and other offal, 'saulsisses' from the lean meat and fat; the forequarter and legs ('eschine' and 'jambon') salted for three days, the chops lightly salted then grilled.[36] Normally this kind of detail would be outside the scope of cookery books - Le Menagier is more properly described as a manual of household management and domestic economy - since killing and salting was not so much the domain of

cooks as of specialists, the 'chaircuitiers' of northern France, the 'porcatiers' of southern France, the 'pizzicagnoli' of Tuscany. Wealthy households, such as the papal palace at Avignon, would command the services of such specialists to kill and prepare their own stock, to ensure adequate supplies for the year.[37] It is likely that they made similar products to those described in Le Menagier - the accounts of the papal palace often specify that 'andolhas' or 'andulcias' were to be made from the pigs killed (for salting) in December.[38] 'Boudins' were known in Avignon and Italy ('boldone') and the Latin Liber gives a recipe under the name of 'trulis'.[39] Recipes for sausages, usually flavoured with fennel (as is still often the custom) are included in several Italian texts.[40]

Although the ritualistic pig slaughter was apparently common to most, if not all, regions of mediaeval western Europe, specific procedures may well have varied, and these differences can be perceived through the different ways of using the salted products. In Mediterranean cuisine, salt pork had a specific and complementary role: to add flavour and saltiness to a given dish. In northern France it was also likely to be boiled and served as a dish on its own, accompanied by mustard, as part of the first or second course of dinner, before the roasts. 'Lart' or 'ribellecte de lart' was added to leeks and spring greens, and a piece of salt pork was added to pre-cooked dried peas for the everyday 'pois au lart'. Such differences in culinary practice may be slight but

they are nonetheless significant, and hint at differences in the ingredients themselves.

In Paris on Easter Day, 1420, "most people ate nothing better than salt pork, and that only if they could get it."[41] This implies that salted pork was a product of low esteem, a last resort when fresh meat was either too scarce or too costly. Certainly a piece of boiled salted pork was not in the same class as a fat roast capon, but hams were a different matter. In northern France, ham seems to have had a traditional association with Christmas. The Christmas ham appears symbolically in the fabliaux of northern France, and the daydreaming glutton of 'La Devise au Lecheors' talks fondly of the 'jambon de fresche salaison' that will satisfy his Christmas appetite; this accords with the account of northern French custom given by the author of <u>Le Menagier</u> ("Eschines et jambons salez de iii jours naturelz").[42] In the Caresme vs. Charnage duel, 'Noel' is accompanied by "Tant de bacons/ Et d'eschines et de jambons!"[43]

In Mediterranean regions, this festive association is not at all apparent, and hams seem to have been served at any season of the year. For a carnival banquet in Avignon in 1495, the table was laid with ham and salted beef tongue, plus capers, apples, bread and wine.[44] Italian menus of around the same era listed salted meats - which included ham, tongue, salami-type sausages and 'sinnata', salted belly pork - as a separate course, usually part of the service of boiled meats, and preceding the roast.[45] (Italian custom was to serve these salted

meats as a cold platter, with or without a sauce: "Ham should not be eaten, nor should its juices be drawn out, unless it has cooled."[46])

The recipe books of northern France provide little indication of how ham should be prepared and served. If the ham had been left salting for as long as a month, it was to be soaked overnight then cooked in a mixture of wine and water (as was the Italian practice), but no other detail is offered.[47] The Vatican Viandier announces three recipes amongst the 'Potaiges lyans' which combine ham with peas or leeks; although the recipes are omitted, it is clear that 'janbon' here is like 'lart' in the recipes of Le Menagier.[48]

While the history of charcuterie is yet to be written, one cannot help but speculate that the traditions of northern France and the Mediterranean regions, despite many general similarities, were quite different in specific details, and the persistence of these same traditions permits the differences to be glimpsed even today - as between 'jambon de Paris' and 'prosciutto di Parma', for example, or between 'petit sale' and 'pancetta' or 'ventresca'. My hypothesis is that not only was more of the pig salted in Mediterranean regions, but different techniques were employed, these being linked with a tradition of preservation by drying - of fruits, vegetables and pasta, for example.

Assuming that the author of Le Menagier described practices typical of northern France, the annual pig slaughter was not intended to stock the larder for the

next twelve months. The loins, forequarters and legs of each pig were salted, but only briefly; 'boudins' were apparently eaten almost immediately, but 'andoulles' could be salted with the 'lart' (presumably the fatty belly section) and 'saulcisses' smoke-dried.

For the 'lars' or 'bacons' - which seem to have been whole sides of pork, salted and dried (smoke-dried) and thus suitable for prolonged storage - Parisians betook themselves to the Foire au Jambon, traditionally held on Good Friday or Maundy Thursday.[49] Here, at the end of the fourteenth century, two or three thousand 'lars' were brought for sale; the king's household bought an annual supply of 200 'lars'.[50] This 'commercial' product may have derived from a specialised industry or from individual peasant farmers, for whom the family pig was not so much a supply of meat for winter as a source of income, only the less noble parts of the beast and the offal being kept for home consumption. It is this form of salted pork, a whole side including the leg, which is represented as 'carnes salate' in Italian manuscripts of <u>Tacuinum Sanitatis</u>.[51]

Thus in northern France there may have been two different salting practices for two different end-products. In support of this suggestion is evidence from nearby Burgundy, where two different kinds of salting vessels, clearly distinguished from one another, are listed in fourteenth-century Burgundian inventories. 'Saloires' were apparently used to 'saler char' and 'saleurs' to 'saler bacon'.[52] I suggest that 'saler

char' meant a brief salting, possibly of small pieces of meat, for short-term conservation, and 'saler bacon' referred to the treatment given to meat to be later dried, so as to keep for longer periods. (The term 'baconner' was applied to meats other than pork; 'saumon baconne' seems to have been salted and smoked salmon.[53]

The only information I have yet found on mediaeval Mediterranean salting practices is given by Platina. Pieces of pork should be laid, skin up, on a layer of salt at the bottom of a cask, and left there - covered with more salt, one presumes - until all salt has been absorbed, then hung "where the smoke can reach it".[54] This advice is very similar to that given many centuries previously by Columella.[55]

The evidence presented supports the hypothesis proposed earlier, that in the Mediterranean region pork was preferentially eaten in salted form, and that the salting procedures were destined to produce a product for long-term storage (at Trets, more salted pork was eaten in summer than in winter).[56] Attitudes towards pork in the Mediterranean differed from those of northern France, where pork was regularly eaten in both fresh and salted forms and where products of both short- and long-term conservation were prepared.[59]

SOCIAL STATUS OF MEATS

Thus far, attention has been focussed on mediaeval

preferences in the domain of butcher's meats, to the exclusion of poultry and game, since butcher's meats predominated in most wealthy households (as, for example, those of the archbishop of Arles and the duchess of Burgundy).[57] While Mediterranean peoples seem to have appreciated mutton more than did the northern French, and to have preferred pork in salted form - a preference not necessarily shared by the northern French - the prestige of poultry was apparently universal, and the aroma of a fat capon, roasting on the spit, wafts through many a fabliau. The banquets offered by the duchess of Burgundy during a stay at Bruges were marked by exceptionally large purchases of poultry, especially capons.[58] Poultry and small game birds were customarily offered the 'gens de qualité' of Tours.[59]

This general esteem is confirmed by a study of cookery books. An analysis of Anonimo Toscano identified 18 recipes in which poultry (hens, chickens, capons) was the principal ingredient, 12 recipes based on lamb. mutton and kid, and 8 recipes ("plutôt indifferenciées") for beef.[60] Other texts show the same pattern - more, and more complex, recipes for poultry than for other meats.

Little research has been undertaken of the importance (qualitative and quantitative) of game, relative to butcher's meat and poultry, in the mediaeval diet. One study, covering the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, insists that game was highly appreciated and made a substantial contribution, in nutritional terms, to the diet of the mediaeval nobleman.[61]

This conclusion, however, was based mainly on literary evidence, and although the image might be appropriate to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it does not necessarily hold true for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In one northern French household in the fourteenth century, game was eaten regularly but represented only a small proportion of total meat consumption.[62] Similarly at a manor in Auvergne, the quantity of game eaten was far less than that of beef, mutton, pork or poultry.[63] These two instances related to noblemen living on (and off?) their estates; urban patterns of consumption could have been quite different, but it is doubtful that game ever held the pride of place conceded by popular belief. In the fourteenth century, the archbishop of Arles was served game only once every three to four weeks, on average, and the evidence of the sample menus of Le Menagier suggests that, with the exception of boiled (salted?) venison accompanied by a custard-like gruel ('fourmentee'), game was not an everyday ingredient, nor was it reserved for special dinners.[64]

Earlier in this chapter it was suggested that prestige was signalled by price, which was not necessarily dependant on supply. Among the wealthy, however, expensive meats may have been preferred not only because their cost put them out of the reach of the ordinary people but because medical opinion deemed them to be more appropriate. The fourteenth-century Italian physician Antonio Guainerio recommended as 'carnes magis convenientes', the most nutritious, most easily digestible

and assimilable, the meats of kid, hare, goat, capon, young hen, chicken, partridge, pheasant and small game birds.[65] Francesco Datini's doctor praised veal ("you can have no more wholesome victuals") and approved "fowls and partridges, pigeons, veal, mutton and kid"; he advised against "goose, duck, young mutton and pork - in especial fresh".[66]

The coincidence of medicinal recommendation with ingredients which were more expensive, more prestigious, and more likely to be chosen by those for whom such dietetic advice was written, is curious, to say the least. Possibly medical and dietetic opinion was nuanced by the wish to flatter a patron, unless the opinion itself influenced price. However, the logic of dietetic advice is questionable. It can hardly be entirely coincidental that the seasonal recommendations are very closely attuned to the agricultural calendar, which in turn was aligned with the liturgical year, the natural and productive cycles coalescing with religious rituals and ceremonies. The Provencal dietetic prescribed a diet in accord with the seasons, recommending fat quail, partridge, and stuffed hens for spring; veal and kid for summer; two-year-old fattened mutton, hens and other poultry for autumn; and for winter, all types of roasts, pork, capons and hens, and game.[67] If one disregards the ubiquitous poultry, it is clear that the seasonal recommendations accurately reflect the seasonal patterns of supply in Provence, where veal was available only at the end of summer, pork more plentiful in the winter months, game more prevalent in

winter.[68]

Nor, apparently, did medicinal advice have much regard for humoral harmony, choosing foods whose qualities would complement those of the season. Veal and kid were usually classified as warm, yet they were recommended for summer, the warm season; pork was termed a moist meat, yet it was supposed to be appropriate to the moist season of winter. It does not seem unreasonable to conclude that in the later mediaeval centuries, advice as to the most suitable diet merely provided a justification for whatever was desirable or customary. Dietary medicine was not a fixed doctrine; in the fifteenth-century commentary on the Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum, the author noted disagreement as to the most nutritious meat, Galen favouring pork and the Muslim trio of Avicenna, Rhasis and Averroes preferring veal.[69]

Thus, rather than seek in dietary recommendations the explanations for taste preferences, one should simply accept them as ratifications of such preferences. Their validity rests on their acceptance by those to whom such advice was directed, and since they tended to perpetuate a social hierarchy, one might assume that the recommendations were accepted. The Latin Tractatus insists on such social divisions, categorically stating that certain meats (partridge and pheasant, chicken and capon, hare, rabbit and kid) were more suitable for nobles and others who led a quiet, leisured life, while other meats (the 'common' meats, beef, mutton and salt pork) were appropriate to those who did physical work.[70] Such

beliefs persisted in the fifteenth century. Platina wrote that peacocks were "more fit for the tables of kings and princes and men of property than those of humble persons"; similarly, veal was superior to beef, wherefor "it is often to be found at the tables of nobles".[71] Recipe books confirm the hierarchy; Martino, a contemporary of Platina, gave more recipes for veal than for any other butcher's meat.[72]

Cuisine, as interpreted here, refers to both the choice of ingredients and the styles of preparation and serving. It has been shown that within a social hierarchy common to the whole of mediaeval western Europe,certain regional preferences and particularities can be distinguished. Now the techniques of preparation and modes of serving will be examined.

COOKING METHODS: ROASTING

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as in the gastronomic heydays of Greece and Rome, even as now, some methods of cooking were, and are, accorded a higher prestige than others. Anthropologists perceive a fundamental dichotomy between roast and boiled, and the cycles of fashion favour one, then the other. Athenaeus noted that boiling was thought to be more beneficial because it "not only takes away the rawness but can soften tough parts and ripen the rest", and the Romans apparently preferred boiled meats - the books of Apicius contain more recipes for boiled than for roast meats.[73] Yet in

mediaeval cuisine roasting was considered superior to boiling. Platina believed roast meats to be more nourishing which, according to the logic of mediaeval dieticians, meant that they were better suited to the upper classes.[74] In the Anonimo Toscano the comparison is gustatory: "Roast meat is more flavoursome than boiled, because it cooks in its own juices not in other..."[75]

Roasting was, without doubt, an extravagant procedure - extravagant of fuel, extravagant of labour, extravagant of expense - and the luxury of cooking directly over coals or in front of the fire is evidenced by the rarity of spits and grills in household inventories. A sampling of one hundred Provençal inventories showed that it was always "la maison du riche bourgeois ou du noble" which owned both a grill and a roasting spit; less affluent households had to be content with a cauldron for boiling their meat.[76] Similarly, relatively few households had grills and spits in the Lyons region, and these were invariably in prosperous households with well-equipped kitchens.[77]

The superiority of roasting in mediaeval cuisine may have stemmed, in part, from a belief in the inherent superiority of the method, but it may also have been a reflection of the higher status of the meats which were customarily roast, such as the more expensive, more prestigious, young, tender meats of lamb, kid, veal, sucking pig, poultry and some game birds. Whether the mode of cooking was dictated by the prestige of the raw ingredient, or whether the ingredient itself gained in

kudos from the cooking method, is impossible to know. The suggested menus of Le Menagier do not usually specify the meats to be included in the 'service des rosts', simply advising 'the best roast available', but those that are nominated are most commonly partridge, capon and rabbit.[78] In the menus appended to Cuoco Napolitano, the most frequently cited are, amongst the birds of the 'rosto minuto', chicken, pigeon, quail and partridge, and amongst the 'rosto grosso', veal, kid and capon.[79]

Roasting almost invariably meant spit-roasting. Recipes include such instructions as 'enbrochee', 'roty en la broch' (Le Menagier); 'Ponila al foco' (Martino); 'arrostilo in spiedo' (Anonimo Toscano); 'mit-los en l'ast', 'cuyts en ast' (Sent Sovi).[80] Oven roasting, however, was also practised - legs of mutton and larded spiced goose were cooked 'in furno' in Provence, and a recipe for 'casola de cabrits' is included in the Sent Sovi.[81] According to Jacques André, oven-roasting was the technique employed in ancient Rome, but the recipes of Apicius also suggest roasting in the 'clibanus', a sort of camp oven, or on the grill.[82] The oven was not a standard piece of equipment in the ordinary domestic kitchen, but nor was it uncommon to take one's dish to the baker's oven to be cooked.

Contrary to Roman custom, and to the popular conception of mediaeval cuisine, parboiling prior to roasting was far from standard practice for all meats. While the northern French texts recommend parboiling for the young and tender meats of veal, rabbit, lamb and kid,

Martino (and Platina) give quite the opposite advice, suggesting parboiling when the meat is past its young and tender prime. Parboiling was sometimes reduced to a brief scalding in boiling water, not so much to soften tough meat as to keep the flesh white, and to stiffen it preparatory to larding; scalding was most commonly used for poultry and young lamb and kid.

In addition, some meats were prepared for roasting by larding, which apparently meant studding the meat with small cubes of lard (salt pork), or by covering it with thin slices of lard. Larding was apparently rare in Catalan cuisine - none of the recipes in the Sent Sovi includes instructions on larding a roast - possibly because Catalan roasts were usually basted as they turned.

The roasts - 'service des rosts' - were a standard course at any mediaeval dinner, and roasting a standard technique in the 'higher' cuisine which is the subject of this study. The high prestige of both the technique and the result meant that roast meats lent themselves to further elaboration, through which social or regional distinctions could be displayed. Two favourite means of refining and varying the simple roast were to include a richly-flavoured stuffing or to decorate with a golden coating or crust, both complicated, labour-intensive embellishments and therefore worthy of admiration.

At the pinnacle of sophistication, the nec plus ultra of the grandest occasions, was the peacock, ornament of

both garden and table. Dressed in all its plumage, its splendid tail fanned out, the peacock stood upright with the aid of iron rods made specifically for the purpose, its neck and tail supported by fine wooden skewers. Even more impressive was the fire-breathing peacock, whose beak held a piece of wool impregnated with camphor and set alight at the moment of presentation. Such a dish was necessarily presented with pomp and ceremony. At a banquet in honour of pope Clement VI in Avignon in the mid-fourteenth century, one of the ornamental entremets paraded around the hall, to the accompaniment of music and joyous applause, was a fountain surrounded by peacocks and other birds, all in their best feathers, while from a small tower in the centre flowed five different wines.[83]

Many mediaeval texts give instructions for this display, which epitomised what Flandrin has termed the 'internationalism' of mediaeval cuisine.[84] Other birds, such as swans and pheasants, could be similarly decked out. Chiquart suggests the subterfuge of substituting the more palatable roast goose for the tough and stringy peacock, and dressing this bird in the peacock plumage.[85]

Equally dramatic would have been the roast birds gilded with gold leaf and sprinkled with spices.[86] An alternative, and more modest, effect could be achieved by brushing an egg yolk-saffron mixture on to the roast as it turned on the spit, to give a rich gold appearance.[87] This technique was probably common throughout much of

mediaeval western Europe; recipes demonstrate its application to roast kid and stuffed fowl, for example. Such splendour may have been fashionable but was totally inappropriate for a bourgeois householod, said the author of Le Menagier, who similarly disapproved of a boned and re-formed shoulder of mutton as involving too much time and effort for two little result.[88]

In the fifteenth century, coatings became further refined and sweetened, in accord with the general culinary evolution. Le Viandier gives a recipe for a clove-studded pheasant or peacock, covered with sugar-glazed cinnamon, and Mestre Robert describes how to 'arm' a capon with almonds and pinenuts, stuck on with beaten sweetened egg yolks.[89]

A spicy forcemeat stuffing was a more subtle embellishment. 'Stuffing' is not quite accurate , for the process often involved a complete reshaping around a bone (as in stuffed shoulder of mutton) or inside a chicken skin. Another common practice, to judge by the cookery books, was to separate the skin of a fowl from the flesh, and cover the flesh with a flavoursome forcemeat; any leftover mixture was shaped into little balls which, prettily covered with saffron or parsley, garnished the finished dish.[90] The whole calf, kid or sheep, boned and stuffed as described in Anonimo Toscano, belonged more to the realm of the magician than the cook; filled with cooked geese and fowl and other poultry, it was an echo of the pig of Trimalchio.[91]

Similar forcemeats entered into pies and torte (to be

considered in a later chapter) and decorative, often frivolous, entremets. To the cook, they were as clay to the potter, to be shaped and moulded, painted and ornamented, before gracing the table. The 'caillette' or abomasum of the sheep served to hold a spicy meat-and-raisin mincemeat which was presented in the form of a hedgehog.[92] The same mixture, cooked in small earthenware pots which had to be broken to retrieve the pot-shaped meatballs to be spitted and gilded, produced Pots (or Pes) d'Espaigne.[93] The inspiration for this presentation may well have been Arab, if not Spanish; the Wusla of the thirteenth century gives a recipe for an omelette cooked in a bottle then, after the glass has been carefully broken and removed, fried.[94] The counterpart in the Italian recipe books was the stuffed chicken-in-a-flask, given a colourful and decorative coating once liberated from its mould. Another form of ostentation was the 'testes dorées', gilded heads (usually kid's heads); these were served at a wedding supper in Paris, at a royal feast at the court of Savoy, and at a dinner in honour of the prince of Capua.[95]

Such ultra-sophisticated display pieces, which were more closely identifiable with spectacularly lavish festivities than with particular regions, could be found throughout mediaeval western Europe. On the other hand, a more simple, and more common, embellishment was an accompanying sauce, and sauces demonstrate considerable diversity and regional affiliations.

ROASTS AND SAUCES

Sauces were a means of giving variety to meats, although to suggest that the mediaeval cook saw then as a vehicle for artistic self-expression borders on hyperbole. "The merest hint of a sauce brings out the madman lurking in the mediaeval cook. With wild bravado he tips into the brew everything he can lay his hands on, from honey to fish stock, and scatters overall a riot of spices for good measure."[96] Some sauces, certainly, were quite complex, but others were as simple as a harmonious blend of rosewater, orange juice and salt.

The purpose of sauces is to stimulate appetite, wrote Platina, as he gave them conditional approval.[97] Sauces should be eaten in small quantities, by persons in good health, to stimulate appetite and digestion, prescribed physician Maino de' Maineri, who shrewdly observed that sauces were invented more for the sake of enjoyment than of health; both he and Platina condemned the gluttony encouraged by the use of sauces to awaken appetites deadened by excess.[98] The popular palate, however, apparently valued sauces for their complexity and richness of flavour; "Que valoit leur ros?/ Leur potage savoit les pos/ Et leur sausse n'estoit que vin", scornfully retorted a wedding guest, as though both the occasion and the roast demanded something better.[99]

The unaccompanied roast was not to be tolerated in mediaeval cuisine, and the sauce was either poured over the dish of carved meat before serving, or offered in

separate bowls. "Car neguna carn de ploma no la menya hom sola, car totavia se menge ab salse altre.": all poultry is to be eaten with a sauce, which perhaps explains the greater diversity - both in ingredients and method - of sauces in Catalan cuisine.[100] Catalan sauces were distinguished by their use of ground nuts and ground cooked liver or meat as thickeners, and by a balance of sweet and sour flavours ("asabora-ho... d'agror et de dolsor", "deu-hi aver molt sucre e such de limons, en guissa que la un tir la sabor de l'altre", instruct the recipes).[101] Northern French sauces were most often thickened with bread, acidified with vinegar or verjuice and lacked the compensation of a sweet ingredient. Italian sauces - to the extent that one can make generalisations about them as a group - were closer to the Catalan style, using different kinds of thickeners and combining sweet and sour flavours. (It should be added that not all sauces were thickened, although those that were thickened were probably of a fairly solid consistency, so that the sauce would not drip off the meat as it was conveyed from plate to mouth, with either knife or finger.)

The specific pairings of sauces and meats ("Viandes diverses demandent saulces diverses") is one more example of the discrimination mediaeval cooks brought to their profession.[102] Occasionally there is almost complete agreement from one cookery book to another as to the appropriate accompaniment. For partridge, the texts prescribe either salt or a blend of rosewater, wine and orange juice (Le Menagier); rosewater, orange juice and

salt (Sent Sovi); citrus juice or verjuice plus salt and spices (Martino). Large game, such as venison and wild boar, either roast or boiled, were to be accompanied by a dark, heavily spiced, acidic, bread-thickened sauce known variously as poivre noir, peverada, peperata, pebrata. This sauce also accompanied the piece of beef for the student's Christmas treat at Trets and, in legend, the heart of his wife's lover, served by a jealous husband ("e fetz lo raustir e far pebrada e fetz lo dar a manjar a la moilher").[103]

More often, however, the pairing of specific sauces and meats and the repertoire of sauces vary from one text to another, even though many of the ingredients and methods are similar, and the same names might be used. (Appendix II) These differences can be assumed to provide evidence of specific regional styles of cuisine. Cameline offers a good example. It was the mainstay of northern French cuisine, accompanying fresh tongue, stuffed sucking pig, veal, kid, lamb, rabbit and venison.[104] Its ingredients were spices (ginger, lots of cinnamon, cloves, grain of paradise, mace, and long pepper, if desired), bread soaked in vinegar and salt to taste.[105] The blend of spices varied between recipes, but cinnamon and a little ginger were the essential ones.

The cenamata of Anonimo Toscano (cinnamon, ginger, toasted bread, salt, all ground and mixed with wine) is obviously a close relation to the northern French cameline, but the recipes of other Mediterranean texts bear little resemblance to this family, the only common

ingredient being cinnamon.[106] Anonimo Veneziano uses blanced almonds, raisins, cinnamon and cloves, a little bread and verjuice; Martino takes bread and raisins, ground together and mixed with red wine, concentrated grape juice, verjuice or vinegar, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg; and the Sent Sovi recipe calls for chopped chicken livers cooked in almond milk with sugar (or honey), pomegranate juice, red wine vinegar, cinnamon and ginger plus smaller amounts of cloves, nutmeg, grain of paradise, pepper and long pepper.[107]

The variations of cameline reveal two different tendencies in northern French and Mediterranean cuisine: in the former, a heavy reliance on bread and a dominant acidity; and in the latter, the tempering of vinegar or verjuice sourness with sweet ingredients such as sugar, honey, raisins or concentrated grape juice, and the use of a variety of thickening ingredients which add flavour as well as texture to the sauce. An analysis of the sauce recipes of the various texts confirms these essential differences.[108] Even modest preparations like aillet/agliata/allata, and saulce vert/salsa verde/jurvert vary from one text to another, which supports the earlier hypothesis that the recipes in each text represent an individual selection from, and interpretation of, a larger recipe bank.

Why was there less variety in northern French sauces? It is possible that the purely pleasurable functions of a sauce were considered secondary to the stimulation of appetites, and the sauces therefore emphasised the spicy

and sour tastes considered most appropriate for this purpose.[109] Perhaps, too, northern French cuisine was less advanced in its evolution than Mediterranean cuisine, a possibility wholly in accord with the hypothesis that many of the motive forces initiating culinary evolution in the mediaeval period came from the Arab world.

It is easy to identify, in the climate and agriculture of the Mediterranean region and in its historical and cultural development, local factors to account for most of its culinary particularities. The almonds and hazelnuts, oranges and lemons, sugar and 'arop' were all essentially Mediterranean ingredients.[110] Although also available in northern France, they were undoubtedly more plentiful and cheaper in Mediterranean regions, where even city-dwelling landowners might have had almond and citrus trees.

The northern climate was not sympathetic to almonds, which were about twice as expensive in Paris as in Avignon.[111] Citrus fruits and sugar may also have been more scarce and more expensive. More importantly, however, these ingredients had been introduced into the Mediterranean by the Arabs, and/or were part of the Arab culinary repertoire, a tradition with which European merchants and traders had direct contact in their visits to the eastern entrepots. Since the traders were predominantly Mediterranean - Italians, Catalans, southern French - any culinary borrowings were naturally more evident in the Mediterranean region than in northern France. (Henri Baudrillart notes that nowhere was

the Arab influence more noticeable than in the south of France, where "Oriental ideas and customs had penetrated."[112]) These borrowings were not so much entire new recipes as new tastes, new techniques, and the inspiration to incorporate these into the native cuisine. The sweet-sour flavour combinations and the use of nuts and citrus juices, which characterised many Mediterranean sauces, were all typical features of Arab/Persian cuisine.

Unfortunately, the scribes did not record the sauces which accompanied the roast leg of mutton on the archbishop's table at Arles, or the roast kid and partridges at the convent of the Frères mineurs at Avignon, and this area of southern French cuisine remains largely a mystery. However, a garlic-and-walnut sauce enjoyed by the brothers is reminiscent of the 'agliata bianca' of Martino and Anonimo Toscano. Since citrus fruits and almonds were relatively abundant in southern France,and since important towns like Avignon, Montpellier and Marseilles were open to the same influences as Venice and Barcelona, one might reasonably assume that southern French cuisine included sauces similar to those of Italy and Catalonia.

BOILED MEATS

Being lower in social status, boiled meats received less attention in the mediaeval cookery books. Unlike roasting, boiling was not a technique of the privileged few, the

theme for a hundred variations; boiling was the common, ordinary, peasant way of cooking. Since there was little point in demonstrating social, or even regional, distinctions in a lower-class dish, it is hardly surprising that the style varied little throughout western Europe. Yet if the 'bouilli' was uncommendable, the 'bouillon' was a necessary ingredient in many sauces and dressed-up dishes.

Almost without exception, whenever a piece of meat was boiled, the broth was an integral part of the dish, whether it was thickened into a sauce or poured over slices of bread to make 'souppes' or 'sopes'. These stocks or broths must have been fairly fatty (there are never instructions for defatting the stock) and indeed, this quality seems to have been prized, in the same way as 'nicely fat' meat was preferred to very lean. Several recipes in the Sent Sovi advise using the fattiest stock.[113]

The lipsmacking qualities came from the salt pork ('carnsalada', 'lard') which was customarily added when any meat was boiled, sometimes as a single chunk or a bone, sometimes chopped into small pieces, sometimes by means of the technique of larding (studding the meat with small pieces of 'lard', salted pork or pork fat). Larding seems to have been more common in northern France, where large game, especially, was larded and then cooked in either stock, wine or water; the dish was called 'bouly larde'. In Martino's recipe for 'brodo lardiero', cubes of lard are simply added with the piece of game.[114]

For some meats, boiling seems to have been the preferred method, and was specifically recommended, but almost any meat could be boiled, with the addition of a piece of salt pork (lard), herbs such as parsley and sage, and spices, often added towards the end of cooking. The usual procedure was to start with the ingredients in cold water, bring it to the boil, skim and simmer. Under the title 'Carn a la Sarreynesca', the Sent Sovi describes an alternative method apparently inspired by Arab cuisine, in which pieces of meat plus salted pork and flavourings are first seared, or fried, before hot stock or water is added; a translation of this recipe is included in Cuoco Napolitano, and Mestre Robert uses this technique in his recipes for 'Brou de larder' and 'Broet larder de bona fayso'.[115] Rudolf Grewe believes the practice to be specific to Arab cuisine; it is prescribed in several recipes in A Bagdad Cookery-Book (for example, Isfanakhiya)[116]

Boiled meats could be kept for a few days if submersed in vinegar. This dish, known variously as 'sols', 'soulz', 'sous' or 'solcio', could be made with any meat, but in particular used the extremities and odd pieces of pig, although a recipe in Sent Sovi applies the process to whole, be-feathered partridges [117] The standard method was to pour vinegar or a vinegar-stock mixture over boiled meat, in a separate bowl, and flavour with herbs (especially sage) and spices; it could then be kept for up to 15 days.[118]

The name 'sols' or 'sous' derived from the early

Germanic 'Sulz', which apparently referred either to brine or pickled meat. From there it was a natural progression to 'sols' (meat preserved in a vinegary liquid) and to the modern German 'Sulze' (aspic), and likewise from the 'sols' to jellies which, although similar in ingredients and method, demanded much more care and expertise. Here the everyday boiled meat entered the realm of international cuisine. A jelly was an end-of-banquet glamour dish, crystal clear or gaily coloured, bejewelled with sparkling crimson pomegranate seeds or golden spices. Enclosing a piece of meat or fish, it shimmered on all the best tables of mediaeval Europe, and variations between recipes reflect more the whims of a particular artist-cook or the requirements of a particular occasion than regional characteristics. It was important that the jelly be 'clere et net' and to achieve both these ideals the recipes specify meats rich in gelatine and frugal in fat - pig's feet, sheep's feet, veal knuckles, young chickens and young rabbits.[119] To ensure clear, limpid jelly the spices were added in chunks rather than as a powder, the liquid strained several times or clarified with egg whites (Martino was apparently the first to recommend this practice, which was later repeated in the fifteenth-century printed Viandier).[120] Martino proposes the added refinement of cooking separately the meats from which is extracted the jelly and the meats to be set under aspic.

It is noteworthy that none of the recipes for jelly include salted pork and consequently, they call for the

addition of salt in judicious amounts. This confirms that the function of the salted pork added to other boiled dishes was to give saltiness and flavour. For a jelly, it was important to have control over the saltiness and equally important to avoid fattiness, which would spoil the appearance of the finished dish. The exigences of aesthetics scarcely applied to an ordinary dish of boiled meat, and its unrefined nature could support the addition of salted pork.

At neither extreme - the noble jelly nor the common boiled joint - can distinctive regional styles be differentiated. In the sauce accompaniments to boiled meats, however, local particularities are evident.

SAUCES FOR BOILED MEATS

The types of meats customarily boiled were mentioned earlier - beef, mutton, salted pork. Sometimes the same sauces were served with these as accompanied roast meats, excepting those condiments of the verjuice/citrus juice/rosewater/wine genre, but two were specifically associated with boiled meats: mustard and eruga.

Mustard was a universal condiment but its preparation and usage varied. It seems to have been more popular in northern France, where it traditionally accompanied charcuterie (the 'andoulles' in the ranks of the army of Charnage were armed with mustard) and salted ingredients (salted pork, mutton, beef, beef tongue, and salt cod).[121] In Flanders it was served with all kinds of

meat and fish, and no other sauce was known, deplored Deschamps.[122] Mustard, when recommended (rarely) in Mediterranean texts, could accompany fresh pork, boiled; as noted earlier, boiled salted pork was not important in the Mediterranean culinary repertoire, which might explain why the mustard-salted meat partnership was more prevalent in northern France (the salted meats offered in the menus of Cuoco Napolitano were sometimes accompanied by Cameline sauce).

The difference between northern and Mediterranean versions of mustard parallels that between the two versions of other sauces: Mediterranean mustard invariably contained a sweet ingredient to balance the sharpness of vinegar or verjuice. Le Menagier's basic recipe is simply mustard seeds and vinegar, with the optional addition of spices; only if the mustard were to be kept for some time was it made with sweet (boiled) must.[123] In contrast, a sweet medium is called for in almost all the Mediterranean recipes for mustard. Concentrated grape juice is used in the recipes of the Latin Liber, and in one of Martino's recipes; the recipes of Anonimo Veneziano call for 'vin cocto' (spiced and honey-sweetened red wine) and Catalan mustard is mixed with stock plus honey or sugar.[124] An alternative version of Martino has no sweetener but includes ground almonds to soften the flavour - and incidentally, ground almonds also feature in Roman and Arab-Persian recipes for mustard.[125] The fourteenth-century sauce book attributed Maino de' Maineri also suggests mustard prepared with sweetened cooked wine,

and recommends this mustard with boiled meats - or, in winter, with roast pork. Alternatively, he says, these same meats can be accompanied by Eruca, a sauce made with the seeds of the plant of the same name, ground and mixed with almonds and a little vinegar, according to a recipe almost identical to one of Martino's recipes for mustard.[126]

Eruca (Rocket, Eruca Sativa) is an annual herb of Mediterranean regions, of the same family (Brassicacea) as mustard. According to Pierre de Crescens, both wild and cultivated varieties were present.[127] It appears to have been used as a substitute for, or alternative to, mustard; in the Latin Tractatus, it is stated that mustard can be made with the ground seeds of either, combined with honey or concentrated grape juice.[128] Recipes for Eruca (the sauce) are included in almost all Mediterranean texts, and all insist on the characteristic sweet/sour harmony. Undoubtedly, this sauce was a Mediterranean speciality, effectively unknown in the north of France. Its presence in southern France cannot be verified, but might reasonably be assumed; certainly the plant was known there, as either 'eruga' or 'tora'.[129]

BROUETS

Godefroy, writing with the hindsight of the nineteenth century, defined 'brouet' as "aliment liquide, bouillon, jus".[130] His interpretation is all the more remarkable, since all but one of the brouets of Le

Menagier are classed as 'potages lyans' and since, much closer to the mediaeval centuries, Cotgrave could describe a brouet as "potage, or broth; also, any liquor, podge, or sauce, of the thicknesse, or consistence, of that wherein our pruine tarts are made".[131] In today's terms, it might be described as a puree.

The mediaeval brouet was a dish of meat in a thickened sauce, differing from roast or boiled meats served with a sauce in that the meat and sauce were cooked together. Indeed, the brouet can be seen as the ancestor of the eighteenth-century ragoût. When, around 1765, Boulanger was granted permission to sell his 'pieds de mouton à la poulette', thus opening the future to 'restaurateurs', the justification for the decision was that the 'pieds de mouton', not being cooked in the sauce, could not be classed as a 'ragoût'.[132]

All but one of the dishes named as brouets in *Le Menagier* have a definite identity and common characteristics. The sauces were all thickened; the primary ingredient was in large pieces (quarters of chicken, chunks of eel); and they were served in the same way - in a bowl, the sauce poured over the primary ingredient. They were invariably spiced and often prettily coloured - saffron-yellow, parsley-green. These features indicate that brouets were dishes of high status, and this is confirmed by the complexity of their preparation. At least two, and often three, cooking processes were involved, the most common sequence being parboil-fry-simmer in sauce; as Rodinson has remarked,

multiple operations and complexity of preparation were characteristics of courtly cuisine in the Arab world.[133] Finally, they had a particular place in the progression of a dinner; all but two of the 24 brouets in Le Menagier's suggested menus come immediately before the course of roasts, the two exceptions being served with the roast course, but in a fish-day menu.[134]

Thus can be developed a model for a category of dishes of which these brouets-by-name are the prototypes. For one cannot simply assume that all dishes labelled 'brouet' - or the equivalent in other tongues, 'brodetto', 'broet' - are of the same genre; indeed, an analysis of 'labelled' brouets could only confirm that they were a highly heterogeneous lot.[135] Nor should one exclude dishes not bearing the name 'brouet' but which, in every other respect, are comparable. By defining a brouet as a sumptuous dish in which large pieces of pre-cooked meat (or other protein ingredient) are simmered in a thickened, spicy sauce thus allows acceptance of those other French dishes of the same family but which go under different patronyms - gravé, civé, seymé, rappé - as well as their Catalan cousins, the mig-raust, sosengua, janet and others, and the Italian relatives, the brodo, civieri, sommachia, romania, and so on. They might not accord in all features with the brouets-by-name, but are close enough to be considered in the general category.

In this chapter only the brouets of 'jours gras' will be considered, those based on meat, poultry or game. In reality, meat and game rarely featured in brouets, which

were most frequently based on poultry - chicken or capon, and also hen and partridge in Sent Sovi recipes. Poultry may have been preferred because it could easily be quartered into serving pieces, or because of its taste and tenderness. A more likely reason, however, was its prestige; rarely would an elaborate preparation be undertaken with an inferior ingredient.

In both flavour and texture, the brouets of Le Menagier (and those of its near-contemporary, Le Viandier) differ from those of the Catalan Sent Sovi; Italian brouets tend to the Catalan model. Fourteenth-century northern French brouets appear to have been basically sour, their spiciness accented with the acidity of vinegar or verjuice, and dulled with the almost inevitable bread thickening. Sometimes there was the novelty of other thickening ingredients - ground liver, eggs and egg yolks - but usually in conjunction with bread. Catalan brouets, on the other hand, often aimed to achieve a sweet-sour harmony through the judicious blending of sugar, honey or 'arop' with pomegranate or citrus juice or vinegar. The mode of thickening was, as for sauces, more adventurous. Usually a combination of ingredients provided the required consistency and at the same time added flavour to the brouet: almond milk with ground liver, hazelnuts and egg yolks, ground liver with bread and eggs. As in the case of sauces, differing availabilities of ingredients probably dictated, to some extent, the composition of the dishes but nevertheless, the differences between northern French and Catalan

brouets provide evidence for basic differences in taste.[136]

Italian brouets tend to share the Catalan predilection for almonds, eggs and ground liver among the thickening ingredients, and for a balance of sweet and sour flavours. Whereas the sweetness of the Catalan brouets derived mainly from sugar or honey, Italian brouets - especially those represented by the recipes in Anonimo Veneziano - relied also on the natural sweetness of raisins, dates and prunes. Although no details of southern French brouets have yet been found, there is no reason not to suppose them similar to the Italian and Catalan brouets. (Incidentally, as if to confirm the characteristics of the Mediterranean model, the three brouets of Le Menagier which include a sweet element (sugar) also include other ingredients of Mediterranean cuisine: pomegranates, a thickening of ground liver and bread.)[137]

To single out for attention a brouet from the Catalan repertoire might be thought to display bias, but if one can believe Platina ("I do not remember eating a better dish") mig-raust was at the summit of mediaeval cuisine.[138] It was made with hens or partidges, part-roast (hence the name) and quartered, then finished in a spicy, sweet-sour sauce thickened with almond milk and the ground cooked livers. [139] Mestre Robert nominated mig-raust as one of the top three dishes in the world, and it was borrowed and adapted by Italian cooks.[140] The name is presumed to be of Germanic

origin (via the Occitan mieg-raust) but the dish was undoubtedly Mediterranean and does not seem to have ventured out of this region.[141] There are, however, hints of a northern French borrowing in the dish 'tremollete' or 'trimolecte', the first recipe for which was given by Chiquart.[142]

GAME

Yet another myth faces the guillotine. Mediaeval gourmets are said to have prized game and to have eaten it in large quantities; moreover, game was supposed to be the monopoly of the nobleman, the reward of the apres-chasse feast. The evidence does not support this.

Perhaps in the early post-1000 centuries there was some reality on which to found such an image, and it was certainly elaborated by many mediaeval writers, continuing the Homeric tradition in which the rituals of preparation, rather than the meal itself, are of ultimate importance.[143] Their long and sonorous lists were intended to convey the splendour and sumptuousity of the festive occasion, such as Flamenca's arrival at Bourbon, rather than describe the mediaeval actuality:

"And there was bustard, crane and swan,
Capon, duck, partridge and with these
Were peacocks and fat hens and geese,
And stags and roebucks, conies, hares,
And flesh of boars and great fierce bears,
All in most copious supply

And of the finest quality." [144]

From similar lists of game in cookery treatises and market documents, Braudel assumes that game was consumed in great variety, frequently and copiously.[145] This, I suggest, is a gross exaggeration; even for the Gallo-Romans, game does not appear to have been an important component of the diet.[146] Some game, but by no means all, was important in late mediaeval cuisine; not all game was necessarily held in high esteem; and game was not the monopolistic privilege of landowning dynasties with vast estates.

"It would be a mistake to think of Provence as a region where hunting was an aristocratic privilege."[147] By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the same could be said of other regions. Some forms of hunting (chasse à courre, on horseback with hounds and grooms, generally for large game) were effectively limited to the noble and wealthy, but hawking seems to have been widely practised (the wife of the author of Le Menagier was instructed in this pastime) and the hunting of small game, such as rabbits and partridges, was largely unrestricted. Indeed, it appears that the hunting of small game, often with nets or ferrets, was recognised as a legitimate means of earning one's livelihood, less 'noble' because its object was profit rather than pleasure. Professional 'hunters' are documented in mediaeval Sicily.[148]

For urban society, the choice of game depended more on market availability than hunter's luck, and it seems

that those varieties of game supplied by 'professional' hunters were of fairly regular supply. At Orange, all game brought to the market to be sold ("tot cassador qui prengua perdis per vendre") was taxed.[149] At the markets, game was always handled by the poultry-seller, whether in Provence, Tuscany or Paris ("Au poullaillier: Les rostz (cochons, hetoudeaulx, perdreaulx) et la volaille et venoison").[150]

Nevertheless, game - large and small, furred and feathered - offered another option to the mediaeval cook and diner. Among small game, partridge in particular seems to have been almost universally esteemed, although it may have been more plentiful in Mediterranean regions than in northern France, where it seems to have been relatively more expensive.[151] Aldebrandin praised its flesh as the best of all birds, and Platina described partridge as easily digested and of much nourishment.[152] Partridge often featured in meals for special occasions, generally roast or as a brouet. In Bruges in 1450, Isabella spent lavishly on small game for banquets, but particularly on partridge.[153] For a wedding breakfast in September, the author of Le Menagier proposes partridge as the only game.[154]

The almost encyclopaedic coverage of game in both Le Menagier and the Viandier indicates that in northern France a greater variety of game was available and was eaten in northern France, although the sparsity of instructions for cooking such birds as plover and woodcock leads one to suspect that the recipes were included simply

because the hunt sometimes produced these trophies which, for whatever reason, were obligatorily presented at the dinner table. Likewise, the paucity of references to large game and to water birds in the Mediterranean texts might be taken as evidence that these species were less prevalent and less important in cuisine in this region. The assumption is supported by the evidence of a sixteenth-century author, Pierre Belon du Mans, who wrote that "Although the French esteem the crane, herons, butors and other water birds, other nations do not necessarily agree; the Venetians do not have a high opinion of egrets, and less of bitterns."[155]

A difference in attitude towards water birds may be one indication of different tastes with respect to game in northern France and Mediterranean regions. Corroborative evidence is provided by a summary of the roles of swans, cranes and herons in the mediaeval cuisine of England, Germany, the Netherlands, France and Italy, which suggests that such species were more important - both nutritionally and symbolically - in the northern than in Mediterranean countries.[156] Nevertheless, the symbolic significance of game, especially among the aristocracy, tends to suppress regional affiliations; as Pierre Belon du Mans wrote, "Anyone who has not had the privilege of attending public feasts and the dinners of the great lords in various regions, would have difficulty understanding the opinion of each type of game."[157]

CONCLUSION

This examination of one particular area of mediaeval cuisine has demonstrated how regional (and social) distinctions were marked, both in the choice of ingredients and of the style in which they were prepared. In southern France and other Mediterranean countries, mutton was frequently eaten and appreciated while fresh pork was avoided; pork was preferentially eaten in salted form and salting practices produced a product for long-term conservation. Similar attitudes towards mutton and pork could not be discerned in northern France, where salted pork products for both long- and short-term conservation were prepared.

Differences between the two regions are also evident in sauces; those which accompanied roast and, to a lesser extent, boiled meats in Catalan and Italian cuisine differed noticeably from those of northern France, typically employing a variety of thickening ingredients and incorporating a sweet component to modify the acidity of vinegar or verjuice. The same characteristic features differentiated Catalan and Italian brouets from those of northern France. The use of almonds, citrus juices and sugar in Catalan and Italian sauces and brouets indicates an Arab influence, and it is assumed that a similar influence would have been apparent in southern France.

While geography may have had some influence on the availability of ingredients, it does not necessarily

explain preferences. Differences between northern French and Mediterranean cuisine can more readily be interpreted as evidence of different patterns of culinary development, with Mediterranean cuisine showing clearly its borrowings from the eastern Arab world. It must next be seen whether similar differences can be identified in other areas of mediaeval cuisine, and whether the same explanations are valid.