

Victorian Christmas Dinner

Although the origins of the meal date back to the Middle Ages, it was the Victorians that developed traditions we still follow today. Originally boar would have been served. However, over the centuries the meal expanded to include goose, rabbit and roast beef. By the Victorian era, turkey became the fashionable meat for upper class families to serve and the lower classes soon followed suit.

Christmas dinner would often include roasted chestnuts, mince pies and plum Pudding; which all gained huge popularity at this time. Other popular desserts included *Buche de Noel* (yule log), panettone (sweet bread), and fruit cake. Stuffing (or dressing) traces its origins back to the Romans and the practice has carried on until modern times. Beverages such as egg nog and mulled wine would have also been served.

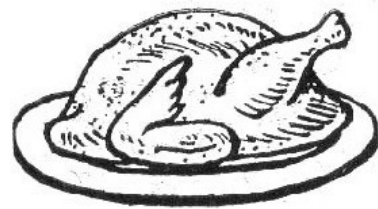
The Victorians loved lengthy meals with many courses and this sentiment can still be seen today, with large Christmas dinners, where we eat and drink far too much!

English Mince Meat

5 lbs. raisins, seeded
5 lbs. suet, finely chopped
5 lbs. apples, finely chopped
4 lbs. citron, finely chopped
1 1/2 blanch almonds, finely chopped
5 lbs. currants
5 lbs. light brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon mace
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
2 1/2 cups brandy

Cook raisins, suet, apples, citron, currants and sugar slowly for one and one-half hours, then add almonds, spices and brandy.

Fun Fact: In 1840, the Christmas Day menu for Queen Victoria and her family include both beef and several royal roasted swans!



Roasted Chestnuts

Ingredients: 1/2 pounds chestnuts.

Preheat oven to 425°. Using paring knife make an x-shape on the round side of each chestnut. Arrange on baking sheet and roast until shells have pulled back and the meat is soft (approx. 15-20 minutes). Remove nuts and place on towel. Wrap and squeeze the chestnuts until they crackle. Let them sit a few minutes before peeling off the shell and papery skin between the shell and meat.

Enjoy!



Image credit: A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, 1843. (original frontispiece)