



## A Wing and a Pear

One set of imagery stands out in *Cymbeline* over all others: birds. The play has at least 32 references to birds, including the generic bird (three), one of them royal; nest (two); crow and lark (two each); wing'd and wings (four); one each of cock, puttock, fowl, raven, jay, owl, rudduck, chicken, capon, and Arabian bird; and 10 eagles, including the one Jupiter rides in Posthumus's dream. Another prevalent theme in *Cymbeline* is the concept of man's outward appearance and how it compares with what's inside. Cloten believes that his outward appearance makes the man (literally, as he dresses in Posthumus's clothes), while Posthumus and the princes dressed as mountaineers prove that the ingredients inside oftentimes count more than the clothes.

This clearly suggests a stuffed bird for our main course. Just as important, though, is the juxtaposition of the court in *Cymbeline*'s palace and the wilds of Wales and the main character, Imogen, who passes from one to the other. Belarius and the boys love to eat—they are constantly talking about hunting game, cooking it, and eating it—and Imogen brings her culinary skills to their cave when she, disguised as Fidele, becomes their guest.

In my main course, I wanted to marry the opulence of the court with the wilds of the woods, so the bird I chose was game hen, which is basted in apple cider and stuffed with a raspberry, apple, and walnut dressing. This is accompanied by matchstick carrots steamed in sugar and



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*But his neat cookery! He cut our roots in characters, and sauced our broths, as Juno had been sick and he her dieter.*  
(IV.2.63)

vinegar, a glance at the fact that Imogen carved the roots she served into characters (if you want to carve your carrots into ABCs, you can do that, too).

The raspberries in the stuffing point at another food theme that runs through *Cymbeline*: fruit. Belarius describes his youth as a tree “whose boughs did bend with fruit” (III.3.65), and Posthumus is described by one of his ghostly brothers as a “fruitful object” in the eye of Imogen (V.3.158). The most famous reference

to fruit is the play's most poetic line when Posthumus and Imogen finally reunite at the end: “Hang there like fruit, my soul, 'till the tree die” (V.4.305). This informs our dessert, which I call “A Pear of Lovers” featuring two types of pears and another fruit from the bough, plums, in a cinnamon brandy sauce.

Although *Cymbeline* is set in ancient Britain in the time of the Roman empire, the Rome in the play is that of the Renaissance, and Shakespeare seems intent on establishing a discord between the true, stout Britain and the lascivious, corrupt Italy. Our starter then represents Iachimo as a pasta salad with marinated artichoke hearts, olives, and roasted red peppers.

For our secondary meal, I combine *Cymbeline*'s bird imagery with its Welsh setting and Celtic background in my own “wild” version of a famous Scottish-origin soup: cock-a-leekie, something Imogen might have made; as Guiderius says she “sauce our broths” at IV.2.6.

## PRINCES' GAME HENS

2 Rock Cornish Game Hens  
 1/2 gallon apple cider  
 1 stalk of celery  
 1 small onion  
 6 tablespoons butter  
 1/2 loaf French baguette of bread  
 1 large apple  
 1/4 cup currants  
 1/2 cup chopped walnuts  
 1 teaspoon nutmeg  
 1 cup raspberries

1. Thaw and clean the hens and soak them in apple cider up to 24 hours (reserve a 1/4 cup of cider for the stuffing).
2. Chop the celery and onions. Melt the butter over medium-high heat and sauté the celery and onions until tender. Set aside.
3. Cut the bread into small cubes (slice quarter inch, then three cross-slices in each axis on the slices). Place the bread into a large bowl.
4. Chop the apples and add to the bread. Add in the currants, walnuts, nutmeg, and the onion/celery/butter. Stir thoroughly until all the bread is soaked in the butter.
5. Stir in a 1/4 cup of the cider.
6. Gingerly, stir in the berries.
7. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
8. Stuff the hens. Bake stuffed hens for about two hours (internal temperature of the hens should be 165 degrees Fahrenheit), basting every 20 minutes with the apple cider marinade.
9. Place the remainder of the stuffing in a covered casserole dish and bake for the last 40-60 minutes of the hens cooking.

**SERVINGS:** Two hens or four half-hens, with enough stuffing for leftovers (not only for another dinner, but breakfast, too).

## FIGURED ROOTS

5 ounces of matchstick carrots  
 1 tablespoon brown sugar  
 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

1. Place the carrots in a saucepan. Mix the brown sugar and apple cider vinegar and then add to the carrots, stirring to coat them thoroughly.
2. Turn on the heat and bring the liquid to a slight boil to steam the carrots about 15 minutes.

### From One Cook To Another

1. Marinading the hens overnight allows them to soak in the apple cider, making for a more succulent, tender meat.

3. Some people might prefer larger chunks of bread, but we found that the smaller pieces of bread makes for a more consistently uniform stuffing, bonding all the small-piece ingredients—the apples, currants, and walnuts.

### Your Ideas

## IACHIMO'S PASTA SALAD

2 large red peppers  
Olive oil  
1 cup pitted Italian castelvetrano olives  
12 ounces artichoke hearts  
1 pound of pasta twists (Rotini or Fusilli)  
Salt

### For the dressing:

2 sprigs rosemary (about 1 tablespoon chopped)  
10 sprigs thyme (about 1 tablespoon)  
10 leaves basil (about 1 tablespoon chopped)  
15 chive stalks (about 1 tablespoon chopped)  
1 clove garlic  
1/4 cup white wine vinegar  
3 tablespoons water  
1/2 cup olive oil

1. Roast the red peppers. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Cut off the tops of the pepper, clear out the seeds and pulp, cut them into thirds or quarters and place them on aluminum foil on a baking sheet. Remove the stem from the top and place the red flesh on the sheet, too. Lightly brush on some olive oil. Roast for about 45–60 minutes until the skins start turning black. Remove from the oven and close up the foil to create a pouch containing the peppers. Allow them to cool a little, then peel off the skins.
2. Prepare the dressing. Chop the herbs and either chop or press the garlic. Combine the vinegar and water in a jar or cruet, add in the herbs and shake well. Add in the olive oil and shake well. You will only use a 1/2 cup.
3. Chop the roasted red pepper. Chop the olives. Slice the artichoke hearts in half.
4. Fill a kettle with water for the pasta. Sprinkle in salt and bring the water to a boil. Add in the pasta and cook to al dente. Drain. Return the pasta to the kettle or place it in a bowl.
5. Stir in the red peppers and the chopped olives. Stir in a 1/2 cup of the dressing and coat the pasta thoroughly. Stir in the artichokes.
6. This can be served hot, cold or, best of all, at room temperature.

**SERVINGS:** Six; the leftovers improve with time, good for lunches or as a salad for subsequent meals.

### From One Cook To Another

The best option for the artichokes, we have found, is the unseasoned marinated version in the supermarket olive bar. Failing to find that, you can use canned or jarred artichokes.

The dressing seems like a lot of work when you end up using only a half cup, but the proportions don't work if you try to reduce the amounts. Rather, make the dressing for this dish but keep the rest of it as a salad dressing or meat and vegetable marinade.

If the artichokes came in a marinade, you can stir a little of that into the rotini to keep the pasta from sticking if you aren't quite ready with your other ingredients.

### Your Ideas

## PEAR OF LOVERS

2 pears, two different types  
 2 plums  
 1/2 cup brandy  
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
 1/2 cup oats  
 Stick of cinnamon  
 Heavy cream

1. Peel the pears and chop. Place in a saucepan.
2. Peel the plums and chop. Stir in with the pears.
3. Stir in the brandy and cinnamon.
4. Place over medium-high heat and cook about 20 to 30 minutes.
5. Stir in the oats.
6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
7. Transfer the pears into individual-sized casserole dishes or tart pans. Break the cinnamon stick and place a portion into each dish, like a branch sticking out of the pears and plums.
8. Bake for about 15 minutes.
9. Remove, drizzle a little cream over the top, and serve.

**SERVINGS:** Two tart dishes.

### Your Ideas

## WINE PAIRING

The dinner moves through so many different flavors that you either need a wine for each course or one wine that pairs well with one course and stands up to the rest. A suitable thematic pairing is a French pinot noir, especially a Louis Latour Nuits St. Georges. Though the play is set in Britain and Rome, the Roman legion that attacks England is garrisoned in Gaul, both Posthumous and Iachimo sojourn in France, and the reports of Posthumous's near duel in France kicks off the Iachimo plot. The pinot noir stands up to all the flavors and pairs beautifully with the hen itself. A cheaper and still thematic alternative would be an Italian pinot noir, such as a St. Paul's Luzia that, in the vineyard's name, at least, combines the play's English and Italian settings. A white alternative is an Italian Gewürztraminer. We recommend the St. Paul's Justina Gewürztraminer, a drier version of the grape and not overly sweet as German Gewürtzes tend to be. Aside from its appropriate name, the Italian Gewürztraminer pairs especially well with the Iachimo Pasta Salad and the Figured Roots and suitably accompanies the hen and stuffing.

**Your Notes:**

## WILD COCK-A-LEEKIE SOUP

4 leeks  
8 tablespoons butter  
1/4 cup olive oil  
6 thigh chicken cutlets  
1/2 cup flour  
96 ounces chicken broth  
1 cup white wine  
1 cup pitted prunes  
1 cup uncooked wild rice  
1 pint heavy cream

1. Chop the leeks, discarding the tough green tops, and thoroughly rinse under running water.
2. In a stockpot, place the olive oil and the stick of butter, melting over medium-high heat.
3. Meantime, start trimming the excess skin and fat from the chicken thighs and dice the meat into small pieces.
4. Sauté the leeks in the pot until tender.
5. When you finish chopping the chicken, add it to the pot.
6. Stir in the flour. Stir to coat the chicken and continue cooking until the chicken is no longer pink and starting to brown.
7. Pour in the broth and wine. Bring to a boil.
8. Meantime, dice the prunes and add to the soup.
9. Add in the rice, return to a boil, then lower the heat to simmer and cook for an hour or two.
10. Before serving, stir in the cream.

**SERVINGS:** About ten 2-cup servings. This is a big pot of soup that not only is great for days to come but, frozen in single-serving containers, becomes an easy-to-pack lunch or pop-in-the-microwave meal.

### Your Ideas

### From One Cook To Another

1. Put the chopped leeks into a large colander and place in a deep bowl or pot. Fill with water until it rises into the colander and the leeks are able to move freely when you swirl your hand through the water. Drain by lifting the colander out of the pot, pour the water out of the pot, and repeat as necessary to clean the leeks.

6. This step is about thickening the soup, not merely coating the chicken; in other words, don't think you can save some trouble by shake-and-baking the chicken with the flour.

6. If your pot is not non-stick, you will have to diligently stir the chicken/leeks/flour as it browns to keep the ingredients from sticking to the bottom of the pot.

10. Soup is best when it ages a day. After the two-hour simmer, I turn the heat off without adding the cream, let the pot cool, and then place it in the refrigerator overnight. The next day, I place it on medium-low heat, stir it all up and then stir in the cream. Let the soup come to a bubbling simmer, stirring occasionally, and then serve.