

Chicken, Lettuce, and Sleepy Spice Stew



This recipe is adapted from Hannah Woolley's *The Queen-Like Closet* (1672). It includes several ingredients the Tudors and Stuarts knew to be sleepy: lettuce, spices, and bread. To this list today we can also add chicken. All of these sleepy foods are known to encourage the production of the sleep hormone melatonin in our brains. They can also work to relieve stress and anxiety.

Ingredients:

Olive oil

8 chicken thighs

2 little gem, cos, or romaine lettuces, halved

800ml chicken stock

Marrowbone (optional) to thicken sauce.

(An alternative is oxtail or simply cornflour)

½ tsp of ground mace

½ tsp of ground nutmeg

½ tsp of ground cloves

1 preserved lemon rind or the zest of 1 lemon

250ml white wine or 125ml white wine and 125ml sherry

8 dates, sliced

25g butter

Salt and pepper

Dried barberries (or alternatively, dried cranberries or goji berries, or pomegranate molasses)

Toast cut into squares or croutons

Brown the chicken thighs in olive oil and then add the hot chicken stock plus the mace, nutmeg, cloves, lemon, wine/sherry, and, if using, the marrowbone. Reduce the sauce down by simmering for 10-15 minutes. If using oxtail, this needs to be slow cooked instead for 3 hours.

Next add the halved lettuces, butter, and sliced dates. If using cornflour instead of marrowbone/oxtail, create a paste with a little of the cornflour and cold water and stir into the sauce to thicken. Simmer for another 15 minutes.

Serve with the toasted bread squares or croutons on top plus the dried barberries. If you can't get dried barberries, use dried cranberries or goji berries, or pomegranate molasses for that tart, sour contrast. For an extra sleepy addition, serve with rice, pearl barley, or bulgur wheat.

