



Smithsonian Associates

## Feasting with Royalty: Dinner with Cleopatra

*Francine Segan*

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### Recipes of Ancient Egypt

from *Philosopher's Kitchen*  
by Francine Segan

#### **Milk and Honey Griddle Bread**

Serves 6

This recipe for moist and flavorful griddle bread is delicious alone or wrapped around salami or grilled asparagus, it's also great for scooping up dips.

4 ounces feta cheese  
3 tablespoons honey  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup all-purpose flour, plus more as needed  
Olive or vegetable oil

In a large bowl, mash the feta cheese, honey, and salt together with a fork until well combined. Add the flour and mix until a dough forms. Using your hands, knead the dough in the bowl until smooth. Cover in plastic wrap and allow to rest, at room temperature, for about 20 minutes.

Divide the dough into 12 equal portions and on a very lightly floured work surface roll each section into a very thin circle, about 3 inches in diameter.

Lightly oil a nonstick pan and over medium-low heat cook the circles until golden, about 1 minute per side. Serve warm.

#### **Cucumber Salad with Raisin Vinaigrette**

Serves 4

Pythagoras, the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC philosopher and mathematician who gave us the Pythagorean theorem, studied in Egypt. It was there he learned of a recipe for cucumbers and raisins, that relieves thirst and that the goddess Demeter supposedly gave to Hercules.

In this modern version, feta, raisins, and spices are pureed to create a creamy, deliciously unusual dressing for cucumbers.

1 European long cucumber, unpeeled  
2 ounces feta cheese  
1/4 cup heavy cream  
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro leaves, plus more for garnish  
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar

1 teaspoon honey  
Juice of 1/2 lemon  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1/4 teaspoon ground coriander  
Salt and freshly milled pepper  
3 tablespoons golden raisins

Cut the cucumber in half lengthwise and, using a knife or grapefruit spoon, remove the seeds. Coarsely grate and reserve in a serving bowl.

Puree the feta, cream, cilantro, vinegar, honey, lemon juice, olive oil, and coriander in a food processor until smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste and toss the vinaigrette with the cucumbers. Top with raisins and garnish with cilantro.

### **Pine Nut Honey Acorn Squash**

Serves 4

The Romans, acknowledging the culinary influences from Egypt, named this sumptuous dish after the city of Alexandria in Egypt.

1 acorn squash, about 1 pound  
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1/4 cup fresh minced mint leaves  
Coarse sea salt and freshly milled pepper  
1/4 cup sherry vinegar  
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander  
2 tablespoons honey  
2 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted, coarsely ground

Slice the squash into 1/4-inch circles and sauté them in oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium heat until golden brown on each side. Remove squash from pan and place on serving platter. While still hot top with the garlic, mint, salt, and pepper.

In the same pan, bring the vinegar, cumin, coriander, and honey to a boil. Pour over the squash and top with pine nuts. Serve warm or cold.

### **Halibut “Alexandria” with Dried Plums**

Serves 4

This recipe was also originally named after Alexandria, one of the most important cities and ports in ancient times. Known for its fine fish and other delicacies, Alexandria is often mentioned in Apicius’ cookbook, underscoring the connection between Roman and Egyptian cuisine.

The sweet dried plum compote, an unusually delicious complement to halibut, is also great with sole, flounder, or bass. Toss any leftover compote with canned tuna to make scrumptious luncheon sandwiches.

10 dried plums, chopped  
2 teaspoons raspberry or fruit vinegar  
4 oil-packed anchovy fillets, drained  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
2 shallots, sliced  
1 leek, white and tender green part only, halved and sliced  
1/2 teaspoon dried marjoram  
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/8 teaspoon celery seed  
1/4 cup red wine  
4 halibut steaks, about 8 ounces each  
Salt and freshly milled pepper  
2 celery ribs with leaves, finely sliced

Toss the plums with the vinegar in a small bowl and set aside.

Warm the anchovy fillets in 1 tablespoon of the oil in a saucepan over medium heat stirring constantly until the anchovy is completely broken down. Add the shallots, leeks, marjoram, cumin, and celery seed and cook until soft, about 5 minutes.

Add the wine and simmer until the wine is nearly absorbed. Stir in the vinegar-soaked plums and cook until warmed throughout. Remove from heat and cover to keep warm while you cook the fish.

Season the halibut with salt and pepper. In a large non-stick skillet, heat the remaining oil over medium-high heat. Add the halibut steaks and sauté, turning once, until golden and cooked through, about 4 minutes per side.

Stir the celery into the plum-shallot mixture, and season with salt and pepper. Serve the halibut topped with several heaping tablespoons of the plum compote.

### **Braised Chicken with Peaches and Squash**

Serves 4

4 chicken legs and thighs, separated  
Salt and freshly milled black pepper  
All-purpose flour for dredging  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1 teaspoon caraway seeds  
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin  
1 acorn squash, peel on, sliced 1/2 inch thick  
2 cups dry white wine  
1 firm peach, skin on, thinly sliced  
2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro  
2 tablespoons minced watercress

Liberally season the chicken with salt and pepper, and dredge in flour. In large sauté pan, warm the oil over high heat and brown the chicken on all sides. Remove the chicken from the pan. Remove all but 3 tablespoons of the remaining pan juices and add the caraway, cumin, and squash. Cook the squash until golden, 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the wine to the squash slices and bring to a boil. Return the chicken to the pan, cover with a tight lid, and reduce to low heat. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through.

Remove the chicken and squash from the pan and arrange on a serving platter. Add the peaches to the pan juices and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes, or until the liquid is reduced by half. Remove from heat. Stir in the cilantro and watercress, and then pour over the chicken and squash.

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Assembled by Francine Segan

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