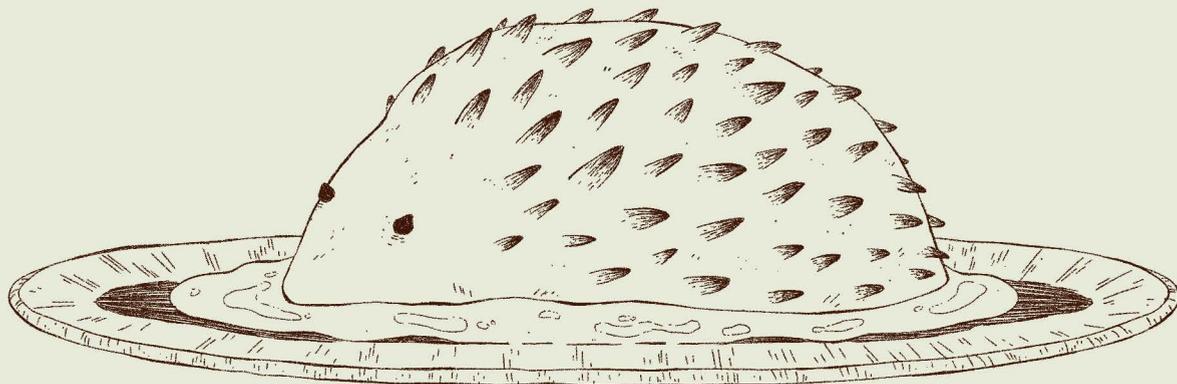


HOW · TO · BAKE · AN

ALMOND HEDGEHOG

FEATURING OLD AND NEW RECIPES



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SHERIDAN LIBRARIES

Introduction



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Reading 18th-century English cookbooks is an absolute delight! The books are full of recipes for things that sound enchanting to the modern ear, like syllabub and flummery, as well as tips that hint at the holiday stresses of yore, such as how to ensure that your gooseberries are kept properly until Christmas. The cookbooks also reveal whimsical food trends that wouldn't look at all out of place on today's tables or even on Instagram. One such trend is the dessert hedgehog, an almond-based concoction that was originally popular with royalty but became quite the thing with the rise of the moderately-priced cookbook.

So, why the hedgehog of all things and why was it made out of almonds? Well, it's a bit of a strange story. In 1532 Henry VIII passed the Preservation Grain Act, which was meant to protect England's agriculture from vermin, including hedgehogs! A sizeable bounty was placed on their cute little heads and it is estimated that nearly half a million of the prickly creatures met an untimely demise due to implementation of the act.

At around the same time that hedgehogs joined England's Most Wanted list, the English went absolutely bananas for the almond and scores of recipes were created to showcase them, including milks and soups. In addition to their flavor, almonds were also widely used for cosmetic and therapeutic purposes. It was even said that an almond salve could cure the bite of a mad dog. Perhaps it was a confluence of politics, a yen for almonds, and a rather macabre sense of humor that led courtly bakers to proclaim, "Let them eat hedgehogs!"

Whatever was the source of inspiration, the dessert hedgehog was nonetheless considered to be a recipe that aspiring and affluent households should have on their backburners. A plethora of recipes can be found in 18th-century cookbooks, including unique manuscript books held by Special Collections. The cookbook writer Hannah Glasse, considered to be the Martha Stewart of her day, was quite a fan of the little hedgehog, and described it as "a neat dish" in her recipe. Since we can all use some new neat dishes in our lives, we have modified an early hedgehog recipe for you to try! It is based on the recipe found in Henry Howard's *England's Newest Way in All Sorts of Cookery, Pastry, and All Pickles that Are Fit to Be Used* (London, 1726; first published in 1703). Though the original recipe lacks ingredient lists, exact cooking temperatures and times, and other content we expect to find in our recipes, the instructions are rather clear. Plus, this recipe seems to be the one upon which the more famous women cookbook authors like Hannah Glasse drew their inspiration.

To Make Hedges Hogs

Take a pound of the Best Jorden Almonds blanch them in Cold water, and put them into a nother Water, Cut them with a knife the long way as thinn as can be, then take a Pound of Loaf Sugar finely Beaten, and Mix with it the Almonds, then take the Whites of two Eggs, and beat them to a froth, with a little orange flower water, then Put your froth upon the Almonds till you have wett them mixing up with a Spoon, then lay them on a Sheet of water Paper, and put them upon a pye Plate flowered, Shape them as you Please, Put in Orange and Cittron cut small, and spoon Comforts on the Top, sett them in a warm oven.

To make a Hedge-Hog.

Take two pounds of blanched almonds, beat them well in a mortar, with a little canary and orange-flower water, to keep them from oiling. Make them into stiff paste, then beat in the yolks of twelve eggs, leave out five of the whites, put to it a pint of cream sweetened with sugar, put in half a pound of sweet butter melted, set it on a furnace or slow fire, and keep it constantly stirring, till it is stiff enough to be made in the shape of a hedge-hog; then stick it full of blanched almonds and stuck up like the bristles of a hedge-hog, then put it into a dish; take a pint of cream, and the yolks of four eggs beat up sweetened with sugar to your palate; stir them together over a slow fire till it is quite hot; then pour it around the hedge-hog in a dish, and let it stand till it is cold, and serve it up; or a rich calf's foot jelly, made clear and good, poured in the dish round the hedge-hog; when it is cold, it looks pretty and makes a neat dish; or it looks pretty in the middle of a table for supper.

Glasse, Hannah. *The Art of Cookery, made Plain and Easy : Which Far Exceeds any Thing of the Kind Yet Published...*: To which are Added, One Hundred and Fifty New and Useful Receipts, and a Copious Index. Printed for W. Strahan, J. and F. Rivington, J. Hinton, Hawes and Co., W. Johnston and 23 others, London, 1774.

124. Hedge-Hog.

Take a pound of Jordon -Almonds, blanched and beaten in a Mortar very fine with a spoonful of slack, or Orange-flower-water to keep them from Oiling; make it into a stiff paste; then beat in six Yolks and two Whites of Eggs, sweeten it with fine sugar with the quantity of half a Pint of Cream, and a quarter of a pound of sweet Butter melted; set it on your Stow, and keep it stirring till it's as stiff as you may make it into the Fashion of a Hedge-hog; then stick it full of blanched Almonds, slit and stick up like the Bristles of a Hedge-hog; then place it in the middle of your Dish, and boil Cream, and take the Yolks of two Eggs, and sweeten to your Taste with Sugar; thicken it, but not too thicke; pour it around your Hedge-hog; set it to be cold: Serve it for a Side-dish.

Howard, Henry. *England's newest way in all sorts of cookery, pastry, and all pickles that are fit to be used. Adorned with copper plates, setting forth the manner of placing dishes upon tables; and the newest fashions of mince-pies.* By Henry Howard, Free Cook of London, and late Cook to his Grace the Duke of Ormond, and since to the Earl of Salisbury, and Earl of Winchessea. To which is added, the best receipts for making cakes, mackroons, biskets, Ginger-Bread, French-Bread: As also for Preserving, Conserving, Candyng and Drying Fruits, Confectioning and making of Creams, Syllabubs, and Marmalades of several Sorts. Likewise, Additions of Beautifying Waters, and other Curiosities. As also above Fifty new Receipts are added which renders the whole Work compleat. 5th ed., printed for J. Knapton, R. Knaplock, J. and B. Sprint, D. Midwinter, B. Lintot, A. Bettesworth, W. and J. Innys, J. Osborn, R. Robinson and A. Ward, 1726.

21st Century Hedgehog

Ingredients:

- 1 pound of almonds (3 cups)
- ½ pint of cream
- ¼ cup of sugar
- 1 stick of butter, melted
- A generous spoonful of almond extract, orange water, or sweet cooking wine
- 6 eggs separated (6 yolks, whites from 2 eggs)
- 1 small package of sliced almonds
- 2 chocolate chips, raisins, or blueberries for eyes

Equipment:

- 1 large pot
- Several small mixing bowls to organize the ingredients
- 1 liquid measuring cup
- A tray
- A food processor or mortar and pestle
- An electric beater
- A cutting board
- A spatula

21st Century Modifications

- Use almond extract instead of wine or orange water.
- After blanching and peeling the almonds, dry them in a warm oven for roughly 10 minutes.
- Replace the mortar and pestle with a food processor when breaking down the almonds.
- Chill the batter for an hour before shaping it into a hedgehog.

21st Century Hedgehog

Instructions:

- Blanche the almonds by placing them in a pot of boiling water for one minute. Drain and rinse in cold water.
- Place the almonds in a food processor and process until they resemble a very coarse grain. Add a heaving spoonful of either almond extract, orange water, or wine and run through the processor one more time. Pour the mixture into a large pot.
- Beat into the almond mixture the 6 yolks, then fold in the 2 egg whites. Add the sugar, butter, and cream until well-blended.
- Place pot on the stove at "medium" heat. Stir constantly. The batter will begin to thicken. If you have a food thermometer, the batter should be safe to eat at around 170 degrees.
- Remove from heat source and chill batter in fridge for 60-90 minutes.
- Start to fashion your hedgehog. Work the dough into a teardrop shape. The tapered end will be the hedgehog's head, add the sliced almonds to mimic quills and additional decoration as desired.
- Optional: Serve with custard. To make the custard in an 18th century style, bring half a pint of cream to boil, then whisk in the yolks of two eggs. Sweeten with sugar to taste. Stir over medium heat until thickened. Pour the custard around the hedgehog and chill.