

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, they just need to be massaged 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 are all comp'ed, and the local baronial couple are 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 1/2 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 1/2 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.

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. 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, in our area, pork is often a very good value in the fall.

Things like onions and eggs I assign 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!

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!

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

Cheese and Mushroom tarts (basic redaction from Pleyn Delit, Vol 2, #2 with some modifications)

Pastry dough- to fit one 8"-9" pan <i>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</i>	\$1.00
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 = \$13/kg Parmesan = \$21/kg 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 a lot 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 6 * .25	\$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 which 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 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup/eighth of a pound.

If butter is usually around \$4/lb, each table needs \$.50 of butter

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

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. Let's estimate about \$.50 for either one

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	\$2.00

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!

Sample grocery list for this feast

Remember how many people we are cooking this feast for: 116 people will be eating feast. If we divide 116 by 8 (the number of people at a table) we get: 14.5 tables. That half table is due to the number of servers (12). I would simply make slightly larger pies and roasts to cover that off.

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 package
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

Cheese and Mushroom pies

Pastry dough- to fit one 8"-9" *pan* *I often use pre-made shells*

1.5 pounds mushrooms

3 ounces EACH of Parmisan and Cheddar (preferably white)

2 tbsp olive oil

.5 tsp salt

.25 tsp ground pepper (white doesn't show as much)

.5-1 tsp ground ginger

I have made this recipe a lot so I know that this recipe makes one well filled pie.

We need 14 pies so we need:

21 pounds of mushrooms- 4 boxes of 5 lb, plus 1-2 lb (for the extra large pie)

42 oz /2 lb 10 oz OR 1.2 Kilograms of Cheddar

42 oz /2 lb 10 oz OR 1.2 Kilograms of Parmesan

28 Tbsp or 420 mL olive oil- will we need more of this?

7 tsp salt

2 tsp pepper

10 tsp ginger

White Torta filling #94 Med Kitchen

Pie shell

generous 10 ounces of cream cheese (300g)

6 egg whites

scant 2/3 cup sugar (125g)

9 tablespoons butter, softened (125g)

3/4 teaspoon ground ginger

1 cup milk (1/4 litre)

salt

This filling recipe fills not one but two commercial pie shells

14 pie shells (7 boxes of 2)

2.1 Kg cream cheese (9 regular bricks- can we get it in bulk?)

42 egg whites (we could look at the boxes of egg whites!)

875 g Sugar- will we need any somewhere else?

875 g of Butter- get 2 bricks- do we need it elsewhere?

10.5 tsp ground ginger

7 cups milk- 2 litres

Butter for each table should probably not exceed ¼ cup/eighth of a pound.
1.75 pounds of butter- do we need it elsewhere?

Sauce for roast pork-Cameline Sauce #48, Pleyn Delit Volume 1

2 Tbsp Breadcrumbs
1/3 cup (85 mL) vinegar or ½ cup red wine
.5 tsp salt
.5 tsp ground ginger
.5-1 tsp ground Cinnamon

One recipe should go over two tables

14 Tbsp bread crumbs
595 mL Vinegar
3.5 tsp salt
3.5 tsp ginger
3.5-7 tsp cinnamon

Flavour for the carrots might be butter and fresh mint if they are boiled or
olive oil and salt, pepper and spices if they are roasted.

1-1.5 lb butter
2 pkg mint
or
300-500 mL olive oil
3 tsp salt
3 tsp pepper
3 tsp ginger

Common ingredients in this feast are:

Onions- we need 7 for the soup, and 14 for the Limonia

Broth-7 cubes in soup, 7 in Limonia, 3-6 in Ravioli

Vinegar some in soup 7Tbsp (100 ml) and sauce 600mL

Egg- in the soup 14 yolks and white torta 42 whites

Spices in most recipes

Butter- in white torta, on the table, in the turnips, and perhaps in the carrots

When we plan the second half of the feast there might be more!

When you are making your grocery lists, think about your precook dates. 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.

Think about freshness too- 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?

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. However- do 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.