



In the French Kitchen: Yesterday and Today

Susan Herrmann Loomis

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**THIS DOCUMENT, INSTITUTED BY CHARLEMAGNE – (BETWEEN 771-800)
LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR FRENCH GASTRONOMY IN THE GARDEN, IN THE
KITCHEN, AT THE TABLE, AND IN SOCIETY.**

The Capitulare de Villis

1. It is our wish that those of our estates which we have established to minister to our needs shall serve our purposes entirely and not those of other men.
2. That all our people shall be well looked after and shall not be reduced to penury by anyone.
3. That the stewards shall not presume to put our people to their own service, and shall not compel them to give their labour or to cut wood or to do any other work for them; and they shall accept no gifts from them, neither a horse nor an ox, nor a cow, nor a pig, nor a sheep, nor a piglet, nor a lamb, nor anything other than bottles of wine, vegetables, fruit, chickens and eggs.
4. If anyone of our people does harm to our interests through theft or any other neglect of duty, let him make good the damage in full, and in addition let him be punished by whipping according to the law, except in the case of murder or arson, for which a fine may be exacted. As far as concerns other men, let the stewards be careful to give them the justice to which they have a right, as the law directs. Our people, as we have said, are to be whipped in preference to being fined. Free men, however, who live on our crown lands and estates shall be careful to pay for any wrong they may have done, according to their law; and whatever they may give as their fine, whether it be cattle or any other form of payment, shall be assigned to our use.
5. Whenever it falls to our stewards to see that our work is done, whether it be sowing or ploughing, harvesting, haymaking or the gathering of grapes, let each one of them, at the appropriate time and place, supervise the work and give instructions as to how it should be done, so that everything may be successfully carried out. If a steward is not in his district, or cannot get to a particular place, let him send a good messenger from among our people, or some other man who can be trusted, to look after our affairs and settle them satisfactorily; and the steward shall be especially careful to send a reliable man to deal with this matter.
6. It is our wish that our stewards shall pay a full tithe of all produce to the churches that are on our estates, and that no tithe of ours shall be paid to the church of another lord except in places where this is an ancient custom. And no clerics shall hold these churches except our own or those from our people or from our chapel.
7. That each steward shall perform his service in full, according to his instructions. And if the necessity should arise for his service to be increased, let him decide whether he should add to the manpower or to the days spent in performing it.
8. That our stewards shall take charge of our vineyards in their districts and see that they are properly worked; and let them put the wine into good vessels, and take particular care that no loss is incurred in shipping it. They are to have purchased other, more special, wine to supply the royal estates. And if they should buy more of



this wine than is necessary for supplying our estates they should inform us of this, so that we can tell them what we wish to be done with it. They shall also have slips from our vineyards sent for our use. Such rents from our estates as are paid in wine they shall send to our cellars.

9. It is our wish that each steward shall keep in his district measures for modii and sextaria, and vessels containing eight sextaria, and also baskets of the same capacity as we have in our palace.

10. That our mayors and foresters, our stablemen, cellarers, deans, toll-collectors and other officials shall perform regular services and shall give pigs in return for their holdings: in place of manual labour, let them perform their official duties well. And any mayor who has a benefice, let him arrange to send a substitute, whose task it will be to carry out the manual labour and other services on his behalf.

11. That no steward, tinder any circumstances, shall take lodgings for his own use or for his dogs, either among our men or among those living outside our estates.

12. That no steward shall commend a hostage of ours on our estates.

13. That they shall take good care of the stallions, and under no circumstances allow them to stay for long in the same pasture, lest it should be spoiled. And if any of them is unhealthy, or too old, or is likely to die, the stewards are to see that we are informed at the proper time, before the season comes for sending them in among the mares.

14. That they shall look after our mares well and segregate the colts at the proper time. And if the fillies increase in number, let them be separated so that they can form a new herd by themselves.

15. That they shall take care to have our foals sent to the winter palace at the feast of St Martin.

16. It is our wish that whatever we or the queen may order any steward, or whatever our officials, the seneschal or the butler, may order them in our name or in the name of the queen, they shall carry out in full as they are instructed. And whoever falls short in this through negligence, let him abstain from drinking from the moment he is told to do so until he comes into our presence or the presence of the queen and seeks forgiveness from us. And if a steward is in the army, or on guard duty, or on a mission, or is away elsewhere, and gives an order to his subordinates and they do not carry it out, let them come on foot to the palace, and let them abstain from food and drink until they have given reasons for falling in their duty in this way; and then let them receive their punishment, either in the form of a beating or in any other way that we or the queen shall decide.

17. A steward shall appoint as many men as he has estates in his district, whose task it will be to keep bees for our use.

18. At our mills they are to keep chickens and geese, according to the mill's importance—or as many as is possible.

19. In the barns on our chief estates they are to keep not less than 100 chickens and not less than 30 geese. At the smaller farms they are to keep not less than 50 chickens and not less than 12 geese.

20. Every steward is to see that the produce is brought to the court in plentiful supply throughout the year; also, let them make their visitations for this purpose at least three or four times.



21. Every steward is to keep fishponds on our estates where they have existed in the past, and if possible he is to enlarge them. They are also to be established in places where they have not so far existed but where they are now practicable.

22. Those who have vines shall keep not less than three or four crowns of grapes.

23. On each of our estates the stewards are to have as many byres, pigsties, sheepfolds and goat-pens as possible, and under no circumstances are they to be without them. They are also to have cows provided by our serfs for the performance of their service, so that the byres and plough-teams are in no way weakened by service on our demesne. And when they have to provide meat, let them have lame but healthy oxen, cows or horses which are not mangy, and other healthy animals; and, as we have said, our byres and plough-teams must not suffer as a result of this.

24. Every steward is to take pains over anything he has to provide for our table, so that everything he gives is good and of the best quality, and as carefully and cleanly prepared as possible. And each of them, when he comes to serve at our table, is to have corn for two meals a day for his service; and any other provisions, whether in flour or in meat, are similarly to be of good quality.

25. They are to report on the first of September whether or not there will be food for the pigs.

26. The mayors are not to have more land in their districts than they can ride through and inspect in a single day.

27. Our houses are to have continuous watch-fires and guards to keep them safe. And when our missi and their retinues are on their way to or from the palace, they shall under no circumstances take lodging in the royal manor houses, except on our express orders or those of the queen. And the count in his district, or the men whose traditional custom it has been to look after our missi and their retinues, shall continue, as they have done in the past, to provide them with pack-horses and other necessities, so that they may travel to and from the palace with ease and dignity.

28. It is our wish that each year in Lent on Palm Sunday, which is also called Hosanna Sunday, the stewards shall take care to pay in the money part of our revenue according to our instructions, after we have determined the amount of our revenue for the year in question.

29. With regard to those of our men who have cases to plead, every steward is to see to it that they are not compelled to come into our presence to make their plea; and he shall not allow a man to lose, through negligence, the days on which he owes service. And if a serf of ours is involved in a lawsuit outside our estates, his master is to do all he can to see that he obtains justice. And if in a given place the serf has difficulty in obtaining it, his master shall not allow him to suffer as a result but shall make it his business to inform us of the matter, either in person or through his messenger.

30. It is our wish that from all the revenue they shall set aside what is needed for our purposes; and in the same way they are to set aside the produce with which they load the carts that are needed for the army, both those of the householders and those of the shepherds, and they shall keep a record of how much they are sending for this purpose.

31. That in the same way each year they shall set aside what is necessary for the household workers and for the women's workshops; and at the appropriate time



they are to supply it in full measure and must be in a position to tell us how they have disposed of it and where it came from.

32. That every steward shall make it his business always to have good seed of the best quality, whether bought or otherwise acquired.

33. After all these parts of our revenue have been set aside or sown or otherwise dealt with, anything that is left over is to await our instructions, so that it can be sold or held in reserve as we shall decide.

34. They are to take particular care that anything which they do or make with their hands—that is, lard, smoked meat, sausage, newly-salted meat, wine, vinegar, mulberry wine, boiled wine, garum, mustard, cheese, butter, malt, beer, mead, honey, wax and flour—that all these are made or prepared with the greatest attention to cleanliness.

35. It is our wish that tallow shall be made from fat sheep and also from pigs; in addition, they are to keep on each estate not less than two fattened oxen, which can either be used for making tallow there or can be sent to us.

36. That our woods and forests shall be well protected; if there is an area to be cleared, the stewards are to have it cleared, and shall not allow fields to become overgrown with woodland. Where woods are supposed to exist they shall not allow them to be excessively cut and damaged. Inside the forests they are to take good care of our game; likewise, they shall keep our hawks and falcons in readiness for our use and shall diligently collect our dues there. And the stewards, or our mayors or their men, if they send their pigs into our woods to be fattened, shall be the first to pay the tithe for this, so as to set a good example and encourage other men to pay their tithe in full in the future.

37. That they shall keep our fields and arable land in good order and shall guard our meadows at the appropriate time.

38. That they shall always keep fattened geese and chickens sufficient for our use if needed, or for sending to us.

39. It is our wish that the stewards shall be responsible for collecting the chickens and eggs which the serfs and manse-holders contribute each year; and when they are not able to use them they are to sell them.

40. That every steward, on each of our estates, shall always have swans, peacocks, pheasants, ducks, pigeons, partridges and turtle doves, for the sake of ornament.

41. That the buildings inside our demesnes, together with the fences around them, shall be well looked-after, and that the stables and kitchens, bakeries and wine-presses, shall be carefully constructed, so that our servants who work in them can carry out their tasks properly and cleanly.

42. That each estate shall have in its store-room beds, mattresses, pillows, bed-linen, table-cloths, seat-covers, vessels of bronze, lead, iron and wood, fire-dogs, chains, pot-hangers, adzes, axes, augers, knives and all sorts of tools, so that there is no need to seek them elsewhere or to borrow them. As to the iron tools which they provide for the army, the stewards are to make it their business to see that these are good, and that when they are returned they are put back into the storeroom.

43. They are to supply the women's workshops with materials at the appropriate times, according to their instructions — that is, linen, wool, woad, vermilion, madder, wool-combs, teazles, soap, oil, vessels and the other small things that are needed there.



44. Two thirds of the Lenten food shall be sent each year for our use — that is, of the vegetables, fish, cheese, butter, honey, mustard, vinegar, millet, panic, dry or green herbs, radishes, turnips, and wax or soap and other small items; and as we have said earlier, they are to inform us by letter of what is left over, and shall limier no circumstances omit to do this, as they have done in the past, because it is through those two thirds that we wish to know about the one third that remains.

45. That every steward shall have in his district good workmen — that is, blacksmiths, gold- and silver-smiths, shoemakers, turners, carpenters, shield-makers, fishermen, falconers, soap-makers, brewers (that is, people who know how to make beer, cider, perry or any other suitable beverage), bakers to make bread for our use, net-makers who can make good nets for hunting or fishing or fowling, and all the other workmen too numerous to mention.

46. That the stewards shall take good care of our walled parks, which the people call brogili, and always repair them in good time, and not delay so long that it becomes necessary to rebuild them completely. This should apply to all buildings.

47. That our hunters and falconers, and the other servants who are in permanent attendance on us at the palace, shall throughout our estates be given such assistance as we or the queen may command in our letters, on occasions when we send them out on an errand or when the seneschal or butler gives them some task to do in our name.

48. That the wine-presses on our estates shall be kept in good order. And the stewards are to see to it that no one dares to crush the grapes with his feet, but that everything is clean and different.

49. That our women's quarters shall lie properly arranged— that is, with houses, heated rooms and living rooms; and let them have good fences all round, and strong doors, so that they can do our work well.

50. That each steward shall determine how many horses there should be in a single stable, and how many grooms with them. Those grooms who are free men, and have benefices in the district, shall live off those benefices. Similarly the men of the fisc, who hold manses, shall live off them. And those who have no holding shall receive their food from the demesne.

51. Every steward is to take care that dishonest men do not conceal our seed from us, either under the ground or elsewhere, thus making the harvest less plentiful. Similarly, with the other kinds of mischief, let them see to it that they never happen.

52. It is our wish that the men of the fisc, our serfs, and the free men who live on our crown lands and estates shall be required to give to all men the full and complete justice to which they are entitled.

53. That every steward shall take pains to prevent our people in his district from becoming robbers and criminals.

54. That every steward shall see to it that our people work well at their tasks, and do not go wasting time at markets.

55. It is our wish that the stewards should record, in one document, any goods or services they have provided, or anything they have appropriated for our use, and, in another document, what payments they have made; and they shall notify us by letter of anything that is left over.

56. That every steward in his district shall hold frequent hearings and dispense justice and see to it that our people live a law-abiding life.



57. If any of our serfs should wish to say something to us about his master in connection with our affairs, he is not to be prevented from coming to us. And if a steward should learn that his subordinates wish to come to the palace to lodge a complaint against him, then that steward shall present his arguments against them at the palace and give reason why we should not be displeased at hearing their complaint. In this way we wish to find out whether they come from necessity or merely on some pretext.

58. When our puppies are entrusted to the stewards they are to feed them at their own expense, or else entrust them to their subordinates, that is, the mayors and deans, or cellarers, so that they in their turn can feed them from their own resources—unless there should be an order from ourselves or the queen that they are to be fed on our estate at our own expense. In this case the steward is to send a man to them, to see to their feeding, and is to set aside food for them; and there will be no need for the man to go to the kennels every day.

59. Every steward shall, when he is on service, give three pounds of wax and eight sextaria of soap each day; in addition, he shall be sure to give six pounds of wax on St Andrew's Day, wherever we may be with our people, and a similar amount in mid-Lent.

60. Mayors are never to be chosen from among powerful men, but from men of more modest station who are likely to be loyal.

61. That each steward, when he is on service, shall have his malt brought to the palace; and with him shall come master-brewers who can make good beer there.

62. That each steward shall make an annual statement of all our income, from the oxen which our ploughmen keep, from the holdings which owe ploughing services, from the pigs, from rents, judgement-fees and fines, from the fines for taking game in our forests without our permission and from the various other payments; from the mills, forests, fields, bridges and ships; from the freemen and the hundreds which are attached to our fisc; from the markets; from the vineyards, and those who pay their dues in wine; from hay, firewood and torches, from planks and other timber; from waste land; from vegetables, millet and panic; from wool, linen and hemp; from the fruits of trees; from larger and smaller nuts; from the graftings of various trees; from gardens, turnips, fishponds; from hides, skins and horns; from honey and wax; from oil, tallow and soap; from mulberry wine, boiled wine, mead and vinegar; from beer and from new and old wine; from new and old grain; from chickens and eggs and geese; from the fishermen, smiths, shield-makers and cobblers; from kneading troughs, bins or boxes; from the turners and saddlers; from forges and from mines, that is, from iron- or lead-workings and from workings of any other kind; from people paying tribute; and from colts and fillies. All these things they shall set out in order under separate headings and shall send the information to us at Christmas time, so that we may know the character and amount of our income from the various sources.

63. With regard to all the things mentioned so far, our stewards should not think it hard of us to make these demands, since it is our wish that they likewise should be able to make demands of their subordinates without giving offence. And all the things that a man ought to have in his house or on his estates, our stewards shall have on our estates.



64. That our carts which go to the army as war-carts shall be well constructed; their coverings shall be well-made of skins, and sewn together in such a way that, should the necessity arise to cross water, they can get across rivers with the provisions inside and without any water being able to get in—and, as we have said, our belongings can get across safely. It is also our wish that flour—12 modii of it should be placed in each cart for our use; and in those carts which carry wine they are to place 12 modii according to our measurement, and they are al65. That the fish from our fishponds shall be sold, and others put in their place, so that there is always a supply of fish; however, when we do not visit the estates they are to be sold, and our stewards are to get a profit from them for our benefit. so to provide for each cart a shield, a lance, a quiver and a bow.

66. They are to give an account to us of the male and female goats, and of their horns and skins; and each year they are to bring to us the newly-salted meat of the fattened goats.

67. With regard to vacant manses and newly acquired slaves, if they have any surplus which they cannot dispose of, they are to let us know.

68. It is our wish that the various stewards should always have by them good barrels bound with iron, which they can send to the army or to the palace, and that they should not make bottles of leather.

69. They shall at all times keep us informed about wolves, how many each of them has caught, and shall have the skins delivered to us. And in the month of May they are to seek out the wolf cubs and catch them, with poison and hooks as well as with pits and dogs.

70. It is our wish that they shall have in their gardens all kinds of plants: *lily, roses, fenugreek, costmary, sage, rue, southernwood, cucumbers, pumpkins, gourds, kidney-bean, cumin, rosemary, caraway, chick-pea, squill, gladiolus, tarragon, anise, colocynth, chicory, ammi, sesili, lettuces, spider's foot, rocket salad, garden cress, burdock, penny-royal, hemlock, parsley, celery, lovage, juniper, dill, sweet fennel, endive, dittany, white mustard, summer savory, water mint, garden mint, wild mint, tansy, catnip, centaury, garden poppy, beets, hazelwort, marshmallows, mallows, carrots, parsnip, orach, spinach, kohlrabi, cabbages, onions, chives, leeks, radishes, shallots, cibols, garlic, madder, teasles, broad beans, peas, coriander, chervil, capers, clary. And the gardener shall have house-leeks growing on his house. As for trees, it is our wish that they shall have various kinds of apple, pear, plum, sorb, medlar, chestnut and peach; quince, hazel, almond, mulberry, laurel, pine, fig, nut and cherry trees of various kinds. The names of apples are: gozmaringa, geroldinga, crevedella, spirauca; there are sweet ones, bitter ones, those that keep well, those that are to be eaten straightaway, and early ones. Of pears they are to have three or four kinds, those that keep well, sweet ones, cooking pears and the late-ripening ones.*