



Lord Thomas de Marr'

Beziers Hippocras

“For a quart or a quarter of hippocras by the measure of Beziers, Carcassonne or Montpellier, take five drams of fine cinnamon, selected and peeled; white ginger selected and pared three drams; of cloves, cardamom, mace, galingale, nutmegs, nard, altogether a dram and a quarter, most of the first and less of each of the others in order. Let a

powder be made thereof, and with it put a pound and a half a quarter (by the heavy weight) of lump sugar, brayed and mingled with the aforesaid spices; and let wine and sugar be set and melted on a dish on the fire, and mixed therewith; then put it in the strainer, and strain it until it runs a clear red.

Nota that the sugar and the cinnamon ought to predominate.– “The Goodman of Paris” 1393

Translated by Eileen Powers, Folio Society 1992 Edition, pg 197

- 5 drams cinnamon = 5/16th Ounce / 8.85 grams
- 3 drams white ginger = 3/16th Ounce / 5.31grams
- 1.25 drams of 5 spices = 0.07812521 ounces / 2.2125 grams
 - Cloves .6 grams
 - Cardamom .5 grams
 - Mace .36 grams
 - Galingale .3 grams
 - Nutmeg .25 grams
 - Nard .2 grams
- 1 1/8lb lump sugar by heavy measure
- 1.15 pints of Pinot Noir wine (Appendix C)

Exploration - This recipe is for making the hippocras itself, unlike the recipe directly preceding it in *The Goodman of Paris* and uses a different unit of measure. The use of drams as a unit of measure is something often seen in alchemy or apothecaries and measures mass in very small increments compared to using ounces. Drams measure both liquid volume at 1/8 oz of a fluid ounce or 3.7 ml, or weight at 1/16 of an ounce or 1.77 grams in the Apothecaries system. In the Avoirdupois system it simply measures mass. (Appendix A) Since I do not have a scale with weights the most accurate way to get the correct measurements was to use the gram equivalents on a very sensitive digital scale.

To find a quart by measure of Beziers, Carcassonne or Montpellier I had to look at the region they are in, in southern France, a region collectively known as Languedoc. Before the French revolution and standardization of the metric system this region was known for its reliance on the old Roman tables of measure which makes sense when you look at its location and historical connection to the Roman Empire. The Roman quart known as a *sextarius* equals 18.47 fluid oz or 1.15 pints. (Appendix B)

Looking at these small quantities of wine and spices involved with this recipe, it is clear that this is intended for making one or two glasses of wine for an individual. This does not lend itself to making a batch that would then be served to a table of consumers unless the quantities were upscaled accordingly in the kitchen to suit the number table guests.



Tools - I used period appropriate tools throughout this process as much as possible. The spices were wrapped in a linen cloth and smashed with a hammer, then ground by hand with my quarn (grindstone). Ceramic bowls were used for all my spices with a metal mixing bowl for the braying of the spices. Wooden spoon, clay pot over the fire on a trivet for boiling. The hippocras bag was made of linen, and I wore my 14th century garb while making this brew. I did use a modern food scale and

measuring cup for the wine. The wine was made with a modern fermenter for 2 weeks then racked into an oak barrel for 3 months.

Ingredients –For the wine I chose Pinot Noir. In 1395 the Duke of Burgundy Phillip the Bold put out an [edict](#) that all Gamay vines were to be removed and only Pinot Noir planted in its place. He did this because Pinot Noir was much more popular, and he felt that the Gamay wines were inferior and giving Burgundy a bad wine reputation. This shows that Pinot Noir was a popular choice to make in that time and region. I was unable to locally source Grenache wine which would have been another alternative as it is mentioned several times throughout “*The Goodman of Paris*” as a cooking ingredient. While most of the spices are not new to me the term white ginger sent me on a side quest where I found that there is another ginger that is a red ginger. When you cut the ginger root it will have a deep orange color to it and a peppery spicy flavor unlike the white ginger which shows pale yellow or white when cut and is milder in flavor that comes off as a heat on the tongue. This ginger originated in the Himalayas of India and the Asiatic continent which leads directly into the next spice of note, the nard or spikenard as we know it. I found three basic varieties, the American form which would not be available in the time period, the European variety and the Himalayan *Nardostachys jatamansi*. The European variety was used as an emetic to induce vomiting which rules that variety out. Jatamansi, like the ginger came from the Himalayas and was used in cooking and by apothecaries as a calming sedative ingredient so I chose to use that variety. Medieval lump sugar was sold in cones or sugar loaves which can found still today or substituted with sugar cubes.

Process – I ground the spices from whole by first wrapping them in a linen cloth, smashing them with a hammer and then grinding them with a quarn. Lacking a period dish or pan I used a clay pot over the fire to combine the spices and wine. Since the recipe does not say to bring it to a boil but rather melting the mixture, I only heated it until the mixture was dissolved and the wine was beginning to steam. At that point I removed the pot from the fire and strained the hippocras through a linen cloth into another pottery bowl until the wine was a clear red. By the time the

straining was complete the hippocrass was back to a room temperature which shows it would have been served to the guests not as heated hippocras but a room temperature beverage where the spices do all the warming.



Serving Container - The example illustrated here was found in a midden at Kidwelly Castle (Carmarthenshire) during excavations in the 1930s. It appeared to have been thrown away along with several plainer vessels and is decorated with a vine scroll motif typical of Saintonge (French Potter) jugs. It was probably produced between 1275 and 1320. This elegantly decorated vessel illustrates the great skill of the Saintonge potters. It is 25cm (9.8 inches) tall and in places its walls are only 2.4mm (0.1 inches) thick. – Museum of Wales Collection



This same French pottery is found all over Wales where it was brought in by English traders during the late 13th centuries and early 14th century (Appendix D). Another example is “Castell-y-Bere jug: Castell-y-Bere was only occupied by the English from 1284-1294. Given the frequency with which Saintonge pottery is found at other castles occupied by the English in Wales, it seems likely that the jug dates from this period.” – Museum of Wales Collection

Appendix / Bibliography

A.) Dram measure sizes were found through a combination of a WIKI search and verification of their cited sources.

[*Research Highlights of the National Bureau of Standards*](#). U.S. Department of Commerce, National Bureau of Standards. 1959. p. 13

Skinner, F.G. (1952). "The English Yard and Pound Weight". *Bulletin of the British Society for the History of Science*. **1** (7): 186. [doi:10.1017/S0950563600000646](#).

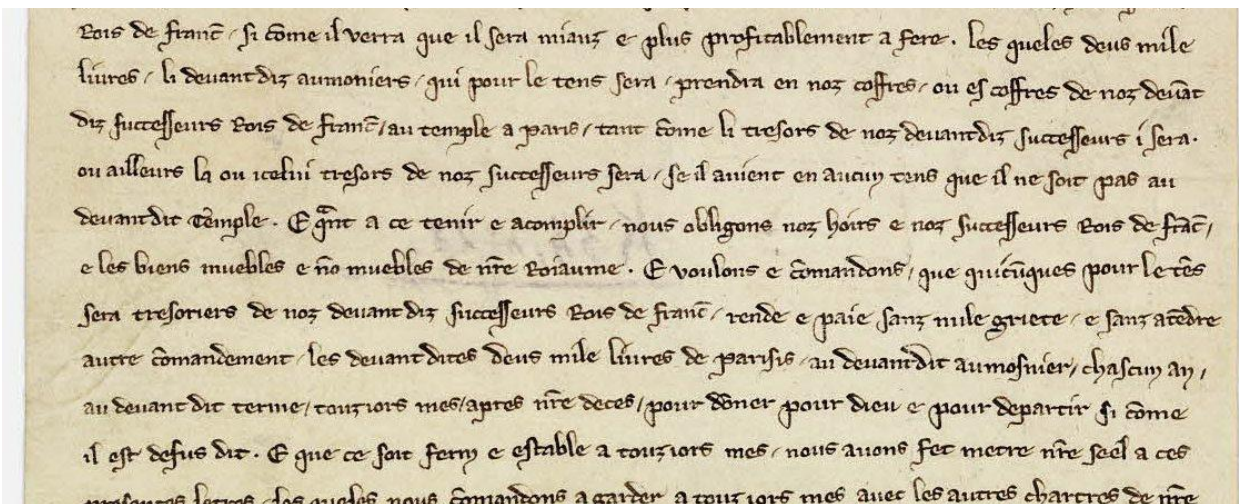
B.) The quart of the Languedoc region is based off the Roman units of measure widely in use at the time of penning *The Goodman of Paris*.

<https://www.britannica.com/science/measurement-system>

<https://www.unrv.com/culture/roman-weights-measures.php>

C.) Pinot Noir – I made my own wine from a wine kit as it was past harvest season to get the grapes. However, from the kit I only used the juice concentrate and yeast provided. I opted to forgo the use of clarifiers and other modern ingredients that came with the kit to keep it closer to a historical process. I put the concentrate into the fermenter and added water until it reached 6 gallons with a SG of 1.055, then pitched the yeast. After 2 weeks fermentation slowed down, and I racked it over into an oak barrel for the finish and aging. The wine sat in the barrel for 3 months before being used.

The Ducal ordinance that changed the grapes of Burgundy. This photo is of a section of the decree listed virtually by the Ducal Estate in Burgundy.



<https://philippelehardi.fr/en/ducal->

[ordinance/#:~:text=Retour%20aux%20articles,T%C3%A9m%C3%A9raire%20\(Charles%20the%20Bold\).">ordinance/#:~:text=Retour%20aux%20articles,T%C3%A9m%C3%A9raire%20\(Charles%20the%20Bold\).](#)

<https://worldoffinewine.com/news-features/by-decree-duke-burgundy-14th-century-aoc>

D.) 14th century French pottery serving vessels are preserved as a trade good in Welsh and English trading towns and castles. The museum of Wales has several good examples of these on display and can be found at:

<https://museum.wales/blog/1336/French-pottery-in-medieval-Wales/>



Scan for the video of this project.