

(Photo: Mustard plant growing in a vineyard in California's Napa Valley)

A Study of Medieval Mustard as Sauce & Seed

by Baroness Hannah Schreiber

PROJECT GOAL

Presented before you is a study of the use of different mustard seeds in the making of sauces based on period methods. Having never presented a competitive A&S entry before I was challenged with a topic and chose to review something that I was indeed curious of on my own. In my past experience making mustard, I had only used a combination of both the white and brown seeds since that's what tasted best to me. The goal of this study is to present research on the uses of and differences between the three types of mustard seed — white, brown, and black.

TYPES OF MUSTARD

There are over 40 varieties of mustard plant, only three of which are used for cooking purposes.¹ These types of mustard seed are: black (*Brassica nigra*), brown (*Brassica juncea*), and white or "yellow" (*Sinapis alba*).²



White mustard seed (Sinapis alba)

White, or what we now refer to as "yellow", mustard seed is the most commonly used seed today.³ These are pale beige to tan in color — and, when ground turn bright yellow. They originated from the coastal areas of the Mediterranean and were introduced into Europe around 400-800. This appears to be the "common variety" mustard plant which was grown for both feed and fertilizer.³ This variety of seed was said to be the first mustard used in food perparation.⁴

Black mustard originated in the Middle East and Asia Minor. It was also grown in Roman times and was the preferred mustard seed in their recipes. Around the time of 812 Charlemagne wrote that this type of mustard was the only variety to be grown on his royal properties. Le Menagier de Paris suggests that "the black mustard was preferred to the white."



Black mustard seed (Brassica nigra)

The brown mustard seed originated from the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains.⁷ It's possible that this plant was introduced at some time during the Middle Ages, but I cannot locate references speci-

fying the use of "brown" mustard seed during this period. Though there are some slightly out of period east European references in cookery. *The Medieval Kitchen, Recipes from France and Italy* references only the white (as a common seed) and the black (as a rarer, more costly seed) varieties of seed.⁸ And Toussaint-Samat writes in her *A History of Food* the same collaborating statement about there only being two varieties of seed in the Middle Ages.⁹ According to "TheNibble.com", a widely used cooking magazine/ website, the brown seeds are modernly the most commonly used of the three varieties of seed in the United States, Britain and American Chinese dishes.¹⁰ Even though I am not finding period references to this variety of seed, I will continue to use it for this project since it is so readily available to us modernly and therefore should be compared to the other varieties of seed.

- 1 www.thenibble.com. "The History of Mustard from Prehistory to Modern Times", reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 2 homecooking.about.com/mustardseedtype.htm, reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 3 www.thenibble.com. "The History of Mustard from Prehistory to Modern Times," reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 4 Toussaint-Samat, Maguelonne. A History of Food. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell; 2nd edition, 2008.
- 5 http://www.shenet.se/referens/litteratur.html, reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 6 Hinson, Janet. Le Menagier de Paris (The Goodman of Paris). A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy, ca 1393. edited by Jérome Pichon in 1846. Translation. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1998.
- 7 www.thenibble.com. "The History of Mustard from Prehistory to Modern Times," reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 8 Redon, Odile; Sabban, FranCoise; Serventi, Silvano. Schneider, Edward, Translator. *The Medieval Kitchen: Recipes from France and Italy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- 9 Toussaint-Samat, Maguelonne. A History of Food. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell; 2nd edition, 2008.
- 10 www.thenibble.com. "The History of Mustard from Prehistory to Modern Times," reviewed Feb. 2012.

HISTORY AND USE

Because it had been cultivated for thousands of years, mustard was the primary spice known to Europeans before the spice trade. Not only did it grow in the wild, but it was one of the very first domesticated plants used both as feed for livestock and as a rotating crop to help aid in fertilizing the ground for wheat and barley. It was the Romans who first planted the seed between their rows of grapes to help fertilize the soil — a practice that is still used today (see modern photo on title page). The Romans are also credited with bringing 'white' and 'black' mustard seeds to Britain thus spreading these varieties of seed. And then once trade routes were established, mustard was used as a seasoning by people from India to Egypt to Rome who enjoyed the 'hot' flavors by chewing them along with their meat. 13

Because of the abundance of the crop and the lack of refrigeration it's not a wonder that Medieval cooks developed sauces made of the seed to use as a companion with roasted meats and fish. Mustard is said to have been the most common sauce of the late period vinegar based sauces. Redon, Sabban, and Serventi in their book *The Medieval Kitchen, Recipes from France and Italy* state that it "... was the most popular condiment in the Middle Ages, and the most ancient and widespread as well.¹⁴ The *Le Menagier de Paris*, who is typically quoted for his frugal methods in running his household, suggests the use of mixing spices left over from other recipes as a method to flavoring mustard.¹⁵ Many recipes at this time include items that alternately flavor the mustard such as raisins, preserves, cloves, ginger and anise.¹⁶ They were still mixed with "wine must" (fresh grape juice) and vinegar or wine. Other items such as breadcrumbs and almonds were also added to give additional texture (*See Appendix D*).

By the 13th century merchants in France sold mustard among their daily sauces. Pope John XXII of Avignon (1249-1334) loved mustard so much that he created a new Vatican position called "Grand Moutardier du Pape" (Grand Mustard-Maker to the Pope), and gave the job to a nephew who lived near Dijon. Dijon soon became the mustard center of the world. Mustard-making was so important to the Medieval palate that in 1634, a law was passed to grant the men of the town the exclusive right to make mustard.¹⁷

(See Appendix A for additional pre-period history)

(See Appendix B for additional modern history)

- 11 Weiss Adamson, Melitta. Food in Medieval Times. Westport, Connecuicut, London: Greenwood Press, 2004. p 13-14.
- 12 www.thenibble.com. "The History of Mustard from Prehistory to Modern Times," reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 13 Toussaint-Samat, Maguelonne. A History of Food. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell; 2nd edition, 2008.
- 14 Weiss Adamson, Melitta. Food in Medieval Times. Westport, Connecuicut, London: Greenwood Press, 2004. p 13-14.
- 15 Hinson, Janet. Le Menagier de Paris (The Goodman of Paris). A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy, ca 1393. edited by Jérôme Pichon in 1846. Translation. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1998.
- 16 Redon, Odile; Sabban, FranCoise; Serventi, Silvano. Schneider, Edward, Translator. *The Medieval Kitchen: Recipes from France and Italy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- 17 www.thenibble.com. "The History of Mustard from Prehistory to Modern Times," reviewed Feb. 2012.

MY EXPERIMENT

After learning about the history and use of mustard, the second goal of my project was to present a single period recipe and change out the three types of mustard seed in an effort to find the differences, if any, in flavor profile.

For this process I have chosen the "Lombard Mustard" recipe from *the Forme of Cury* of 1390. Which describes a "Lombard" or "Lumbarde" mustard as one that is sweetened.¹⁸

Take Mustard seed and waishe it & drye it in an ovene, grynde it drye, farce it through a farce, clarifie honey wt wine & vinegr & stere it wel togedr, and make it thikke ynowe, & whan thou wilt spende thereof make it thynne wt wine.

After looking at many other mustard recipes (*See Appendix C for others*), this one uses the most common, basic ingredients as many other recipes: vinegar, honey and wine (*See Appendix D*). In addition, having minimal experience translating recipes, I also found this one translated in many sources. This recipe is possibly one of the most common SCA recipes for a Medieval mustard. The translation reads as such:

Wash and dry your mustard seed (to get the chaff off), grind it, sieve (sift or sort) it, and mix in clarified honey, vinegar and wine to make a thick paste, and then thin it with wine to serve. (Translated "*The Book of Goode Cookery*" online.¹⁹)

For the purpose of this experiment, all of the elements needed to be the same to assess the taste of each variety of seed. As stated earlier, it's possible that not all varieties would have been known or available at the time or in the region of this recipe. In effort to show that mustard was used in many different locations, I would presume that the use of other varieties of seed would have been used as well; therefore, I've listed other recipes from a variety of regions and dates at the end of this document. (See Appendix C).

My Recipe:

1¼ c. mustard seed, ground ½ c. vinegar ½ c. wine ⅓ c. honey

In the period reference, as is the case for most period recipes, no measurements are given. Having had some past experience making mustard, I did know that the ground seed does need to rest to absorb some of the liquid. Caution was used to make only one batch at a time in effort to get my desired 'paste' like consistency. Depending on the absorption of the wet ingredients into the ground seed, I may have to add additional liquid (wine) to moisten the batches at time of consumption. Other period references (See Appendix C) call to soak the seed in vinegar, juice, or wine — which had I used that method, I would not have to remoisten the batches when serving.

¹⁸ Hieatt, Constance B. and Sharon Butler. *Curye on Inglish: English Culinary Manuscripts of the Fourteenth-Century* (Including *the Forme of Cury*). New York: for The Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1985.

¹⁹ godecookery.com. Matterer, James L., c. 1997-2009, reviewed Feb. 2012.

MY PROCESS:

The seeds were purchased already dried, so I did not have to oven dry them, as they would in period to remove the exterior husk (or chaff).

I chose to grind the seeds in a spice grinder instead of more period methods such as grinding stones or a mortal and pestle. This was meant to be a time-saver, as well as a break for my tired hands which suffer from carpal tunnel! They were each ground for the same amounts of time and in small batches to keep them consistent. Please note that I have included a small sample of a mortal and pestle ground seed and seeds ground in my spice grinder for comparison. These samples are to show that I was being conscious of achieving a similar grind modernly as could be achieved using the period method.

After first grinding, the seeds were then sifted to remove the larger bits and ground again until I could achieve a fine texture.

Next, I added the liquid ingredients starting with a dry white Chardonnay wine and apple cider vinegar. I chose the wine because I read recipes specifying dry wines. The vinegar was chosen because it was a fruit vinegar, which was also common and easily accessable to medieval cooking. Then the honey was added. I used a Grade A clarified honey.

I started with the brown seed, then the white, and finally with the black. Each was left on the counter to rest for approximately 30 minutes while waiting for the ground seeds to absorb some of the liquid. While the white and brown developed to my desired constancy — the black seed mixture was still very runny (See photos, next page). In effort to make all the mustard a similar constancy, I did have to add an additional ¼ cup of ground black seed to the batch. It is noted that perhaps when ground — they all do not have the same porous nature.

Each batch has been left to rest several days. Many period recipes also make mention that the mixture should be made in advance to reduce the hotness of the seed (See Appendix C). It is the mixture of vinegar with the ground mustard the releases the essential oils of the seed. The seeds contain crystalline glucoscides which, once crushed and mixed with liquid, give up their essential oils. ²⁰ These are the source of both the flavor and the hotness of the seed and are originally bitter. Thus letting it rest for many days will allow the development of a more mild flavor and thicker consistency. Please note the cards in front of the mixes for the number of days since these batches have been made and the charts (on page 7) for my observations.

²⁰ Redon, Odile; Sabban, FranCoise; Serventi, Silvano. Schneider, Edward, Translator. *The Medieval Kitchen: Recipes from France and Italy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.



Brown seed mixture



White seed mixture



Black seed mixture - too runny!



Black seed mixture with addition of just 1/4 c. more ground/sifted seed.

DISCOVERIES

The main purpose of this effort was to find the differences between the seed varieties. Below are my observations:

- The general flavors were similar to each other. They are all spicy and have some level of heat.
- When they were first made, the level of heat significantly increased from white to brown to then black. After several days, the black mustard mellowed in heat, making the brown seed version the spiciest of the three.
- As mentioned earlier I did have to add additional ground seed to the black mixture. To me this says it seems to be more porous than the other varieties and thus, needs less liquids.
- I also note that in looking at the unmixed ground seeds, the white seed seems to have larger, coarser pieces. Both the brown and black seeds are not only smaller seeds, but do not grind to the same consistency as the white. These two varieties seemed to crack in half and had a harder outside shell.
- Overall, I believe that while this was an interesting experiment in flavor, to my liking I will continue to mix both the yellow and the brown mustard seed for my personal mix of mustard. Though, should I make mustard for other A&S projects or for period feasts I am now aware that brown seed is not appropriate for our periods of study.

Below are three charts noting my taste and visual observations. Please note, that the level of heat is rather subjective! The samples were stored in air-tight containers on the counter, not refrigerated. Refrigeration is great for storing mustards that are ready to eat, but would not give me the same degree of evaluation for texture or absorption since it would occur at a much slower rater.

DAY 1	VARIETY	HEAT	TEXTURE	ABSORPTION		
	WHITE	medium	A bit runny	Good and slight creamy look		
	BROWN	very hot!	Slightly runny	Lots of liquid		
	BLACK	very hot!	Runny	Lots of liquid		

	VARIETY	HEAT	TEXTURE	ABSORPTION		
۲ ۲	WHITE	medium	great, full body	Still somewhat thick, but smooth		
DA	BROWN	hot	creamy, smooth	looks good, still a bit liquidy		
	BLACK hot		creamy, smooth	looks good, still a bit liquidy		

DAY 12	VARIETY	HEAT	TEXTURE	ABSORPTION
	WHITE	mild	thick-grainy	Good, though somewhat firm, might need to add some wine for A&S
	BROWN	medium-hot	great, smooth	a bit of liquid on surface, but mixed smooth
	BLACK	medium	great, smooth	a bit of liquid on surface, but mixed smooth

SOURCES

www.thenibble.com. "The History of Mustard from Prehistory to Modern Times," reviewed Feb. 2012.

answers.com. "What are the ways one can use mustard seed," reviewed Feb. 2012.

homecooking.about.com/mustardseedtype.htm, reviewed Feb. 2012.

godecookery.com. Matterer, James L., c. 1997-2009, reviewed Feb. 2012.

http://www.shenet.se/referens/litteratur.html, reviewed Feb. 2012.

a website dedicated to plants, with a huge collection of floras and herb books. Written in Swedish and translated for me by THL Airna fraan Traentorp (M.K.A. Ann Asplund)

A Booke of Cookrye, With the Serving in of the Table. 1591. The English Experience, Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile 1834. Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum; Norwood, N.J.: W.J. Johnson, 1976.

Hieatt, Constance B. and Sharon Butler. *Curye on Inglish: English Culinary Manuscripts of the Fourteenth–Century (Including the Forme of Cury)*. New York: for The Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1985.

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Weiss Adamson, Melitta. *Food in Medieval Times*. Westport, Connecuicut, London: Greenwood Press, 2004. p 13-14.

Appendix

APPENDIX A

Additional pre-period history of mustard:

Mustard is a cool weather crop that is known to grow wild in the Northern Hemisphere. Food historians can trace origins of the seeds to Stone Age settlements and grave sites. Since the Egyptians enjoyed it mixed in food, it was discovered King Tut was buried with a large supply for the afterlife. There are multiple passages in the Bible where mustard seeds are mentioned generally focusing on the small or insignificant which in the future grows in strength and power.

"It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth."

- Mark 4:31, New International Version Bible, 2002

"If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'May you be uprooted and thrown into the sea,' and it would obey you!"

– Luke 17:6, New Living Translation Bible, 2007

Seeds were often used in medical compounds dating back to at least 400 B.C., in the West and were first mentioned in herbal medicine in China in A.D. 659. Originally the Ancient Greeks used them for medicinal purposes feeling that they aided in digestion, helped in healing cuts and war wounds, the reduction of phlegm, — and, even in love potions.³ They later discovered that they tasted good as well and added them both whole and ground in foods. It was the Romans who discovered that it made a great condiment when ground and then mixed with wine at table side in particular with roasted fish.⁴ The Roman cookbook of Apicius, compiled in the late 4th or early 5th century AD, states that it is one of the most popular flavors (of the time) especially when mixed together with salt, vinegar and wine.⁵

Sources:

- 1 www.thenibble.com. "The History of Mustard from Prehistory to Modern Times," reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 2 homecooking.about.com/mustardseedtype.htm, reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 3 www.thenibble.com. "The History of Mustard from Prehistory to Modern Times," reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 4 homecooking.about.com/mustardseedtype.htm, reviewed Feb. 2012.
- 5 Weiss Adamson, Melitta. Food in Medieval Times. Westport, Connecuicut, London: Greenwood Press, 2004. p 13-14.

APPENDIX B

Today, mustard seed is one of the most popular spices traded in the world. The areas that produce the greatest amount of mustard seeds including Hungary, Great Britain, India, Canada and the United States. Mustard is the second most-used spice in the United States exceeded only by the peppercorn.¹

Source:

1 homecooking.about.com/mustardseedtype.htm, reviewed Feb. 2012.

APPENDIX C

Below are examples of some of the other recipes I reviewed before settling on the one for my experiment. These are presented to show the variety of locations mustard was used as condiment and the types of items that were mixed with mustard.

From an old Icelandic Medical Miscellany (supposed to be 15th century from a lost manuscript of the 13th century)

I	One shall take mustard (seed) and add a fourth part of honey and grind all together with good
	vinegar. This is good for forty days.

One shall take mustard (seed) and a third of honey and a tenth part of anise and two such of cinnamon. Grind this all with strong vinegar and put it in a cask. This is good for three months.

From the Dutch Eenen Nyeuwen Coock Boeck (1560), written by Gheeraert Vorselman and translated by Lord Floris van Montfort (G.A. van heusden) of the Shire of Polderslot.

Om drooghen mostaerd te maken.opt Rooms

Droocht nieuwe mostaertsaet in die heete sonne oft oven oft bijden viere, ende stoot dat in eenen vijsere tot cleynnen mele, ende maeckt hier af een deech met stercken azijn ende een cleyn luttel greynpoeders ende laet dan dat tot eenen stuck ligghen drooghen.

(Translation)

To make dry mustard in the Roman way.

Dry new mustard seed in the hot sun or in the oven or at the fire, and crush it in a mortar to fine flour and make a dough with this and with strong vinegar and a little grain powder and let dry to one piece.

Anderen mostaert opt Rooms, wit

Neemt mostaertsaet ende legget twee daghen in water te weycke, ende veranderet water dicwil, so sal hi te witter ende beter zijn ende stootten oft wrijften wel cleyne. Dan doeter toe amandelen cleyn ghestooten, ende wrijvet weder tesamen met witbroot dat geweyct is; dan doeget samen door met stercken azijn oft verjus. Wildien sterc hebben, doeter stercke specerie in, wildien soet hebben, doeter soet in.

(Translation)

IV

Different mustard the Roman way, white.

Take mustard seed and lay it two days to soak in water, and change the water often, so it will be whiter and better and crush them small. Then add almonds crushed small and rub it together with whitebread that has soaked; then mix it with strong vinegar or verjuice. IF you want it strong, add strong spices, and if you want it sweet, add sweet.

From The Viandier of Taillevent (13th century), translated by Terence Scully [Cameline Mustard Sauce]: (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988)

Take mustard, red wine, cinnamon powder and enough sugar, and let everything steep together. It should be thick like cinnamon. It is good for any roast.

APPENDIX C (continued)

VI

VII

Χ

Das Kuchbuch der Sabrina Welserin (1553):

To make the mustard for dried cod

Take mustard powder, stir into it good wine and pear preserves and put sugar into it, as much as you feel is good, and make it as thick as you prefer to eat it, then it is a good mustard.

The 14th-c. Catalan "Llibre de Sent Sovi"

"to make mustard our way", with finely ground mustard seed, broth, and honey or sugar, pointing out that "the French style" is tempered with vinegar rather than broth.

England, late 15th c., MS Pepys 1047

To make sauce for A pyke

Take the refette (28.1) of the pyke and mynse hit small and put hit yn A dyshe and take a gode mese of musterd And put of the best and fattest of þe broth a.... (28.2) the saucer and shakyd and put hit in to the dyshe with the refete and put yn a litell vyneAger and a lytell vergys ther to And a grete quantite of Syamom & sugure and lityll gynger and as ye fele hit with your mowth ye may all way amend hit.

Modern Translation:

Take the edible viscera (28.1) of a pike and mince small; set aside. Combine mustard and broth thoroughly (28.2) and then mix with the viscera. Add a little vinegar & verjuice & season with cinnamon, sugar, and a little ginger. Taste for flavor and adjust as necessary.

The 13th-c. Arabo-Andalusian Manuscrito anonimo gives the following recipe for "Sinab" as a good recipe for pork:

Clean good mustard and wash it with water several times, then dry it and pound it until it is like antimony [?]. Sift it with a sifter of hair, and then pound shelled almonds and put them with the mustard and stir them together. Then press out their oil and mash them with breadcrumbs little by little, not putting in the breadcrumbs all at once but only little by little. Then pour strong vinegar and eggs over this dough for the dish, having dissolved sufficient salt in the vinegar. Then dissolve it well to the desired point, and clarify it thoroughly with a clean cloth; and there are hose who after it is clarified add a little honey to lessen its heat. Either way it is good.

Le Menagier de Paris (The Goodman of Paris). A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy, ca 1393. edited by Jérôme Pichon in 1846. Translation. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1998.

(Translated) Original:

If you would make provision of mustard to keep for a long time, make it in the harvest season and of soft pods. And some say that the pods should be boiled. Item, if you would make mustard in the country in haste, bray mustardseed in a mortar and moisten it with vinegar and run it through the strainer and if you would prepare it at once, set it in a pot before the fire. Item, if you would make good mustard and at leisure, set the mustardseed to soak for a night in good vinegar, then grind it in a mill and then moisten it little by little with vinegar; and if you have any spices left over from jelly, clarry, hippocras or sauces, let them be ground with it and afterwards prepare it.

APPENDIX C (continued)

Delights for Ladies - Cookerie and Huswifery, Hugh Plat, 1609

ΧI

Mustard Meale; It is usuall in Venice to sell the meal of Mustard in their markets as we doe flower and meale in England: this meale, by the addition of vinegar, in two or three daies becommeth exceeding good mustard: but it would be much stronger and finer, if the husks or huls were first divided by searce or boulter: which may easily be done, if you dry your seeds against the fire before you grinde them. The Dutch iron hand-mills or an ordinarie pepper-mill may serve for this purpose.

Ruperto de Nola's Libro de Coch (translated by Brighid) Mostaza Francesa (French Mustard)

XII

You must take a cantaro of the must of wine, either red or white, and grind a dishful of mustard that is select and very good; and after straining it through a sieve or a sifter, grind with it, if you wish: a little cinnamon, and cloves, and ginger, and cast it all, very well-mixed in the mortar, into the cantaro or jar of wine; and with a cane stir it around a long while, so that it mixes with the must; and each day you must stir it with the cane seven or eight times; and you will boil the wine with this mustard; and when the wine has finished boiling, you can eat this mustard. And when you want to take it out to cast it in the dish to eat, first stir it with the cane a little; and this is very good mustard and it will keep all year.

APPENDIX D

	LOCATION	TIME	USED ON	INGREDIENTS				
RECIPE				HONEY	VINEGAR	WINE	SPICES	ADDITIONAL
ı	Icelandic	13th C.	-	Х	x	-	-	_
II	Icelandic	13th C.	-	Х	х	_	anise & cinnamon	-
III	Dutch	1560	-	_	х	-	-	grain powder
IV	German	-	-	Х	х	-	"strong"	almonds & bread
V	Italy	13th C.	any roast	_	-	Х	cinnamon	sugar
VI	German	1553	dried cod	_	_	Х	-	preserves & sugar
VII	Italy	14th C.	-	Х	х	-	-	sugar & broth
VIII	German	13th C.	pyke	Х	Х	_	cinnamon & ginger	-
IX	Norman	13th C.	pork	Х	х	_	salt	almonds, eggs, breadcrumbs
×	French	1560	meat	_	х	_	leftover spices	-
XI	English	1609	-	_	Х	-	_	-
XII	Spanish/Catalan	1520	-	-	-	Х	cinnamon, ginger & cloves	_