

Mists Fall Coronet
Technical Science- Savory
4 Roman Salad Dishes

1. Appendix Vergiliana, Moretum [Translated by Armando Salvatore. Naples: Libreria Scientifica Editrice, 1964.]

Quattuor alia, apius, ruta, coriandrum, salis micas, caseus.

*4 clove garlic, celery (leaf), rue, coriander, salt grains, and cheese.*¹

2. Apicius 41
Moretaria: Mentam, rutam, coriandrum, feniculum, Omnia viridian, ligusticum, piper, mel, liquamen. Si opus fuerit, acetum addes.

*Condiment for a moretum: Mint, rue, coriander, fennel, all fresh, lovage, pepper, honey and garum. If necessary add vinegar.*²

3. Columella, *Re Rustica*, XII-lix
Addito in mortarium satureiam, mentam, rutam, coriandrum, apium, porrum sectivum, aut si non erit viridem cepam, folia latucae, folia erucae, thymum viride, vel nepetam, tum etiam viride puleium, et caseum recentem et salsum: ea omnia partier conterito, acetique piperati exiguum, permisceto. Hanc mixturam cum in catillo composurris, oleum superfundito.

*Put savory in the mortar with mint, rue, coriander, parsley, sliced leek, or, if it is not available, onion, lettuce and rocket leaves, green thyme, or catmint. Also pennyroyal and salted fresh cheese. This is all crushed together. Stir in a little peppered vinegar. Put this mixture on a plate and pour oil over it.*³

4. Columella, *Re Rustica*, XII-lix

(seen only in translation)

*When you have pounded the green herbs which are listed above, pound with them as many walnuts which have been hulled as seems sufficient, blend in a little peppered vinegar and pour olive oil on top.*⁴

¹ Giacosa pg. 54-5

² Giacosa pg. 54-5

³ Faas, pg. 228-9. See also Green pg. 101

⁴ Faas, pg. 229. See also Green pg. 102

Concept:

Wealthier Romans whether eating at home or at a bar, were given a variety of small dishes from which to eat; what we might call a buffet.⁵ Such might be these 4 “salads”. Salads were usually part of the first course or *Gustatio*.⁶

They were served with bread. There were many types of bread, each for a different use, from a different region, or for a different strata of society. Some were more what we would call focaccia or cracker like and would be used to scoop up various dishes. A number of these were flavored with spices (cumin, pepper, caraway, or fennel) or seeds such as sesame or poppy seed.⁷ Various grains were used for bread. White bread was a luxury initially, but later fell out of fashion for the higher stratas of society.⁸

The focus of this entry is on the savory, so a commercial cracker is being used. The choice of cracker was in keeping with what may have been the type of flavor of “bread” used to accompany such a course. In addition, serving utensils were provided for use by the judges, where in Roman times the bread frequently served as the utensil.

Background: Understanding the Ingredients, Flavors, and Recipes

Cheese: Romans divided cheese into 2 main groups – fresh or curd cheese and cheeses that would keep. Pliny stated that goat and sheep make the best cheese.⁹ Columella discusses in great length adding rennet or curdling milk to make cheese. Cheese to be kept is placed in molds or baskets and salted.¹⁰

Curd cheese is what is primarily called for to be pounded in mortars with herbs. This is called *moretum* from the mortar dish name.

Mortar versus Chopped:

McGee discusses the science and the effect grinders, choppers and mortars have on herbs – heat and oxygen both of which change the flavor of herbs. Each generate heat making the aroma molecules volatile and changeable. “Food processors slice into herbs and introduce a lot of air and therefore aroma altering oxygen, while a pestle pounding in a mortar crushes the herbs and minimizes aeration. Careful chopping with a sharp knife leaves much of the herb structure intact to provide fresh flavor...”.¹¹ Thus, careful prechopping of the herbs might be appropriate, but the majority of the process of incorporating the ingredients should be done in the mortar. As my mortar is small, I prechopped each of the sets of herbs before adding them to the mortar.

⁵ Apicius Grocock, Faas, & Grant

⁶ Faas pg. 83-5

⁷ Faas pg. 190 - 2

⁸ Faas, pg. 192

⁹ Faas pg. 168-9

¹⁰ Columella *Res Rustica* VII - viii

¹¹ McGee pg 398-9

Vinegar: Vinegar was used by Romans to make water safe to drink and as a preserving agent. Pliny said that “no other sauce serves so well to season food or to heighten a flavor”.¹² There were lots of different types and quality of vinegar. As this is supposed to be for a wealthier client, a better quality of wine vinegar was used.

Pepper: Black pepper was a popular spice in Rome, but Long Pepper was preferred to black pepper.¹³

Rue: Rue has not been included in the recipes as it has some unhealthy side effects. It has a slightly bitter flavor. Rocket, which appears in some of the other recipes and which also has a slightly bitter flavor, is used as a substitute.

Recipes:

1. *4 clove garlic, celery (leaf), rue, coriander, salt grains, and cheese.*

Finely chop 4 cloves of garlic.

Take 2 handfuls each of Rocket and Coriander (cilantro leaves) and grind in a mortar.

Add about 1 teaspoon of sea salt or more to taste.

Add in the garlic and grind.

Add in approximately 7 oz. of goat ricotta added to herb mix in mortar.

If dry add a tablespoon of fine olive oil and 2 tablespoons of vinegar to moisten and brighten the flavors.

2. Mint, rue, coriander, fennel, all fresh, lovage, pepper, honey and garum. If necessary add vinegar.

Grind 3 long pepper in mortar and set aside.

Grind in mortar a handful each of Mint, Rocket, Coriander (cilantro leaves), fennel leaves, and celery.

Add to the above approximately 7 oz. of goat ricotta and grind with herbs.

Add in ground long pepper, about 2 teaspoons of honey, 1 teaspoon of Garum, and 3 tablespoons of vinegar. Mix well.

Notes:

This mix has Honey, but it is not a sweet mixture but used in combination with the vinegar to brighten the flavors.

Cheese is not mentioned specifically in the recipe, but is in a section of Apicius talking about cheese.

¹² McGee pg. 772

¹³ McGee pg. 427 - 9

Garum is a fermented fish sauce that was used to add a salty richer flavor.

Lovage was not available so celery tops were substituted. Lovage and celery are related plants although lovage has a stronger flavor.¹⁴

This recipe specifically says fresh herbs. In other recipes Apicius mixes dried and fresh herbs.
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3. *Put savory in the mortar with mint, rue, coriander, parsley, sliced leek, or, if it is not available, onion, lettuce and rocket leaves, green thyme, or catmint. Also pennyroyal and salted fresh cheese. This is all crushed together. Stir in a little peppered vinegar. Put this mixture on a plate and pour oil over it.*

Grind 3 long pepper in mortar and set aside.

Grind in mortar a handful each of Marjoram, Mint (Spearmint and Peppermint), Rocket, Coriander (cilantro leaves), Parsley, Lettuce, 2 or 3 finely chopped green onions, and green portions of a sprig of thyme.

Add in 1 oz. approximately of sheep/goat mixed feta plus approximately 7 oz. of goat ricotta. Add in ground long pepper and 3 tablespoons vinegar.

Mix well.

When completely mixed, add a couple tablespoons of olive oil on top just before serving.

Notes:

Catmint was noted as an “or” so not included as 2 other mints were included.

Pennyroyal was not available. Added in a bit of a 2nd type of mint (peppermint).

Savory was out of season for fresh so substituted Marjoram.

4. When you have pounded the green herbs which are listed above, pound with them as many walnuts which have been hulled as seems sufficient, blend in a little peppered vinegar and pour olive oil on top.

Same as above #3 but substitute 1 cup of finely chopped walnuts for the cheeses.

¹⁴ Faas pg. 151

¹⁵ Flower pg 93 Book IV Sala Cattabia 2

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