

Cooking a Feast

Dame Helen of Greyfells

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Chapter 1- General Preface

This is just one of the many ways to run a feast- indeed there are as many ways of cooking a feast as there are feast cooks to cook them. But hopefully this document will give you a good overview of what needs to be done, and a plan that you can follow or modify as you wish.

I think of cooking large feasts in the society as a service more than an art. To be sure, artistry is involved in choosing and executing your menu, finding period recipes that will please and tantalize the modern palate. But when cooking for 100 plus people one is likely to be making use of modern timesavers such as machines to mix and chop, as well as freezers to make things in advance, making the execution of the chosen period recipes less period than it might be. But until we can rent a site with a full on medieval kitchen complete with minions, I will continue my labour saving ways!

The best thing you can do to mentally prepare for cooking a feast (even if that great day is years away for you) is to familiarize yourself (and practice) with basic cooking techniques and recipes. Roasting meats hasn't changed so much; it still takes time and a suitable 'fire'. Soup and pastry making are pretty similar throughout even if the exact recipes have changed. Once you have modern cookery in your head, moving to medieval recipes will be less difficult.

Do be on the look out for good medieval cookbooks (and there is a list in the bibliography of ones I quite like) that have the 'period' recipe followed by a modern redaction (or version) of the same recipe. These books are often a great way to get started with medieval cooking since they have easy to follow instructions, just like a modern cookbook does. Refer to the 'medieval' instructions as you cook and you will get an idea of how the writers made the decisions they did. Eventually you might like to make your own redactions of recipes (and there are plenty of collections that you could look at, some of which are in the bibliography), but that is out of the scope of my class today.

Chapter 2- Things to think about that are not directly menu related.

There is more to cooking the feast than just making up a menu, and there are things you need to know before you can make up the menu. Many of these things happen many months before the feast, and it is worthwhile to get onto them as soon as you can. Planning ahead can help you become the feast cook of choice!

1) Find out as much information about cooking the feast as you can. If there is no steward selected yet, ask the seneschal or previous feast cooks for answers- but remember an incoming steward might change the answers! Some questions that are good to have answers to are:

- How many are expected to eat the feast?
- How many servers are usual at the feast?
- How many Royalty/comps are expected?
- How much will people likely pay for the feast?
- How much time will you have for your feast?

2) When sites for the event are being selected, try to go on the site visits with the steward or seneschal. If you are expected to prepare a multi course feast, you should ensure that you have adequate facilities! The type of kitchen and what it contains will affect the menu profoundly. Try to get a kitchen that will give you lots of options! IF you are not able to go on the site visit, try to send a proxy who can look at the site with your needs in mind. If a site has already been selected, try to get to see it as soon as possible.

A great kitchen would be one that is large enough for 4-6 people to work comfortably in it, has a lot of counter space for preparation and plating, has 2 or more sinks, has several stoves and ovens, a Large refrigerator or two, an industrial dishwasher, and lots of natural light. As you will discover, most kitchens in halls we can afford don't have all of these things. So you will make your menu and your cooking plans to suit the kitchen that you have.

Here is a list of things that a kitchen might have. Check to see how many you can get! DO ask if there will be an extra cost to use any of the facilities- it would be disappointing to plan around having steam trays only to find the steward's budget can't afford them!

- Burners (preferably well spaced, stew pots are bigger than home pots)
- Oven space
- Warming ovens
- Fridge and freezers
- Counter space
- Sink space
- Dishwasher
- Steam Trays

- Microwave
- Other equipment

IN addition to the kitchen facilities, you should have a look at the hall. What size are the tables- do they sit 6 or 8 people? Are there any obstructions in the hall that might affect table size or serving? How close is the kitchen to the dining area and what sort of access is there between them. Is there an easy place for the servers to collect the food and drop off empty dishes?

As the feast day nears (2 months or so before) I like to go the site again to remind myself what the kitchen looks like. It is easy to misremember the size of a room, and spaces can grow and shrink in your mind's eye as you make plans. If possible, get a floor plan from the site operator, or failing that, make a sketch of the room- mark where things are on the plan so that you can keep it in mind while planning. Photos could help with this too

3) All the cooking facilities in the world will come to nothing if you have no way of bringing the foods you have prepared to the hungry populace. Find out what your canton has in the way of serving equipment. Your exchequer should have a list, though the person who stores it might maintain it. If your canton does not have a large inventory, find out if you can borrow things from your neighbouring cantons, or if there are things at the site that you can use. Remember to find out if there are extra costs or catches attached to either of these options. Some sites will only let you use their dishes if you have a staff member there, and they might need to be paid on top of the site rental.

4) Speaking of bringing the food to the populace, you will need not just platters but also people to carry them. A good Feast cook rarely cooks in isolation, and certainly cannot cook, plate and serve at the same time! So you need helpers to make your feast dreams come true! IN order of their importance these helpers are:

Every feast cook should have a **deputy** that can pick up if the head cook gets hit by the proverbial bus. The deputy should have a good idea of what is going on through the different phases of feast preparation, and the head cook should have detailed notes so that they will be able to pick up the threads of the feast if needed. It would be best if the deputy were not someone in the immediate family of the head, in case the worst happens.

It is very helpful to have a **head server** (usually chosen by the steward, but you can certainly make suggestions!) working closely with the cook. Their duties are to collect people to help serve the dishes; to help the servers know what is on the menu, and what allergens might be in each dish; To announce the dishes to the populace; to help the kitchen know what is going on in the feast hall- should the food come more quickly or more slowly, is there a court or entertainment going on etc. If you cannot find one person to do all of these things, get someone to do the things that they can't manage.

Every feast needs a **clean up crew**, and it would behoove the cook to find someone who is willing to make a team to take care of this for you. The last thing I want to do at the end of a long day cooking is to wash all the pots! Remember that even if there is a dishwasher- someone still has to operate it, and it doesn't work on pots! You will need to keep an eye on things, particularly if you are using a combination of your canton's service equipment and the site's equipment, having to go back and forth with lost and found is a pain in the behind later.

It is good to have a number of people as **day helpers** to help you with the things that can only be done on the day. They may take shifts, or come in only during an expected busy time, but it is good to have some volunteers in place. You might have random people come to help, but it is never good to have to count on that.

It is also wonderful to have a **dishwasher** who is committed to doing dishes as the day progresses- it certainly makes the post feast clean up easier!

Come feast time it is handy to have a **'plater'**- someone who arranges the food on platters or bowls to go out to the tables. This can ensure that all the tables get the same amount of food, and that any decorative elements are in place before the servers take the dishes out, and lets the cook keep cooking!

One of the day helpers could act as a **doorman** to field questions not directly related to cooking, like the inevitable "I was looking for the washroom..."

5) There are different ways of arranging your dishes on the menu, and it is good to think about how you would like to present them. There are many factors that affect this decision. How long you have to serve the feast in total, and how many dishes you would like to serve are very important of course. But also important are considerations of theme- will you have a winter themed group of dishes and a spring one; or perhaps a French group and an Italian group; or have you read of a period feast where they served things in a particular order and you would like to try to emulate that?

But more practically, some decisions will be made by your kitchen- do you have enough burners for 3 soup or stew type dishes in quick succession? Some will be made by the event steward- like a concert planned for the middle of the feast! And some choices may be dictated by the amount and type of serving trays and bowls you have- you can wash up and reuse service dishes, but you need to have time to do that!

6) Our society includes a number of people who have different dietary habits, and as a head cook you must decide how many of them you feel able to accommodate in your feast. Vegetarians are the most common group of exceptional people that you will have at your feast. You can set up your feast so that vegetarians can have a satisfying feast without eating the meat dishes, and give them a price break, or you can set up your feast to include alternatives to the meat dishes for the vegetarians to eat.

I find that making alternative dishes is a very helpful thing to do- not only do the vegetarians feel more welcome at the table, but if you have folks with more esoteric food needs (can't eat pork, can't have wine, can't have garlic etc) you can often give them a substitute that they can eat from the vegetarian menu. Do check your vegetarian menu with a local vegetarian to be sure it meets their needs.

In all cases your life as a cook is made infinitely easier by **requiring** those who need a special menu to contact you in advance of the feast day- preferably one week ahead! Be strict on this, or it will drive you mad trying to accommodate everyone on the day! Keep a list so that the servers can see who gave you advance notice, and what their substitutions are. IF others arrive on the day you can accommodate them if you have extras after the people who gave notice have been served.

If you are a vegetarian and wish to be head cook at a standard omnivorous feast, find a deputy who will be in charge of meat dishes.

Once you know what royalty will be reigning during your event it is good to find out if they have any dietary preferences. Being able to offer a dairy loving queen a glass of milk is a wonderfully hospitable touch. Being able to give a gluten intolerant baroness a gluten free tart with the same filling as the rest of the head table lets her participate more fully in the feast.

Chapter 3- Making a Menu

In order to make a menu that you will be proud to serve you need to consider many things. In the last chapter we discussed many things that you will need to keep in mind when making the final choices. But for now let our minds think only on food....

1) I usually start with brainstorming as many recipes as I can think of, and then ploughing through my cookbooks to see if there are recipes I had forgotten, or always wanted to try but had not got around to yet. I wonder if I would like the feast to have a theme- sometimes the event already has one! Themes could include a time period, or a place; A season or seasons; a colour; a topic such as service or arts; or the favourite foods of a locality or a special person.

Remember to think of dishes in all food groups: meats, vegetable, eggs and dairy, carbohydrates, desserts. And think about different cooking methods too- roasting, stewing, frying and in pastry.

When I say brainstorm, I really mean it. See if you can come up with 40-50 or more neat looking recipes to think about

2) Give a quick thought to costs of these brainstormed recipes- note the ones that are likely to be very inexpensive (barley, rice and some vegetables) and ones that are likely to be very expensive (venison or wild boar etc). Trying to come up with estimates of prices at this point can keep you from getting too carried away, but don't get too deeply into it. A brainstormed list is usually pretty long and you don't want to do too much work on recipes that won't make the cut!

3) With the brainstormed recipe ideas in your head, do some price checking on ingredients, particularly those that you might not use all the time- olives, almonds, pomegranates, wine etc Look in your regular grocery stores, but also at specialty shops (Ethnic food shops can be really helpful), and bulk food stores (bulk barn and Costco can be a big help).

4) Refine the list you made while brainstorming. Think about dishes that might seem a bit 'out there' for one reason or another- even if you LOVE chicken livers and organ meat it is not reasonable to imagine that everyone at your feast will. Which is not to say you shouldn't include one such dish, just that you would be better served by having some variety. Think about your theme if you have elected to have one: Fresh lemon is not a likely Scandinavian food ingredient, and fresh salad greens at a winter themed feast are also not likely.

Find out if the hall has any restrictions on the foods that can be served on the premises. Some halls do not permit alcohol on the site, even when it is cooked in food. Some sites might have restrictions on ingredients due to allergies or religious beliefs. Any recipe

that would put you afoul of the site rules must be removed from your list of potential recipes.

And of course, the budget must come into this as well. You don't need to be too ruthless at this point, there is still work to do, but you should still be reasonable. It might be tremendously cool to have dressed peacocks at each table but you are unlikely to find them at a price you can afford.

5) Now that your list is down to "Reasonable Candidates" (probably not many more than 30 dishes), think about each one in turn:

- Will the dish be fussy on the day (Fresh omelets for 100 is not practical)
- Can you get the ingredients? (Venison may not always be available)
- Will it require particular accompaniments to be 'good' (sauce needs a roast)
- Will it require more time than you have before the feast?
- Will it require special equipment to produce? Do you have access to equipment?

IF any dishes no longer seem like Reasonable candidates remove them from your list!

Think about the dishes that remain:

- Can it be prepared ahead? How far ahead? Frozen?
- Should the dish be served warm or cold?
- How will you need to serve the dish? In a bowl, on a platter?
- Will it require particular accompaniments to be 'good' (sauce needs a roast)

And then you should do a detailed costing of these dishes. For more on costing, see the next chapter *** Math for Cooks***. If there are recipes that you have never tried before, you might want to give them a try (have a few friends over to help and have a nice supper!) to see how they turn out.

This is the time to trial cook any dishes you are unsure about. How do they go together? How much do they yield? Remember to measure and think about how much you would want at feast with 10 other dishes to come. Mc Donald's rule: no single serving of meat should be more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of a pound (225g). Total meat should be not more than 1 pound/person, and usually should be less.

Chapter 4 – Budgeting- Math for cooks!

Budgeting can be a sticking point for some cooks, but it doesn't have to be an awful task! Many of the numbers will be given to you; you just need to massage them a bit!

You should be able to find out pretty easily:

- 1)** How many people are expected to sit feast, based on past feasts in the group. If you are a new group, and having a small event, better to make a feast that is too small than too large- perhaps you could do feast for only 20-40.
- 2)** How much people will generally pay for a feast in your area. Around here 10-14 dollars is pretty standard. Remember that the more you ask folks to pay, the more they will be expecting in quality, quantity and service
- 3)** How much time the event steward and the group as a whole wants to devote to feast at the event. There is no point in making a lavish multi course feast that will take 90 minutes to serve if all your guests have small children that are expecting to dance after dinner. Similarly, if feast is the last thing on the schedule and the hall is booked until 11 pm, a quick 6 dish dinner might be anti climactic.
- 4)** How many people are generally given complimentary feast tickets. Usually the Royal family is all comp'ed, and the local baronial couple is comp'ed. Sometimes the nearby baronial couples are comp'ed, - check with previous event staff.
- 5)** Does your canton have a policy on servers? In some places they only have to pay half price for the feast (sometimes they eat for free!), since they have to work. Check with previous event staff on that too.

So let's make an example:

Having asked around, I have found that

- 1)** Feasts here normally sit about 100 (96 is 12 tables of 8)
- 2)** People will pay between \$10-14 depending on the feast offered. The Autocrat would like them to pay \$12 this year.
- 3)** The folks in my group like to cook and eat, and are willing to give me up to 90 minutes to serve my feast, but it would be cool if it were done earlier so we could dance more!
- 4)** We will plan for 8 complimentary tickets, 4 for the royals, 2 for the baronial couple, and 2 more at the discretion of the royals. Great, that is the whole head table!
- 5)** Our canton policy is to have the servers pay half price for their tickets. So if we have one server for each table that is 12 servers. (Perhaps later we will find we need fewer servers, but we can start with this.

Money

So how do we find out how much money we have to work with?

96 feasters paying full price=	96*\$12=	\$1152
12 servers paying ½ price=	12*\$6=	\$ 72

for a total of \$1224

But what if we don't sell all our seats? There might be a snowstorm!
What if we only have half as many servers?

So perhaps we should only count on

84 feasters paying full price=	84*\$12=	\$1008
6 servers paying ½ price=	6*\$6=	\$ 36

For a total of \$1044

So we should not spend more than \$1044 on all the food for the feast, just in case we have a snowstorm (or whatever). If the exchequer asks you what your “**Break Even**” point is you can tell them it is 84 feasters and 6 servers, for a total of \$1044.

Note that different groups and different events will want to have an even lower break even point- perhaps only 72 feasters- if they are very prone to weather variations. Be reasonable when setting your numbers- it is better to have a sold out feast for 70 than a feast for 100 where only 70 people showed up!

Attendees

How do we know how many people we are hoping to feed?

We add #1, #4 and #5, assuming the largest number of people for each

So $96+8+12= 116$ total eaters!

So we have \$1044 to spend to feed 116 people! Great! Now we know we have about \$9/person or \$72/table to spend. It doesn't sound like a lot does it? But don't worry; we will give people a meal to remember!

So how do we know what things will cost? We look at Grocery store prices and test the recipes to find out!

Let's try estimating the cost of some recipes from Feasts that I have done in the fall. These recipes are some that have passed all the tests in Chapter 2- we just need to find out how much they cost. Of course the number of dishes you have on your list will be greater than what I have in this chapter, and you will have more choices in ordering them than in this example, but we must start somewhere!

When estimating, think of the prices you would expect to pay in the grocery store when they are having a decent sale- most of the time you should be able to get these prices by going directly to a butcher and making a bulk order. If you are not sure about a price, use an estimate for a rough cost, but go and find the real price before you commit to the recipe. If you aren't accustomed to watching the fliers in your area, collect them for a month or so to get an idea. Remember that some things have a 'season' - not just fruit and vegetables. For instance, pork is often a very good value in the fall.

When I am budgeting I assign things like onions and eggs a standard value of \$.25 each. I usually use bouillon cubes for broth, and give them a value of \$.50, which is a bit high, but you do want to use a good quality cube- avoid those with MSG particularly. Spices, I usually say cost about \$.25 in each recipe, though that is likely too high in most cases. I would rather have a few more pennies in there than have too few.

The recipes that follow are straight out of the books cited, just as you would find them on your own. My notes are in *italics*. Many books will say in the preface that the recipes are to feed 8 people, but they don't tell you what the portion size is, so you have to test them, as we will find out!

Limonia or Chicken with Lemon #33 Medieval Kitchen

1 Free Range Chicken (<i>I normally make this with boneless meat for ease of serving and give about 100g of meat per person.</i>) <i>Boneless chicken can be had for around \$9 a kilo if you watch the sales so 800 g at \$9/Kg =</i>	\$7.20
1 cup Almonds (<i>is about 140g at about \$8.50 KG</i>)=	\$1.20
2 cups meat broth (<i>I use bouillon cubes</i>)	\$0 .50
2 medium-small onions	\$ 0.50
2 ounces of fresh pork fatback (<i>used as grease for browning, so I used Crisco instead in case of pork allergies</i>) 4 Tbsp of Crisco	\$0 .50
Juice of 1 lemon	\$ 0.50
1 tsp strong spice mixture	\$0 .25

For a total of \$10.65

When I did a trial recipe I found the dish had a lot of sauce for the amount of chicken in it. Since I wanted more of a stew consistency than a soup consistency I decided to double the amount of chicken in the same amount of liquid and then spread that over two tables

So \$10.65 + \$7.20 (the value of the extra chicken) = \$17.85

Divided by 2 tables the cost per table is about =\$ 8.90

Pumpkin or Winter squash soup #25 Medieval Kitchen

4 ½ pounds pumpkin or winter squash (<i>Pumpkin is in season!</i>)	\$1.00
1 onion sliced	\$.25
1.75 cup broth	\$.50
2 TBSP verjuice or 1 Tbsp cider vinegar mixed with 1 tsp of water	\$.10
2Tbsp freshly grated Parmesan cheese	\$.50
2 Egg yolks	\$.50
1 small pinch saffron	\$.25
½ tsp of sweet spices	\$.25

For a total of \$3.50 for one recipe of soup.

When I did a trial recipe, I found that it made LOTS, so we probably can spread one recipe over 2 tables. So \$3.50 divided by 2 =

\$1.75 per table for this dish!

Cheese and Mushroom tarts (basic redaction from Pleyndel Volume 2, #2 with some modifications)

Pastry dough- to fit one 8"-9" pan *I often use pre-made shells if I am making a lot of pies. Usually you can get 2 shells for \$2 if you look*

1.5 pounds mushrooms- <i>I buy them by the box \$3/lb</i>	\$4.50
2-4 ounces (50-100g) EACH of Parmesan and Cheddar (preferably white)	
<i>Cheddar = \$13kg Parmesan = \$21kg 3 oz \$1 for C \$1.5 for P</i>	\$2.50
2 tbsp olive oil	\$.25
.5 tsp salt	
.25 tsp ground pepper (white doesn't show as much)	
.5-1 tsp ground ginger	\$.25

For a total of \$8.50 per pie, unless we can do some serious saving on the mushroom price. But even at \$2.50/Lb it comes to \$7.75 per table.

I have made this recipe often so I know that this recipe makes one well-filled pie.

White Torta filling #94 Medieval Kitchen

Pie shell <i>As above</i>	\$1.00
generous 10 ounces of cream cheese (300g) <i>1.2 boxes * \$3</i>	\$3.60
6 egg whites <i>6 * .25</i>	\$1.50
scant 2/3 cup sugar (125g)	\$0.40
9 tablespoons butter, softened (125g)	\$1.00
3/4 teaspoon ground ginger	\$0.25
1 cup milk (1/4 litre)	\$0.50
salt	

For a total of \$8.25 per recipe. But when I tried the recipe I found that this filling recipe filled not one but two commercial pie shells! So if we add the cost of another pie shell to the total $\$8.25 + \$1 = 9.25$ for two pies. So about \$4.60 a pie!

And of course we will likely want to have some bread, and some roasted meat, and some vegetables too. These are easier to find prices for:

Bread is commercially available for about \$2/loaf
Pork Roast can be had in the fall for \$4.50/kg that will feed one table
40 pounds of carrots will easily feed our group
8 bags of 5lb each costs $8 * \$2 = \16 for everyone
 $\$16$ divided by 15 tables = \$1.06 per table

Our menu so far

Bread	\$2.00
Pumpkin soup	\$1.75
Limonia	\$8.90
Roast Pork	\$4.50
Carrots	\$1.06
Cheese and Mushroom Pie	\$7.75
White Torta	\$4.60

For a table total of \$30.56

So this group of dishes would make a good first half for our feast and if we think about spending our total money (\$72 per table) equally between the first and second half we are well on budget.

So let's look at the menu from the point of view of our eaters:

We have bread, with no butter.

We have a lovely vegetarian friendly soup

Limonia is a yummy dish, unless you are vegetarian

Roast pork is not vegetarian either, and might be nice with a sauce

Carrots are nice, but a bit boring on their own.

Cheese and mushroom pie is good and vegetarian protein too

White Torta is also good and vegetarian protein too

SO for budgeting we might want to add butter for bread, 2 vegetarian alternate dishes, a sauce for the roast, and flavour for the carrots.

Butter for each table should probably not exceed ¼ cup/eighth of a pound. If butter is usually around \$4/lb, each table needs \$.50 of butter

Flavour for the carrots might be butter and fresh mint if they are boiled or olive oil and salt and pepper if they are roasted. Lets estimate about \$.50 for either one

Sauce for roast pork- let's try <u>Cameline Sauce #48, Pleyn Delit Volume2</u>	
2 Tbsp Breadcrumbs	\$.25
1/3 cup (85 mL) vinegar or 1/2 cup red wine	\$.35
.5 tsp salt	
.5 tsp ground ginger	
.5-1 tsp ground Cinnamon	\$.40

For a total of \$1 per recipe. One recipe should go over two tables
 For a total of \$.50 per table

Which leaves us to decide on **Vegetarian alternate dishes**. I usually estimate that about 5-10% of feast attendees will be vegetarians, or one per table. If you find that pre-registration for vegetarians is high or low, you can adjust this. I try to make the vegetarian dishes of a similar value to the dish they are replacing, as well as making them of a similar type (stewed/dry; hot/cold) when possible.

Some possible recipes are

Turnips baked with Cheese #38 PD2

2 Lb White Turnips	\$2.00
12 Oz Swiss cheese (\$8/pound)	\$6.00
.25 lb butter, melted	\$1.00
Spices to taste (Pinches of ground allspice, nutmeg, ginger,)	
Salt and pepper to taste	\$0.25

For a total of \$9.25 per recipe, which will serve 8. So if there is one vegetarian at the table their portion is \$1.15

Ravioli in Broth- adapted from Medieval Kitchen #7 and PD2 #13

1 Lb commercial cheese Ravioli	\$2.49
6-8 cups Veggie broth	\$1.50
Fresh Herbs	

For a total of \$6 per recipe, which will serve 8. So if there is one vegetarian at the table their portion is \$.75

The Full Cost of the proposed menu

Bread	\$2.00
Butter	\$. 50
Pumpkin soup	\$1.75
Limonia	\$8.90
Alternate dish	\$1.15
Roast Pork	\$4.50
Sauce	\$0 .50
Alternate dish	\$0 .75
Carrots	\$1.06
Flavour for carrots	\$.50
Cheese and Mushroom Pie	\$7.75
White Torta	\$4.60

For a table total of \$33.96. Hurrah, we are still under budget!

So we could leave it like this, or, you could consider adding extras to the food menu (Perhaps some cut veggies to start, or another sauce for the roast, or making the roasts bigger), or decorations on the existing dishes (a few sprigs of herbs, or red onion slices, or lettuce under the food can make things look so nice).

These sorts of additions are optional, and can be added the day before the feast, so if you have paid reservations that exceed your break even numbers, feel free to go ahead-remember those extra people bring extra money with them!

Chapter 5- Making your Final Menu

IN the last chapter we worked with only a few dishes that I knew would work together for an example. But you have your list of 15-20 dishes that have gone through the brainstorming and refinement process in Chapter 3. What sort of order should those dishes be placed in for the feast? How do we get the costs of the dishes to fit into our budget and onto the tables?

1) In Chapter 2 #5 we talked about different considerations that would affect the way you would serve your feast, so let us look at those things again:

Theme- how do the costed recipes fit into the theme? Do you have enough of the right themed dishes to make 2 reasonable groups (if you have decided to do two groups!)? Is there enough of the theme colour represented? Is there a way to influence that with decoration?

Cooking time on the day- do you have many recipes that need to be cooked on the day? Do you have enough room and staff to manage that? Alternately, if you will be cooking much of the feast ahead, do you have people to help you cook it ahead of time and freezer space to store it? Returning to our example from Chapter 4:

Looking at our sample feast from a cooking in advance perspective:

Bread can be bought from a bakery on the day, or baked and frozen ahead

Butter can be cut on the day

Pumpkin soup can be mainly made ahead

Limonia can be made ahead

Ravioli will be cooked on the day

Roast pork will be cooked on the day

Cameline sauce could be made up to 2 days before the feast

Turnips in Cheese can be made ahead or be cooked on the day

Carrots will be cooked and flavoured on the day

Cheese and mushroom pie can be cooked ahead and frozen

White torta can be made ahead and frozen

This looks like a meal that would be easy to prepare for a feast- not too much rushing around on the day!

Cooking method- Do you have enough burners and pots to cook the number of boiled/stewed or roasted dishes that you would like to serve? Are there ways to get around this in some way? Is there a balance of cooking types throughout the feast?

Looking at our sample feast from a cooking perspective

Bread is cold

Soup should be hot- probably in two large pots
Limonia should be hot- probably in two large pots
Ravioli will need a good-sized pot
Roast pork should be served hot, probably right from the oven
Sauce could be hot or room temperature
Turnips in Cheese should be hot, probably right from the oven
Carrots could be boiled, or roasted- depends where we have space
Cheese and Mushroom pie is good hot or cold
White torta is usually served cold

This looks like could be it cooked easily as long as we have **at least** 3 regular stoves/ovens. Four would make it easier, particularly in the preparation of vegetarian alternate dishes. A warming oven would really come in handy. We also need 4 very large pots, and at least one good-sized pot, as well as at least 5-6 roasting pans. Does the canton have them?

Temperature: Will you have a balance between hot and cold dishes throughout the feast? Be sure that you can serve all your dishes at the appropriate temperature.

Service method- do you have enough serving vessels to get the food from the kitchen to the diners? Can you put two foods onto one platter? Will that have repercussions for exceptional eaters?

Looking at our sample feast from a serving perspective

Bread can go right on the table
Butter should be in a small dish
Soup could be served from central pots
Limonia could be served centrally, or in a bowl on each table
Ravioli- Vegetarians would need to send their bowls to a central place, or have a small bowl from the kitchen brought to each diner
Roast pork could be on a platter
Sauce will need a small cup, on the platter,

Carrots could be on the same platter- but not for vegetarians!
Carrots and Turnips and cheese could come on a separate plate to each vegetarian (you could use a pie plate even)
Cheese and Mushroom pie comes in its own tray
White Torta comes in its own tray

This looks like it will fit in with what we have in our serving gear:

14 small butter bowls
4 ladles
14 bowls or soup tureens
8 small bowls (vegetarian ravioli)

14 platters
14 sauce cups
8 plates (vegetarian alternates)
14 pie lifters

Similar dishes- Are there just too many dishes of one type (5 soup/stew dishes or are all meat dishes chicken or does everything have cinnamon in it).

Exceptional Diners: Follow your policy, weather it is to allow the vegetarians to have a good meal even without the meat dishes or to plan alternative dishes for them. These must be able to fit into the service order and cooking order without a lot of extra difficulty. They must also fit into your budget!

Other considerations: Is the steward planning a concert or court in the middle of your feast service time? Will serving of dishes be permitted during this time or would it be best to have a pause?

Budget: Some recipes will likely need to be dropped just based on cost alone, but sometimes it is possible to serve only a small portion of a desired expensive recipe, perhaps closer to the end of the feast so that people can have a taste. Otherwise, try to ensure that your money is spread out over the feast with an emphasis towards the front end. Hungry people usually don't want to wait until the end of supper to get their roasted meats, and they will eat less as they get more full.

Looking at all these considerations, play with your costed recipes and any other simple dishes (vegetables, bread, barley etc) that you will need for balancing your menu. Make several different arrangements to see what will work best in your circumstances. Think carefully about how the feast will look and taste to the diner waiting for their supper after a busy day at the event. If there is a special arrangement of dishes that might be unusual to the diners (like emulating a period feast, or a different cultural norm), it can be helpful to have a note on each table with an explanation and the menu to help them understand why you are doing things in the way that you are.

2) Considering presentation: Once you are sure that you have sufficient service vessels to transport the food you have prepared, you might wish to consider how the dishes look when they arrive at table. We know that medieval diners were interested in how their food looked at table, just as we do today. Medieval tastes for food decoration went from redressing a cooked peacock in its feathers for a realistic effect, to disguising foods and calling them different names (pork meatballs with almond 'spines' became "hedgehogs"). Modern food safety rules would frown on putting wrapping a cooked bird with its uncooked skin, though with some ingenuity a 'fan' of feathers could be attached to a cooked bird for presentation purposes!

If you wish to make models of something in particular, Marzipan is a wonderful period modeling “clay”. You can make it yourself or buy it ready made in tubes at many supermarkets or specialty stores (particularly European ones). It can be made into large or small sculptures and then painted with food colour or regular paints if you don’t wish to eat it. I was fortunate enough to have someone make some marzipan trilliums to top a cherry pudding and they were quite heraldic!

Although I would encourage interesting period presentations of food when possible, sometimes time and your budget might only allow a simple garnish. Slices of lemon on top of the bowl of Limonia at the table look lovely, and reflect what is in the dish. Rose or other edible flower petals (if you can find ones that are not sprayed with chemicals) are beautiful on top of salads, or surrounding a pate or desert flavoured with rose water. Stencils can be used to make pictures on the tops of pies with a coloured powder (Saunders is a medieval food colour that comes powdered and is wonderful for this purpose)

Do keep your budget in mind when considering your decorations; a feast for the eyes is good, but no match for a feast of the belly. Sometimes lavishly decorating the portion for the head table and parading it around the hall for others to enjoy is the most cost effective way to go!

Keep in mind too that adding any decorations will also take time, both in preparation of the decorations (The feather fans, the marzipan anything), and the dressing of the dishes on their way out the door. Do you have time to make things in advance or could you get a creative friend to help out? There are some folks who love to do decorations, but don’t wish to cook a whole feast in order to decorate it. What a team you could make! And remember the more elaborate a presentation you wish to make on the day, the more help you will need in plating the dishes.

3) Subtlety or Soteltie- These are elaborate edible constructions that often seem to be something that they are not. According to PD2 ‘the most common festive subtlety is a representation in sugar of persons or objects, some were of pastry or even of ground meat.’ These fun objects are an optional next step beyond merely decorating your feast dishes on the way out of the kitchen. They could be presented at the beginning of the feast to be admired, and then consumed at the end of the feast, or brought out at the end as a piece de resistance. Sotelties are usually made large enough to be seen even from a little distance, and can be as detailed as you wish to make them. They can be reflecting your royal visitors, or portraying something significant to your group- Hares are a common subject in Skraeling Althing.

If you wish to display a Soteltie at your feast I would recommend getting a local artisan to produce it for you, particularly if the subject is complex. DO be sure to budget for it and to let the artisan know how much you are willing to pay, and have them collect receipts as you would for any other part of the feast. It is better to have a terrific feast

with no Soteltie than a mediocre feast with an amazing soteltie. Spend your time and money wisely!

4) Make your final menu choices- Having looked at the budget and all these considerations, make your final choices about what dishes you will serve, and how they will appear on the menu, and on the table. Be sure to include any alternative dishes and extras on this menu.

5) Give your menu to the Event Steward for posting on the website. You may wish to give a short description of each dish so that diners have an idea what to look forward to. It is also good to attach a provisional list of ingredients with a disclaimer that some things may change closer to the feast.

It would be good to share your menu with the lunch cook at this time so that they can make something that is not going to overlap with your meal

Chapter 6- Teamwork

No one cooks a feast alone. You are part of the larger event team with the steward and the activity coordinators, and you are the head of a team of people helping you to cook the feast. IN Chapter 2 section 4 we discussed some key staff positions that are good to have filled, especially when you are cooking a feast for 100 or more. But you will also need help long before the feast day arrives, in almost every step of the process.

1) Start with considering your family. If you live with your folks, it is good to let them know what you are up to, particularly if you will be having precooking sessions at their home. If you have a partner (and kids too) they need to be aware of what you are taking on, and prepared to (at the very least) give you the space you need to prepare for the feast. Ideally they will support you and help with running around for things, help with precooks, and either stand with you in the kitchen, or keep the kids out of the kitchen! :-
D Remember their support when they want to take on a big project of their own and stand by them in exchange.

If your family and/or partner are not in a position to support you in cooking the feast this time around it might be better in long run to let someone else try it this year. You could help the other cook out for precooks or on the day to stay involved without causing too much distress in the home. Family lasts longer than the feast this year. If there really is no one else in your small group to cook the feast this year, then perhaps the group could try doing a pot luck this year, or perhaps borrow a cook from another group to help out.

2) After considering your immediate family, you need to drum up support for the fun and exciting work of cooking the feast. Contact your extended family and household, call your friends or contact them online by e-mail, Live Journal or Face book. Let people know what kinds of cool plans you have for the feast this year, and what kinds of challenges you have in mind.

IF you are genuinely engaged and enthusiastic about cooking your feast, it will often be contagious and people will want to help. It can be a great way for the canton to gather and work on something together, mixing up some of the usual 'groups' that naturally form in a canton. Try to be as welcoming as possible and encourage as many people to come and help as you can. You might meet some talented new people, and see old friends in a different light.

Helping with the feast is not just for aspiring cooks- there are plenty of ways for people to help out with the feast that don't involve cooking:

-Precooked foods need to be stored somewhere- who has space in their deep freeze?

-Precooked foods need to be stored IN something- who has plastic food tubs that they can lend or give? Many people save tubs from margarine, blueberries or ice cream
-Things always need to be moved from place to place, and groceries must be bought- do you have a car? Is it big enough to move everything- all the feast food and the equipment? What about collecting all the foods from people's freezers before the feast- do you want to be the one running around the night before?
-Does anyone have contacts in the Food service industry that can get you good deals? Or even just know about out of the way places to shop that can give good bargains?

When you are precooking you might want to have extra equipment- who has a blender, food processor or pasta machine that you could use? Who has extra skills that might be helpful- does someone own an exquisite set of knives and knows how to use them well?

3) Pre-cooking sessions are when your feast gets cooked in advance of the feast day. This is where people who do like to cook can get together and do their thing! Like any successful party though, they do need a bit of planning. Ask around to find out the best days for the people you encouraged in section 2. Be aware of statutory holidays and SCA event dates that your helpers might be interested in. Try to find 2-3 days spread out over the 2-3 months before your feast day to hold your precooks. Aim to have 2-6 helpers come to each one if you can. If your kitchen is not big enough to cope with this activity, see if you can find someone who might lend you their kitchen for the dates. Or ask if your regular meeting place can accommodate you- though you will likely have to pay for its use, and that can get pricy.

Once you have decided on your dates, advertise them as much in advance as possible. Send it down your groups e-list, put it on your Live Journal or Face book, and spam your chums! Let people know what dishes you will be cooking on which days so the vegans don't have to come to the meat day etc. While doing that, think carefully about your recipes and see if you will need any extra equipment for the precook day. You could ask if people have things they can bring like their own knives, blender, food chopper, or rolling pin. Do you have big enough pots to precook the stew? See if you can get some from the canton.

Most of all make the pre cook fun! Put on some tunes and be a good host- have pop or juice, perhaps a special treat at the end of the day like ice creams or have everyone stay to have pizza dinner. (Or order pizza for lunch if you like to start early)

Prepare in advance for your precook- have the counters and stove clean and sanitized so that once your volunteers get there you can get right to work. Be sure you have all the ingredients you need, and a driver around just in case! Copy your recipes so that you are not all trying to share one book and folks can work independently. Set up stations if you can- the dining table is dedicated to pie fillings, and the kitchen itself is for stew making. The pie folks only have to pop in and out of the kitchen occasionally, and you don't all

stand on top of one another. Over see what is going on, but if you know you have experienced cooks helping you, don't micromanage them. They will appreciate your trust.

When you are finished your cooking and are sending the results to be stored, label everything well and keep in mind the desires of the freezer owners- vegetarians may not want meat stew in their freezer!

Most important: Say thank you! Lots! Advertise your thanks as much as your advertised the precook itself. Try to remember what people did and thank them particularly (i.e. Thanks to Joel for being in charge of the Gnocchi). Make the precook sound like a fun time where people are appreciated and more people will come to the next one! :-D

Chapter 7- Stay organized

IN order to keep your team moving forward, you need to be organized. After your menu has been passed to the steward (and has their approval if it is needed in your canton), you can start planning the few short months before your feast -no matter when they fall, those months always seem short!

1) Make your list of precook-able dishes, and separate them by meat and vegetarian dishes. Also separate dishes that have very similar cooking methods. IF you try to cook all your pies on one day in one oven you will be there for hours! Try putting one oven dish with one stove top dish if you can.

Try to estimate how long you think it will take to make the multiple batches of the dish that you will need to feed your feasters, and then add an hour or 2 extra for something to go wrong, or less quickly than you hoped. When announcing your precooks, try to let people know how long you think it will take. Sometimes people cannot make the start time for a precook, but might be able to arrive a few hours later when the first folks to arrive are getting pooped. Let them know there will still be something going on!

2) Doing the shopping for a feast can be a daunting task- there is just so much to buy! Sit down well before your precooks and look at each recipe and your notes about it when you did your trial batch and planned your menu. For example:

Pumpkin or Winter squash soup #25 Medieval Kitchen

4 ½ pounds pumpkin or winter squash (*Pumpkin is in season!*)
1 onion sliced
1.75 cup vegetable broth
2 TBSP verjuice or 1 Tbsp cider vinegar mixed with 1 tsp of water
2Tbsp freshly grated Parmesan cheese
2 Egg yolks
1 small pinch saffron
½ tsp of sweet spices

When I did a trial recipe, I found that it made LOTS, so we probably can spread one recipe over 2 tables.

Since we are cooking for 14 tables we need 7 iterations of this recipe, so the shopping list would look like this:

31.5 lb pumpkin- probably 4 good-sized pumpkins will be plenty
7 onions- about a 2 lb bag. I wonder if we will need more of these later?

7 vegetable broth cubes- 1 package
7 Tbsp of Cider vinegar- I wonder if we will need more vinegar later on?
14 Tbsp of Parmesan= a bit less than 1 cup
14 egg yolks- I wonder if we will need egg whites later on?
14 pinches saffron- get a small box
3.5 tsp of sweet spices- see if we need these again

Limonia or Chicken with Lemon #33 Medieval Kitchen

1 Free Range Chicken *boneless meat about 100g per person*
1 cup Almonds is *about 140g*
2 cups meat broth
2 medium-small onions
4 Tbsp of Crisco
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tsp strong spice mixture

When I did a trial recipe I found the dish had a lot of sauce for the amount of chicken in it. Since I wanted more of a stew consistency than a soup consistency I decided to double the amount of chicken in the same amount of liquid and then spread that over two tables

To buy for this recipe we need 116 portions times 100g of meat, plus 7 iterations of the sauce

So we need
11.6 Kg of boned chicken
7 cups of almonds –do we need in more later on?
7 broth cubes- buy a box
14 onions- perhaps 4 lbs worth
28 Tbsp of Crisco- a little less than a pound- so get a block
7 lemons
7 tsp of strong spices- see if we need these again

When you are making your grocery lists, think about your precook dates. If you don't have a car, be sure to arrange for a car and driver to take you around to the shops before each precook. Be sure that you buy enough of the right things at the right time! Rushing out halfway through a precook usually means you will be paying more for the convenience of doing so.

Call or (much better) go to shops to get the very best prices you can. Smaller stores can often be more flexible than major chains if you are buying in bulk. But some major chains do have a policy to give non-profit/charity groups 10% discount. Ask the manager, preferably when it is not too busy. Ask for deals on meat if you pre-order it-

often they won't have large quantities ready for sale at a moment's notice. This can work for Produce and baked goods too. Watch fliers for deals in the lead up to feast prep days (I have noticed that Cream cheese always goes on sale around Thanksgiving- great for feast of the Hare!)

When doing your shopping keep your receipts orderly and in one space so they are not lost. Mark the receipts or keep a separate paper with the recipes that you were cooking with the groceries on each receipt. Keep a running tally of expenditures as you make them so that you can keep on top of your budget numbers. If you need to hand in receipts as you go, take photocopies for your records.

Think about freshness- if you will need butter at the first precook 2 months before the feast, it makes no sense to buy all the butter for the feast tables at that time. Butter can be frozen, but unless you found an amazingly good price for butter, why would you? But things like flour and almonds can be kept for two months with ease if necessary, so you could easily buy them in bulk.

A note on spices: Once you have determined where each spice will appear and the total quantity required of each one, you could go to bulk barn (or similar) and buy just what you need. If you do this you must clearly label your bags- on the bag, not the tag- and take care not to lose them! Alternately, you could do what I do- I use spices from my own personal stock, so that I know that they are fresh and in abundance. I will buy one package of a common spice from the feast funds that will serve to replenish my stock and 'pay me back' for the use of the various spices. I do not recommend buying large containers of spices for the 'use of future feast cooks'. Spices do lose their potency over time, particularly if they are ground, and someone will have to store them for years until they are gone, and that place will inevitably not be where you need them when cooking.

3) Make your preorders for pick up on Feast day with the butcher, baker, and produce person. Put them in writing, and try to discuss them with the manager of the department well in advance of the day. Some shops only want a few days notice, but some want weeks, so check. See if they need things prepaid (bakers often do) and be sure that is taken care of if someone else is picking things up for you. Always be Super Nice, they are doing you a favour!

4) Keep talking to the rest of the event staff to keep them aware of what you are up to, and find out what they know about the rest of the event. It is handy to know how many people have pre-registered for feast- if there have been few pre-registrations perhaps you and the autocrat could advertise the menu some more at meetings and on E-lists etc. Find out how many royalty are coming, and if you haven't done so yet, find out if they have any food preferences that you be catered to.

In particular you should be in touch with the lunch cook, who might be sharing your kitchen for the first part of the day. It is important for both of you to understand what

time and resources are needed for each of your meals, at least for the time that you are overlapping. If you are making pies on the day and they must go in to the ovens at 12:30, the lunch cook needs to know that. With any luck they will not have a lunch that needs the use of the ovens, and if they had planned for one, there might still be time to organize your way through this, either by a menu change of their part, or precooking on yours.

Chapter 8- Plan for the day

The Day of the feast will be a busy one, but it will pass smoothly if you have made appropriate plans. Forward planning can eliminate (or at least mitigate) problems in the final press to get dinner on the table.

1) It is important to keep in touch with the event steward as they plan the schedule for the day, particularly the afternoon and evening. Although it is not your place to dictate to the steward, it should be possible to ask for some consideration as they plan. Fighting tourneys are best planned to end at least an hour before dinner or court, and longer if there are no showers on site. Courts should end at least half an hour before the feast should begin to leave some time for hall set up. If time is very tight at your event for some reason, Royalty can sometimes be encouraged (by the steward, in advance) to be briefer than they might otherwise be. Similarly, if Court must start at a particular time after supper, it is important that you know so that you can plan to be done at least half an hour before.

If there is to be entertainment during the feast it is important that you keep in touch with the entertainment coordinator. Some performers don't mind if dinner is served around their performances, whilst others wish to have rapt attention and stillness. It is important that the entertainment coordinator knows which is which and can hopefully schedule them around your service. If you are serving your dishes in two groups, the break between is a perfect time for performances needing attention, or even a short court. If your dishes are intended to come out without a large gap, there may still be times in the service where there will be less activity. For instance, if a platter of roast, vegetables and barley has gone out it would be wise to refrain from sending more dishes out to the tables for 5-10 minutes so that the diners are not overwhelmed. This leaves a nice gap for a performance.

Keep in touch with your Kitchen staff as laid out in Chapter 2 #4. It is important that the head server is collecting serving staff before the event, and it is wonderful if they can get a Peer or two to serve head table. If you are planning special presentation foods, or a specific method of serving, it is important that the head server and the plater know your expectations. Similarly, if you are having troubles with details of service and presentation, talk to your staff, more heads are better than one!

If you will need something special done- like carving roast beef to put on platters for service- find someone who is able to take on the task. Sometimes people who don't want to spend the whole day in the kitchen are happy to help out with a particular task if it is something they are particularly suited for.

The event steward will be planning a clean-up crew for the site at the end of the day, but it is often up to the cook to collect a special cleanup crew for the kitchen. Find someone you trust to co-ordinate this for you if you can, and be sure that they find helpers so that

they are not doing it alone! If volunteers cannot be found before the event, be sure that the hall is cried more than once after dinner (or even before) to encourage people to help out. If you can have a dishwashing person during the day, and/or during the feast it will help the clean-up crew a great deal. Remember that even if you have a dishwashing machine, the big pots will still need scrubbing by hand, and the floors will need mopping too. Keep in touch with the reservation clerk as well- be sure that they are passing on information on dietary restrictions to you so you know how much to make.

2) I find that “**T-Schedules**” are an important planning tool in my feasts. “T-schedules” are schedules are timelines that are relative to a changeable value known as T. T is when the feast should start, according to the posted event schedule, and then (perhaps) modified by the steward as necessary on the day, usually because something ran longer than expected. However, it is best if you can get a fixed time from the steward at least 3 hours in advance of your feast start time. Things might still run late, but a best guess must be made somewhere, and you need to start cooking!

So T is when your feast begins with the first dish being served. Dishes usually follow at 5 minute intervals after this (T+5, then T+10 etc) until you finish your group of dishes (probably around T+30). If you will be serving a second group of dishes, the usual interval between groups is 20-30 minutes. Do not exceed this time, your diners will either get fractious, or wander off. So the meal resumes at T+55 with the first dish of the second group and continues again in 5 minute intervals until T+80 with the service of the last dessert. When you know when you would like things served in relation to T, you can plan when you will cook them so that they will be ready at the appointed time.

If we continue with our example from the budgeting chapter, we start with:

Time	Activity
T	Bread and butter out
T+5	Pumpkin soup out
T+10	Limonia out
	Ravioli in broth out to vegetarians
T+15	Roast pork, Cameline sauce and Carrots out
	Armoured Turnips and carrots out
T+20	Cheese and mushroom pie out
T+25	White torta out.

Which brings us to cooking. I would encourage you to read Evan Little’s advice to the novice that is included in the appendix. ON Page 2 he talks about cooking in large quantities. It is VERY important to remember that it takes large quantities of food much longer to cook than small quantities. A two pound pork roast will cook in one hour at home, but 10 in one oven together will often take 2-3 times as long. Making rice for your family might only take 20 minutes, but when you are making it for 100 people it will take an hour or more, and require stirring in the early stages as well. Draining the carrots for

your own supper is an easy task but a 20-liter kettle of carrots is very heavy and hard to manage. Be sure that you have the time to cook these things properly, and someone strong enough to help you move pots on and off the stoves and to the sink. Keeping these things in mind, let us move on to using this in our T schedule. As I go through the menu, I add notes to the T schedule. At this time some notes will have definite times (relative to T) attached, and some will not (when something just needs to be done ‘in the afternoon’)

- Bread and butter are served at room temperature, but the butter needs to be set out in dishes. This is not time sensitive, so it could happen sometime in the afternoon
- The pumpkin soup needs to be gently reheated (taking perhaps 2 hours depending on how thawed it is), and close to the serving time the Egg yolk and cheese must be added, after reserving some for those diners with allergies to egg and dairy.
- Limonia should also take about 2 hours to reheat depending on how frozen it is. It needs no additions, but it will be served with lemon slices and in soup tureens to each table.
- Ravioli in broth- heat broth to boiling with herbs. Boil pasta, serve in small bowls
- Roast Pork- roast in oven, let stand for 5-10 minutes, serve on Platters
- Cameline Sauce served at room temperature, put into small cups in the afternoon
- Carrots- Roast in oven (away from Pork!) with olive oil and herbs, Serve on platters
- Armoured turnips- Cook in oven (away from pork and/or covered), serve on small plates
- Cheese and mushroom pie- Served at room temperature, or warm if there are warming ovens
- White torta will be served cool or at Room temperature

Your feast will likely have more dishes than this, and thus have more notes of course.

Another layer of complexity can be added when you factor in feeding the service staff half an hour before the main meal starts. I prefer to serve the servers in advance since it gives them a chance to taste what they are serving. From the servers perspective it is easier to serve others when you are not hungry yourself, or are trying to grab a bite to eat in between taking out dishes.

If possible, serve the servers in an out of the way area, near to the kitchen. If you work with the steward you might be able to have the end of the hall near the kitchen roped or curtained off for this purpose. I do not recommend serving them in the main hall, as it will be full of people trying to set up tables, sort out the seating schedule, and put their dishes down,

I try to serve them all the dishes in the feast (or in the upcoming group of dishes at least) at once. While they are eating, the head server can assign the tables, and let the servers know what order the dishes are being sent out in. The servers should be told what vegetarian options are available, and who have pre-registered to receive them. Put a list of the service order and a list of the pre-registered special eaters on the wall as a reminder.

Time	Activity
T-5 hours	Check to see how things are thawing, spread out, or microwave
(around 1 pm)	Butter into dishes, set aside at room temperature
	Cameline Sauce into dishes, set aside at room temperature.
	Make up the armoured turnips
T-210	Chop herbs for carrots-reserve some tops for garnish Turn on Ovens for roasts and carrots
	Mix Carrots with Olive oil and herbs
T-190	Servers roast and Carrots into the oven
T-180	Check on Soup and Limonia- if they are not well thawed, start them now with a few cups of warm water to get them going.
T-160	Roasts into the oven
	Carrots into the oven with a foil lid!
	Apply Stencil 'hare' to tops of White torta
T-120	Put Pumpkin soup on low temperature **Stir every 15 minutes!! Put Limonia on at low temperature. **Stir every 15 minutes!! Chop up herbs for Ravioli broth- reserve some tops for garnish
T-60	Slice Lemons for garnish and for water jugs
T-45	Remove servers roast from oven
	Check on roasts and Carrots, adjust oven temp as necessary
	Take Bread from bags if necessary
	Armoured Turnips into an oven
	Server's dinner served, all at once. -Bowls brought in for soup
	Servers meeting takes place over dinner
T-20	Put Broth onto boil for Ravioli, adding herbs
T-15	Reserve some soup for allergic diners Add Egg yolk and Parmesan to the main pots after tempering.
T-10	Prepare jugs with lemon slices and cold water
T-5	Put Ravioli into boiling broth
T	Bread and butter out
	Put soup kettles and ladles on trolleys for serving out in the hall
	Put Limonia into Tureens and garnish
T+5	Pumpkin soup out Put Ravioli into bowls for vegetarians
	Remove roasts from oven to stand before serving
T+7	Start plating the Roasts/ Carrots/ sauce **Reserve some carrots
T+10	Limonia out in tureens with ladles Ravioli in broth out to vegetarians Plate Armoured turnips with Carrots
T+15	Roast pork, Cameline sauce and Carrots out Armoured Turnips and carrots out
T+20	Cheese and mushroom pie out- with pie lifter
T+25	White torta out.

IN an effort to get the schedule onto one page for this document, I have not put a couple of things into this sample T-schedule.

- Do leave lots of spaces between times so that you can write extra things in if changes need to be made.
- Do add notes about self care- drink water every hour, take your pills at lunch, go to the washroom, and eat food regularly. If you get too wrapped up in events in the kitchen and don't take care of yourself you won't be able to go the distance!
- If you have any special requests from the head table, these should be entered as well (like taking a jug of Milk to the head table at T-5 for instance)
- After supper clean up for the feasters- it is handy to have a garbage pail and a few totes of hot water in the hall for people to rinse their dishes at the end of a meal.

3) Make a chart to hang in the kitchen that clearly shows the order of service and how dishes are to be plated. This will save confusion on the day. We have looked at most of these considerations in previous chapters

- What dishes need what type of serving platters?
- Can some things share a serving platter? (Like the roast and the vegetables) Is the platter big enough- measure!
- Remember your vegetarians- they can't eat the veggies that are on the platter with the roast. Can you circulate a separate bowl? Can you plate a smaller dish with their alternate dish and the veggies, just for them?
- Will platters and things need to be reused during the feast? Be sure that the servers know to bring them back, and that you have a dishwasher (human or not) ready to quickly wash them up.

Here is what the service order would look like for our sample feast

Time	Recipe	Serving Dish	Garnish
T-0	Bread	None	
T-0	Butter	Small dish	
T+5	Pumpkin soup	Served centrally	
T+10	Limonia	Tureens	Lemon slices
T+10	Ravioli in broth	Small bowls	Herbs
T+15	Roast Pork	Platter w carrots	
T+15	Roast Carrots	Platter w roast pork	Herb sprigs
T+15	Sauce	On platter	
T+15	Armoured turnips	On plates w carrots	Herb sprigs
T+20	Cheese and Mushroom	Own tray	Pie lifter
T+25	White torta	Own plate	Hare Stencil

4) Type up your ingredient lists with any changes that might have been made in the precooking days, or in the lead up to the feast day.

Chapter 9- The Last Week

So we are almost there, just a few more things to confirm and finish and we are good to go!

1) Talk to all of your staff again, and be sure that they are prepared for the day. If anyone is having an attack of life and needs some help, try to help them get it. Be sure that you have confirmed some drivers to help you pick things up this week, particularly the night before the feast. Between the food in freezers all over the place, the things that need to be picked up on the day, and the canton serving inventory, there is a lot of stuff to truck to the event!

2) Check all with all your vendors to be sure that the things that you pre-ordered with them will be ready to pick up on Saturday. Pre pay ones that require it, and any that will be picked up by someone other than yourself so that you can get the receipts.

3) Collect the serving and cooking equipment from the canton storage place. Bring an inventory with you so that the crew up crew knows what needs to be brought back. Ensure that the feast equipment box has sufficient dish soap, towels, scrubbers, garbage bags, zip bags foil etc. Don't guess, check!

Find out if the lunch cook needs any of the equipment to serve the lunch, or to clean up after the lunch. Be sure they have it a few days in advance.

4) Cook any dishes that need to be fresh for the event, like the sauce for the roasts, or perhaps stewed fruit.

5) Make any refinements or additions necessary to the Ingredient list or T schedule

6) Try to pamper yourself this week if at all possible- drink lots of water, go to bed early, get a pedicure, whatever makes you feel good.

7) On the day before the feast there may be a few last minute items that need cooking- pates or aspics. You might want to have a 'peeling and chopping party' the night before the feast to get some things done before the day. If you do, keep the cut vegetables wet or at least damp in Zip bags or large tubs. Large food safe tubs can often be had at bulk food stores, or at supermarkets with an olive bar. Run them through your dishwasher a couple of times so they don't smell of olives or peanut butter though- it might cause allergies or taste transfer issues.

8) Pack your kit for the feast day- a sample-packing list is in the appendix

9) Remove foods from freezers around the canton. Keep the weather in mind as you do this- you want things to start to thaw overnight, but not to be completely thawed (and in the unsafe temperature range for food) by morning. So take care if it is summer, or if you leave things inside the house. Since our main feast is in the fall, I often put things into a garage over night- it is usually around 0-4 degrees overnight in Ottawa in November- which is about fridge temperature. Things thaw slowly and safely, as they would do in the fridge.

Separating things out will make them thaw more quickly while keeping things together will keep the cold in. This can be used to your advantage if you do not have a fridge temperature garage to lean on. If the freezer owners have committed to transferring the food to you in the morning, be sure that they know to take it out the night before, and take appropriate precautions. If drivers are going out to collect it the night before, they need to be advised too.

10) Print out multiple copies of your ingredient lists, your table menus, your T-Schedules and your Service order sheets. You will want at least one ingredient list in the following places: The kitchen, the gate area, the server's area and the dining hall. You will need as many menus as you have tables, with perhaps 2 for the head. You will want at least two T-schedules in the kitchen, and possibly one in the servers' area. And you will want at least 2 service order sheets in the kitchen, and at least one in the servers' area.

You will also need your list of People pre-registered for special meals, to be posted in the servers' area at dinnertime. Before then it should be in the kitchen in case there are any last minute additions that you wish to accommodate.

11) If at all possible, go to bed early, and try to relax- you have things well in hand! :-D

Chapter 10- the day and after

The long awaited feast day dawns and you are bright eyed and bushy tailed and ready for action.... Or perhaps not. Get a coffee (or stimulant of choice) and have a good breakfast, you will need your strength! :-D

In the morning you need to pack your (or your drivers) vehicle with the things you have packed the night before, all your printed lists, any food that is still in your house or garage. Then off to the shops to pick up preordered food (unless you have delegated that task) at the bakers, the butchers and the greengrocers.

Try to get to the site before noon if at all possible. The lunch cooks might still be in the kitchen, but you can often bring things into another part of the kitchen or hall until they are finished. If you offer them some, they would likely have no objection to you plugging in the coffee machine! Put on your working costume and start putting up your lists in the kitchen, and in the other locations mentioned above – or get a helper to do it.

Follow your T-schedule- particularly when it tells you to eat and take care of yourself. Be sure your helpers take refreshment as well- they will need it too! Keep an eye on how things are progressing- check thawing things to refrigerate or microwave as needed. Check oven temperatures to be sure things are cooking as they should. Keep stirring things. Try to keep well on top of your T-schedule, doing things that are not too time sensitive earlier rather than later. Try to relax into the knowledge that you have planned ahead, but keep an eye out for potential problems, just in case! :-D

During the service time, try to rely on your staff to help you with things. Try to stay clear of the plating and serving ends of things if you can, the plater and the head server should be able to manage without you, but could certainly be helped by a kitchen volunteer. You need to be keeping your eye on the big picture and watching for problems waiting to happen instead of working on the details of garnishes.

Once the feast is all out on the tables, you can take a well-deserved break! I sometimes put “beer!” as my last T schedule line! If you are giving leftovers away either to charity or event goers, be sure to have some zip bags available to take things away. It is handy to have a garbage pail and a few totes of hot water in the hall for people to rinse their dishes at the end of a meal- and it keeps them out of the kitchen where the clean-up crew needs to work!

Be sure the clean-up crew knows what is going on with dishes and where you will be. Then let them go at it for 15-30 minutes and put your feet up and chat to your friends. Getting out of the kitchen for a short while is key! After your break you will likely need to re-enter the kitchen and help the dish-doers put things away in the right places. Check serving ware to see if belongs to the site or to the canton and pack it appropriately. As boxes are filled put them to one side, or load them into waiting cars if possible.

Above all else: say Thank You throughout the day. Say it to everyone that comes into the kitchen. Say it to your partner. Say it to the kitchen staff. Say it to the event staff. It is far better to say it more often than necessary than to forget the time you really should have said it.

The day after the feast, you sleep the sleep of the just and worthy. Rejoice! You are almost done!

Yes, I know the feast is cooked, served, eaten and gone, but you still have one or two details to take care of in **the week after** the feast:

I know I just mentioned it, but Say Thank You! Be sure to send a note to your canton e-list (and any other places that you might have been talking about the feast) thanking everyone on your team for all their hard work. Just like at the precooks, try to think of a particular thing (or things) that each person did during the feast day that made things go a bit smoother, made you laugh, or fixed a problem. You did not do this feast alone, it is important that people's contributions are appreciated.

Prepare a short report on the day for the canton meeting, and get your final receipts in order and make a financial report as well. Unless something completely unforeseeable happened, if you followed my method you will surely be in the black, and contributing to the canton coffer, and that is a great feeling.

Go over the serving inventory with a canton representative to ensure it is complete, and when it is not (there is always something!) trade lost and found with the site. If there are things that belong to neither you nor the site, report them to the steward who likely has a lost and found list going.

Bask in the glow of a job well done!

Cooking tips and tricks

Bring oven thermometers to the site and use them!

Coffee grinders make great spice grinders- but be sure you clean them in between uses!
Or get a separate one just for spices

Store pies in pizza boxes (you can usually fit two on a diagonal) to keep them from getting crushed- but measure your freezers first to be sure the boxes will fit!

To Keep Meat warm for up to 3 hours:

- Fully cook your meat
- Then put it into a cooler that is prepared by
 - Lining with a good thickness of newspaper
 - Lining that with foil
 - Put meat in
 - Top with foil, and put the lid on

Radish flowers: Cut Radish ends off and wash them

- Make about 8 cuts from the top end along side Radish skin
- Soak in cold water and they will 'bloom'

Icing and Marzipan dye well with Gel food colour from cake decoration shops. The watery stuff is well, watery!

Marzipan can be painted with the above too

Marzipan will harden if it is left to dry for a few days- temperature is immaterial

Marzipan, once modeled and painted, will keep almost indefinitely as a statue if kept away from things that will eat it (critters etc). But you don't want to eat it yourself after a few months!

Dying with Grape Juice or pulp:

- Green grapes get little colour, or pale green
- Red grapes give you pink
- Black grapes give you purple

Allow lots of time for things to roast/ boil, it takes longer than just cooking one!

Roast vegetables with a LID! Or they dry out!

Things in pots will retain heat for a long time (Barley, thick soup)

Liquid or Volume Measures (approximate)

1 teaspoon		1/3 tablespoon	5 ml
1 tablespoon	1/2 fluid ounce	3 teaspoons	15 ml 15 cc
2 tablespoons	1 fluid ounce	1/8 cup, 6 teaspoons	30 ml, 30 cc
1/4 cup	2 fluid ounces	4 tablespoons	59 ml
1/3 cup	2 2/3 fluid ounces	5 tablespoons & 1 teaspoon	79 ml
1/2 cup	4 fluid ounces	8 tablespoons	118 ml
2/3 cup	5 1/3 fluid ounces	10 tablespoons & 2 teaspoons	158 ml
3/4 cup	6 fluid ounces	12 tablespoons	177 ml
7/8 cup	7 fluid ounces	14 tablespoons	207 ml
1 cup	8 fluid ounces/1/2 pint	16 tablespoons	237 ml
2 cups	16 fluid ounces/ 1 pint	32 tablespoons	473 ml
4 cups	32 fluid ounces	1 quart	946 ml
1 pint	16 fluid ounces/ 1 pint	32 tablespoons	473 ml
2 pints	32 fluid ounces	1 quart	946 ml 0.946 liters
8 pints	1 gallon/ 128 fluid ounces	4 quarts	3785 ml 3.78 liters
1 liter	1.057 quarts		1000 ml
128 fluid ounces	1 gallon	4 quarts	3785 ml 3.78 liters

DRY or WEIGHT Measurements (approximate)

1 ounce		30 grams (28.35 g)	
2 ounces		55 grams	
3 ounces		85 grams	
4 ounces	1/4 pound	125 grams	
8 ounces	1/2 pound	240 grams	
12 ounces	3/4 pound	375 grams	
16 ounces	1 pound	454 grams	
32 ounces	2 pounds	907 grams	
1 kilogram	2.2 pounds/ 35.2 ounces	1000 gram	

Sample packing list

- Tunics/costume (at least two, one should be comfortable and washable for cooking, the other for after you are done)
- Apron
- Comfortable shoes- two pairs, just in case
- Head cover appropriate to costume to keep hair out of soup!

- First aid kit (yours or the cantons, but it should be in the kitchen)
- Medications for you (headache or tummy remedies etc)

- Snacks for you and the kitchen staff (preferably nothing like the food you are cooking)
- A Large drinking vessel for water, and water, juice or pop to go in it.

- Your Knives (often canton ones are not sharp)
- Any special equipment your need (coffee maker for staff, food processor for feast)

- Extra spices, oil, salt, sugar, stock in case you need it

- Any ingredients for things cooked on the day

- Wallet with Cash to buy lunch or any emergency supplies required.

Feast Preparation Checklist

4-6 months ahead

- Research menu ideas and concepts (Chapter 1)
- Consider if this is a good time for you to be a feast cook (Chapter 6 #1)
- Collect information about this feast (Chapter 2 #1)
- Meet with the Event steward and any staff (Chapter 2 #1)
- Look over the site, if possible (Chapter 2 #2)
- Find out what your canton has to serve your feast upon. Your exchequer should have a list. (Chapter 2 #3)
- Collect Staff and helpers (Chapter 2 #4 and Chapter 6 #2)
 - Deputy
 - Head server
 - Clean up Coordinator
 - On the day helpers
 - Precook helpers
 - Dishwasher for the day of
 - Plater
 - People with Freezer space
 - Drivers (if required)

- Consider how you would like to arrange your dishes (Chapter 2 #5)
- Consider how you will deal with dietary restrictions (Chapter 2 #6)
- Consider a theme- Time period, place, colour, topic (service, arts,) (Chapter 3 #1)
- Brain storm recipes, look at recipe books, fantasize (Chapter 3 #1)
- Look around at local shops for interesting things (Chapter 3 #3)
- Refine your list of recipes Chapter 3 #4

3-4 months ahead

- Meet with the Event steward and any staff (Chapter 2 #1)
- See the site if you have not been able to yet (Chapter 2 #2)
- Trial cook any recipes you have questions about (Chapter 3 #5)
- Cost out your trimmed list of recipes (Chapter 4)
- Make your final menu choices (Chapter 5 #1) keeping in mind
 - Theme
 - Cooking time and method
 - Service method
 - Dishes for Dietary restrictions
 - Budget
- Consider the presentation of your meal
 - Garnishes/ decorations Chapter 5 #2)
 - Sotelties (Chapter 5# 3)
- Give your Menu to the Steward and the Lunch cook
- Type up your ingredient list

- Continue to collect helpers in all capacities (Chapter 2 #4 and Chapter 6 #2)

Three months to two weeks ahead

- Consult with the lunch cook about how you will share the kitchen
- Collect information about preferences from the Royalty (Chapter 2 #6)
- Plan and hold Precooks! (Chapter 6 #2, #3)
 - Select your dates Chapter 6 #3)
 - Select the dishes you will make and when (Chapter 7 #1)
 - Encourage attendance (Chapter 6 #2 and 3)
 - Make appropriate grocery lists, and go shopping. (Chapter 7 #2)
 - Be sure you have appropriate storage containers and facilities. (Chapter 6 #2, #3)
 - Reward attendance (Chapter 6 #3)
 - Say Thank You (Chapter 6 #3)
- Keep your receipts orderly! (Chapter 7 #2)
 - Keep a running tally
 - Take photocopies for your records.
- Keep tabs on Freezer space, and containers and get more if needed.
- Keep in mind the desires of the freezer owners- vegetarians may not want meat stew in their freezer!
- Make up pre-orders for pre cooks (if needed) and before the feast day (Chapter 7 #3)
- Keep in touch with the event staff to share information Chapter 7 #4
 - Registrar
 - Steward
 - Lunch cook
 - Entertainment coordinator
 - Head server
 - Clean up Coordinator
 - Plater
 - Any special staff- Carvers, Soteltie and decoration makers etc

One month ahead

- Make your T-Schedules (Chapter 8 #2)
- Make your Order of Service (Chapter 8 #3)
- Type up or modify your ingredient list (Chapter 8 #4)
- Type up your menu and any other information for the tables
- Collect information about preferences from the Royalty if not already done
- Continue to keep in touch with staff

One week ahead

- Confirm Staff for the night before and during the day at the event, particularly drivers (chapter 9 #1)
- Confirm pre-orders with Vendors (Chapter 7 #3 and Chapter 9 #2)
- Collect Serving equipment from Canton (Chapter 9 #3)
- Be sure the lunch cook has the equipment they need
- Be sure there are sufficient
 - Cleaning supplies (soap, scrubbers, towels garbage bags etc)

- Food service supplies (Foil, plastic wrap, Zip bags, etc)
- Cook dishes that need to be fresh
- Take care of yourself
- Make any necessary changes to ingredient lists or T-schedules
- Assess the weather and plan a strategy for thawing foods (Chapter 9 #9)

Day before the Feast

- Very last minute cooking and chopping
- Pack your kit (see list in the appendix)
- Remove foods from freezers (Chapter 9 #9)
- Print out multiple copies of forms (Chapter 9 #10)
 - Ingredients x 4
 - Menus x number of tables plus extra
 - T schedules x 3
 - Order of service x 3
 - Pre registration for special meals x 2
- Go to bed Early!

Day of the Feast

- Have Breakfast and Coffee (or equivalent)
- Pack your vehicle
 - Food
 - Service dishes
 - Lists
- Collect Pre-orders from the shops

- Be at the site before noon
- Post all signs and lists
- Follow your T schedule
- Keep your mind on the big picture, and watch for problems

- Let people do their jobs in the kitchen- don't micromanage perfectly good people!

- Organize facilities for getting rid of left overs
- Organize facilities for cleaning up the feasters plates
- Get the kitchen clean up crew in
- Sit down for a short while
- Coordinate putting away dishes and cooking equipment
- Say Thank you!

Week after the feast

- Thank you letters to people and/or e-lists
- Prepare day report and financial report
- Check the serving inventory over with a canton rep

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