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“... Shape them like a Ciambelle”
THL Alslinge MacCuithein

Introduction

I became interested in *ciambelle* while paging through *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi (1570)*. Modern *ciambelle* are Italian doughnuts and I was curious if Scappi's recipes resembled the Italian treat. Scappi contains several recipes for *ciambelle* or *ciambelle* shaped pastry. I wanted to explore the variations within the recipes' ingredients, techniques, and most importantly, taste.

I focused on six recipes from *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi* using the translation by Terence Scully from the first printing (1570) of the Opera De Bartolomeo Scappi (compiled in the 1560s), and the second printing (1581), by the Tramezzino family of printers. I also included one ring shaped pastry recipe from Cristoforo di Messibugo *Libro Nuovo Opera Assai Bella e Molto (1556)* published by Giovanni Dalla Chlesa in Venice for a comparison.

In the course of my research, I found different names for these ring shaped confections. Scappi uses the terms *ciambelle* and *berlingozzi*. Diego Granada in his 1599 cooking treatise, *Libro del Arte de Cocina*, uses the term *rosquillas*. While Cristoforo di Messibugo uses *brazzattelle* in his *Libro Nuovo*, which means “bracelet” in Italian (Balinska p. 10).

With the exception of the *berlingozzi*, these recipes are boiled and then baked. In all of Scappi's recipes he instructs us to “make little round *ciambelle*.” Messibugo uses the term *brazzattelle* or “bracelet” to describe the finished shape. Granada only instructs us to “make the *rosquillas* the size that you wish.” According to Robin Carroll-Mann, *Rosquillas* are little rings so the connection to *ciambelle* is easily seen. They both are flavored with anise and they are both boiled and baked.

Ciambelle

Ciambelle are a ring shaped bread similar to a bagel or a pretzel which are both boiled and baked. Gillian Riley asserts in *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food* that there are two different categories of ring shaped breads,

“those meant to keep, long lasting, hard as rocks, used by soldiers and mariners as subsistence food on long journeys, needing to be softened in water, wine, or oil.....Then there are the short lived, sometimes luxury products, often made with eggs, some kind of shortening and sugar” (p. 70)

In my search to find Scappi's *ciambelle* I consulted *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionarie of the Italian and English Tongues* by John Florio (1611). It states

that *ciambelle* were “simnels, buns or cake” (p. 100). The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists *simnel* as “A kind of bread or bun made of fine flour and prepared by boiling, sometimes with subsequent baking” (p. 492). Gillian Riley states in *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food* that *ciambelle* was not the only name for these ring shaped breads and biscuits and not all of them were dunked in boiling water. She goes on to quote Costanzo Felici, who wrote in 1560’s Italy, saying

“ *There is also a twice-cooked bread, circular or ring or other shaped, made with a fairly hard dough, with salt, anise or fennel seeds, first cooked in boiling water and then in the oven*”

He goes on to say

“...with many varieties that we might call “reinforced” breads, with a wide range of additions to the flour or dough according to the changing tastes of mankind, among these breads made in various shapes commonly known as *bricuocoli*, *ciaramilie* or *bracciatelli* or *braciatelletti*, made with flour mixed with eggs....and sometimes twice cooked, or in copper pans; some of these are light and very spongy, some covered in powdered sugar, called *berlingozzi* in Rome, others without sugar, some smoother, some harder, some low and flattened, large or small in shape, and among these last one often sees little *biscotelli* mixed with milk and sugar, or just sugar, or without. Of the same form, but made with much thinner strips of dough, are other ones---*bacciatellini* or *zuccarini*, as they call them, made with eggs and sugar” (p. 71-72).

For Scappi *ciambelle* seems to describe the shape of the finished product and is less about the ingredients or method of cooking. Scappi finds inspiration with the ring shape and shows his creativity by making *ciambelle* of differing tastes such as sweet or savory and includes differing textures such as bread-like, biscuit-like and filled.



Possible Origins

At the height of the Roman Empire, Roman soldiers were known to carry these ring shaped breads with them. There is visual evidence that these breads existed in Roman times from a mural of a baker’s shop in Pompeii to a mosaic pavement in Algeria to a relief in Ostia. Ring shaped twice cooked wheat breads and biscuits were known to Romans as *buccellatum* from the Greek *boukellaton* and were familiar to Roman soldiers. By the fourth century, soldiers in private armies were known as *buccellarii* (Riley p. 70).

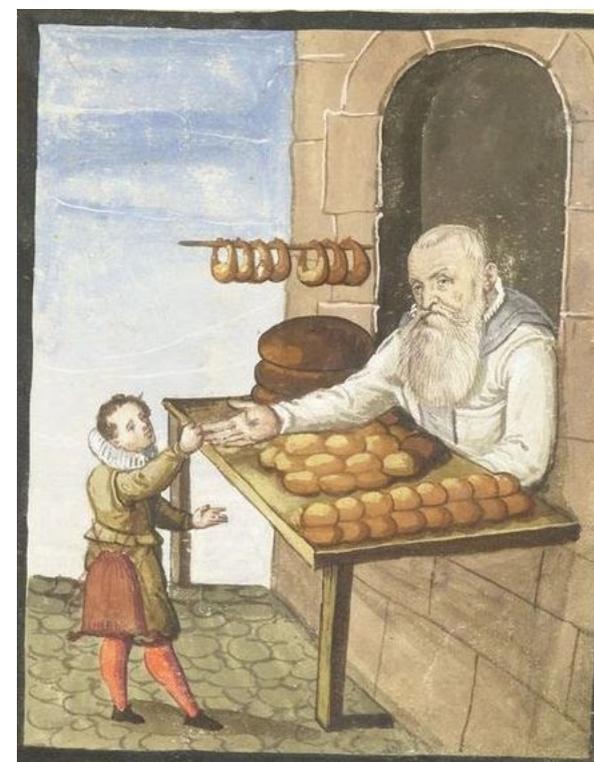
According to *The Bagel: The Surprising History of a Modest Bread* by Maria Balinska, by the 16th century ring shaped wheat bread was eaten all over Italy (p. 10)



but it is important to understand that ring shaped breads were not exclusive to Italy. It seems to be a phenomenon that several different countries also had ring shaped breads at essentially the same time. It could be that this idea was carried from one region to another by travelers, merchants and sailors. Alternatively, circular breads with a hole in the center could have been developed independently in various regions.

By the 16th century, one could find *obwarzanek* in Poland, *girde* in China, *ciambelle* in Southern Italy and the pretzel in Germany. The first mention of *obwarzanek* is 1394 and is found in the household accounts of the Polish royal family. This bread was made for Poland's most beloved queen, Jadwiga. The *girde* made in China is a golden circular bread that is steamed and then baked. Puglia, in southern Italy, during the ninth century had a large Jewish population. With the conquest of that region in the 16th century by Spain and the Spanish Inquisition, the population was all but eradicated but some traditions remained, namely the *ciambelle*. In Germany, the pretzel was originally a ring shaped bread made in monasteries for feast days. According to pretzel historian, Irene Krauss, the shape of a pretzel changed from a ring to a three holed oblong which was modeled after the outline of the monk's arms in prayer (Balinska p. 15).

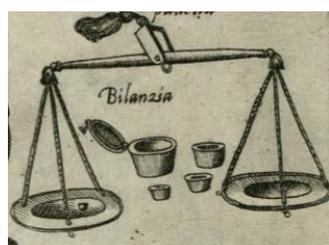
I have chosen to recreate seven kinds of *ciambelle*: six recipes from Scappi, Book V, 148 *ciambelle* with eggs and milk, 150 cheese filled *ciambelle*, 151 *ciambelle* stuffed with chicken, 152 apple stuffed *ciambelle*; Book VI recipe 140 *ciambellette* with eggs; and one from Cristoforo di Messisbugo *brazzatelle* with milk and sugar.



While translating Scappi's *ciambelle* filled with cheese, I discovered that Terrance Scully omitted three ingredients: sugar, cinnamon and raisins from his translation of recipe 150. I have redacted both translations, Scully's and my own, so that we can see how Scappi had originally meant the recipe.

Period Tools, Methods and techniques

Balance or Scales

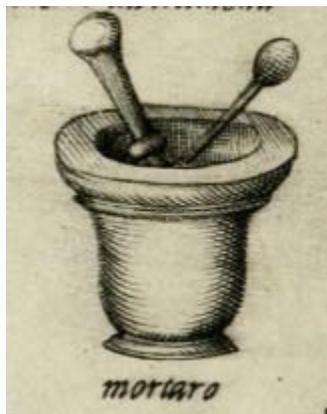


According to Terence Scully, scales were essential daily equipment for cooks of the 16th century. Scappi had two, one with boards and hooks for weighing heavier items and the scale shown

(pg. 647) for weighing small amounts like spices. For his *ciambelle* recipes Scappi calls for two ounces of *mosticcioli* or four ounces of almonds etc. He would have weighed them on a scale

like this one.

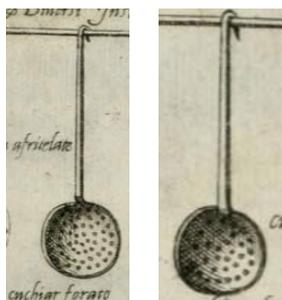
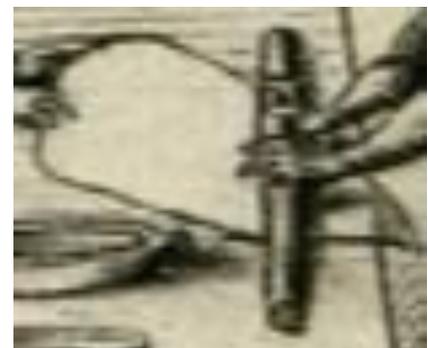
Mortar and Pestle



Scappi gives us these drawings of mortars & pestles in Plates 1 (on the right) and Plate 10 (on the left). He also gives us a description saying “Mortars of marble and other stone, with their pestle of hardwood” (Scappi pg. 128).

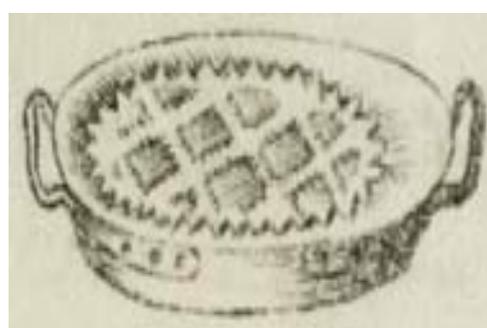
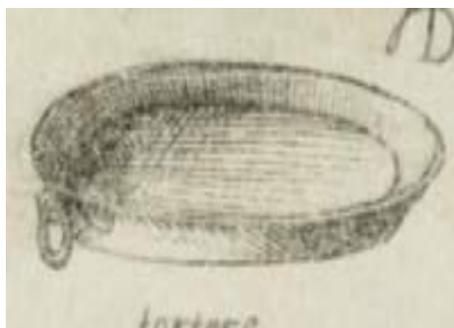
Rolling Pin

In Plates 2 and 1, respectively, Scappi shows us what a “pin” or “stick” should look like. Unfortunately for us, Scappi gives no further description except “rolling pins for spreading dough” (Scappi pg. 129). It is worth noting that the pin on the right looks to be an even width all along the length but the pin on the left appears tapered towards the ends, more suitable for pastry.



Pierced Spoon

This tool, which is illustrated in Plate 16 (Scappi p. 651), does not seem to have changed very much in the last 400 years. Scappi does say in his discourse “spoons, round, perforated, medium sized, a hand or more in width, with a long handle” (Scappi p. 126).



Tourte Pan

Plate 9 (Scappi p. 644) shows various kinds and sizes of tourte pans. In the recipes I am recreating Scappi specifies a tourte pan with shallow sides like the one shown to the left.

Frying Pan



This pan from Plate 15 (Scappi p. 650), is for frying crispelle or any other dough. He instructs Giovanni to have “large skillet for frying, with a handle”(p. 125) and

“frying pans for making fritters” (Scappi p. 126). The differentiation is important because a skillet has low sides and for frying fritters he was specifying a pan with deeper sides that was more suitable for deep frying.

Period Ingredients

Flour

Any discussion of bread or dough must always start with discourse on flour. In his *ciambelle* recipes, Scappi specifies “Fine Flour.” When deciphering recipes from Italy, particularly the southern half of Italy which is called *Magna Gaecia* (see Appendix C for a map of this area) the question always centers on what wheat was used to make flour. Wheat flour can be hard or soft wheat or a combination of both creating a flour that works well for all purposes. Semolina is a flour that is high in protein, higher than most bread flour, but at the same time very low in moisture and gluten so it is not preferred for bread (Storck p. 34).

In Appendix D, you will find the original Italian text of Scappi and literal translations using John Florio’s 1611 Italian-English Dictionary. In doing this it gives insight into Scappi’s process and his meaning. In his *ciambelle* recipes, he specifically says “*fior di farina*” which translates as “the meale of flour” (Florio, p. 189). This is an interesting phrase and Terrence Scully translates this as “fine flour.” The question becomes, is the meaning of “fine” a designation of quality or is it simply a description of a physical attribute? I looked to see if Scappi used any other terms to describe the flour he used and found: *farina di grano* meaning “Flour of grain” (p. 433); *sfoglio di pasta di fior di farina* meaning puff paste made of “flower of meale” (p. 467); *di farina* for “flour” (p. 497); *farro* for “spelt flour” (p. 477); *miglia* for “millet” (p. 233); *semolessa del regno bianco* to specify a hard white wheat from the “Kingdom” (p. 217); and *formentone* for “einkorn wheat”. The implication is that by using the term “*fior de farina*” Scappi is specifying a particular wheat and not just a generic “*farina*.”

Scappi tells us in Book II Recipe 153 “*Get white Regno hard wheat that does not smell badly and is clean of dust* (Scappi p. 217). Scully says in the footnotes that Scappi is most likely referring to Naples and Sicily and referencing their historical importance in making and shipping pasta and hard wheat (Scappi p. 217).

According to Bianchi A. *Durum wheat crop in Italy*. In : Di Fonzo N. (ed.), Kaan F. (ed.), Nachit M. (ed.). *Durum wheat quality in the Mediterranean region* . Zaragoza : CIHEAM, 1995. p. 103-108

*“It's generally recognized that wheat became a cultivated plant in the Middle East about a thousand years ago as a diploid crop: a fortunate hybridization with a practically unknown species, followed by chromosome doubling, gave rise to a series of tetraploid wheats, among which *Triticum turgidurn* L. var *durum* was the most successful in expanding largely around the Mediterranean Sea.... In Italy the result was that during the Middle Ages the area cultivated with durum wheat*

was mainly that known as *Magna Grecia*, whereas bread wheat was prevalent in Central and Northern regions.”

In *Cooking and Dining in Medieval England*, Peter Brears writes,

“The sieved, searced or ranged flour also formed the basis of the finer breads.Depending on the closeness of the weave, this produced either **fine flour for making manchets, cockets, cracknels, simnels and similar good-quality breads**, or the finest white flour for the superior wastel and paidemaine loaves served only at the most important of tables” (Brears p. 115).

The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes: Gathered by John Gerarde of London, Master in Chiurgerie, Printed in London by John Norton 1597 tells us that white wheat without the beard is the most highly esteemed wheat. Gerarde goes on to tell us that

“wheate groweth almost in all countries of the world that are inhabited and manured, and requireth a fruitfull and fat soile, and rather sunnie and dry, and better compact....most commonly sowed in the fall of the leafe or Autumne: sometime in the Spring.....Wheate is called of the Latines *Triticum*. *Triticum* doth generally signifie any kind of corne...in Italian *Grano*...” (p 60).

He continues by telling us

“Wheate saith Galen is very much used of men and with greatest profit. Those wheates do nourish most which be hard, and have their whole substance so closely compact, as they can scarcely be bit a sunder, for such do nourish very much and the contrarie but little” (p 60).

Per Flour for Man's Bread in describing wheat in Rome,

“As time passed, emmer was displaced by durum and to a slight extent by turgidum, naked members of the same group, which the Romans collectively called *triticum* (wheat). For their better flour Romans used three genome wheats...collectively called *siligo*, which cost more than other wheats and which produced *similago*, fine flour, which Pliny described as coming from “the very choicest of all the varieties of wheat” (Storck p.87).

It is easy to see the similarity between *similago* and the modern word *semolina*. The root word of these two words is the Latin *simila* and according to

the *Oxford English Dictionary* means fine wheat flour. Seemingly, for Scappi, “fine” flour is a description of quality rather than a designation of particle size.

Apples

According to John Gerarde: “*Apples do differ in greatness, forme, colour and taste; some covered with a red skin, others yellowe or greene, varying infinately according to soyle and climate; some very great, some little and many of a middle sort; some are sweete of taste, or something sower; most be of a middle taste betweene sweete and sower*” (p 1273).

Gerarde only mentions six varieties of apple; The Pome Water, the Baker’s Ditch, King of Apples, Quinning or the Queen of Apples, the Sommer Pearemaine and the Winter Pearemaine. There is very little information about the taste and texture of the flesh of these apples but the pearemaine trees are available from England. I chose to use MacIntosh apples as I consider their flesh to be of a “middle taste between sweet and sour.”

Cheese, Butter, Eggs & Milk

Scappi uses cheese, butter, eggs and milk in all of his filled *ciambelle*. For Scappi, cow’s milk was a staple of the kitchen as were the cheeses and butter made from it. Butter was made at home and was rarely used in medieval kitchens but by Scappi’s time it was common on the tables of the wealthy and is his preferred cooking method (Scappi p. 59).

Scappi specifies to use a “creamy plump moderately soft cheese” and parmesan cheese for the fillings in his *ciambelle*. Cheese for Scappi is in a large number of dishes either as an integral part or as a garnish. Scappi qualifies what cheese to use, i.e., new, old, moist, dry, fat, firm hard, etc. In most recipes he will name a specific cheese such as mozzarella or pecorino. In his introduction, Scully says of Scappi...“Among fresh cheeses he shows a predilection for proventura: among salted, parmesan” (Scappi p. 59).

Spices

Scappi uses only a few spices in his *ciambelle*. He uses cinnamon in all three of his stuffed *ciambelle* and saffron just one. Scappi directs us that anise or fennel can be used to flavor the *ciambelloni*. “Anise is one of the spices used in comfits eaten at the end of a meal to sweeten the breath and help digestion...anise acts as a preservative” (Riley p. 16). Anise is used to perfume breads and confections like the festive buns, *mescuotte* which are made from *farina di grano duro*, durum hard grain flour.

Scappi uses saffron sparingly in his *Opera*, to color food that would otherwise be white or sludge-colored, or where cinnamon and ginger would have made a sauce look muddy. Scappi also uses saffron to brighten dull dishes such as custard (Riley p. 465).

Measurements

Libra or Pound

The *libra* was the Roman unit from which the English pound is descended; the symbol "lb" for the pound comes from this unit. The Roman *libra* contained only 12 *unciae* (ounces) and was about 0.722 English pound. The traditional Italian *libra* was often of similar size, but a wide variety of *libras* were used in Italian markets over the centuries. The Spanish and Portuguese units are larger, generally in the range from 1.011 to 1.016 English pounds (very close to 460 grams). The Spanish *libra* equals 16 *onzas*, and the Portuguese *libra* equals 16 *onças*. The ounce is a standard weight that is the same now as it was in Scappi's day. It is the approximate weight of 20 mustard seeds (Rowlett, Russ. "How Many? A Dictionary of Units of Measurement. www.ibiblio.org.)" I used the 12 ounce Roman *libra* for my project.

Period Method and Techniques

Scappi tells us very little about what or how to form *ciambelle*. He gives us a clue in Book V Recipe 147 when he directs us to "make a little round *ciambelle*" and to "brush both pieces with beaten egg white so they stick together"(Scappi p. 500).

Scappi's directions in Book V Recipe 148 pertain to the size and not the form, "Make the large *ciambelle* four ounces each.." (Scappi p. 500). In Cristoforo Messibugo's *Libro Nuovo* there is essentially the same recipe "Brazzatelle di Latte e Zuccaro" or Bracelets of Milk and Sugar. The first insight is the title, Bracelet; this solidifies the idea that *ciambelle* are indeed a ring shape. Messibugo goes on to say "Poi farai le tue brazzatelle...farai levare con gran diligenza, Et dopoi che faranno levate", meaning then make your bracelets...make it raise with great carefulness and then after that join them again. These two recipes from Scappi and Messibugo are boiled, cooled and dried and then baked.

Recipes 150 and 151 give directions for making filled *ciambelle* specifying two ounces of dough with two ounces of filling. "Split the dough up into 2 ounce lumps and with a pin roll them out making them round and leaving them the thickness of a tourte shell." Scappi goes on to instruct that two ounces of filling go on one side of the round and to roll it up one and a half times, brushing them with melted butter. "Then make them into *ciambelle*, flattening them with the palm of your hand" (Scappi p. 501).

Book V Recipe 152 is done the same way as 150 and 151 but Scappi tells us to make *ciambelletti* or small *ciambelle*. In Book V Recipe 135, Scappi gives us another clue. He writes “...roll it thinly as if you were going to make small *ciambelle*” (Scappi p. 496).

In his sixth book, the book for the sick, Scappi gives us a recipe for small cracker-like *ciambellini*, Recipe 140. His only instructions are not to add any more flour while kneading but to oil your hand with almond oil or Greek wine (Scappi p. 587). These cookies are also boiled, cooled, dried and then baked.

Ciambelle

Please note: Scappi was cooking for many people. In all of my redactions of Scappi's recipes I quartered the amounts he calls for so that I was able to make a reasonable amount.

Period Recipe

From The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi (1570). Trans. Terence Scully. 2008, I found the following:

Book V Recipe 148

To Prepare Large Ciambelle with Eggs and Milk

Make a dough with three pounds of fine flour with eight fresh, beaten eggs, six ounces of sugar, three ounces of rose water and the rest warm goat's milk, with a little salt. Make the dough so that it is not too thick, though it should be well kneaded. Make the large ciambelle four ounces each and put them into a cauldron of boiling water. Leave them there until they float, then take them out and let them cool and dry. Bake them in an oven on paper or on a floor that is very clean. When they are done, serve them hot or cold, whichever you wish. You can put dried fennel or anise with that (p. 500).

My Redaction and Method

My ingredients:

Durum wheat flour (Semolina)
Eggs
Sugar
Rosewater
Goat's Milk
Salt
Anise

My Redaction

9 oz. finely ground durum wheat flour from Italy
2 eggs, beaten
1.5 oz. Sugar
½ c. warm goat's milk
1 Tbsp. Rosewater
1 tsp. salt
1 ½ tsp anise, toasted and then ground

To start, I put the goat's milk in a small pan and warmed the milk to around 100°. You want the liquid warm but not hot. Warming the liquid denatures the proteins in the flour. The resulting dough is very tender. In cold water, the gluten chains are more able to stretch out. Hot water makes the gluten molecules form more of a "ball" shape creating a more tender crumb.

I placed my anise seed in a dry pan and gently heated it until I could smell the perfume. I took it off the heat and let it cool to room temperature. When it was completely cool I put it into a mortar and ground it as fine as I could. I sifted it so that the larger particles were caught and I ground these again. I then put the anise with the sugar, salt and flour mixing them thoroughly together.



To mix the dough I placed the flour mixture on my work surface and made a hole in the center. I added the warm milk and mixed it in and then I added the beaten eggs and rosewater and continued mixing with my hands until the dough held together enough to begin kneading.



When the dough is kneaded and ready, cover it and let it rest for thirty minutes or so. During this time get a pot of water boiling.



After the dough has rested, weigh out four ounce lumps of dough and roll into a rope shape. Keep rolling it out until it is about six inches in length and about 1 inch thick. Now begin forming the *ciambelle* by bringing the two ends together and joining them in a ring.

I placed the *ciambelle* into the boiling water a few at a time because I did not want to reduce the temperature of the water and if they are too crowded, they will stick to each other.



Scappi says to "leave them there until they float" which will take about five to eight minutes. Take them out as soon as they float and place them on a wire rack to cool and dry.



I learned the hard way that the *ciambelle* must be completely cool and dry before they are baked. If they are not, they come out of the oven all bumpy and ugly, like the picture on the left.

After the *ciambelle* are cool and dry, place them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake, as Scappi directs, in a "temperate" oven which is 350° for approximately 20 minutes. If they brown too quickly, cover them with a piece of parchment paper.

Period Recipe

From the *Libro Nuovo* written in 1549 by Christofor Messibugo.

While *Libro Nuovo* is available online it is only available in the original Italian of the 16th Century. In order to better understand Scappi's *ciambelle* I felt I needed to know what Christoforo Messisbugo's recipe contained. I used John Florio's Italian American Dictionary written in 1611 to translate this recipe to compare it with Scappi's. Below is my translation:

Bracelets with Milk, and Sugar

“ To Make 50 bracelets of four ounces for each, take 15 pounds of fine flour, of rosewater 3 ounces, of milk 3 pounds and of white sugar 2 pounds eggs numbering 25, of butter 4 ounces and these things you will knead together very well. Then make your bracelets, thereafter in the form of the coin of India and make them raise with great carefulness, and after raising join them again make them boil in your water, and cast these bracelets within to cook and behold when it is strong from above, draw it forth & lay them into fresh water and when they are removed from there lay them to cook in the oven, and if you wish lay anise within and it will be good work.”

My Ingredients

Durum wheat flour (Semolina)
Rosewater
Milk
Sugar
Eggs
Butter

My Redaction

3 lbs. finely ground durum wheat flour from Italy
½ ounce Rosewater
7.2 ounces Milk
4.8 ounces Sugar
5 Eggs
1 oz. Butter
2 tsp. anise seed, toasted and ground

Since this recipe makes fifty - four ounce *brazzattelle* and this is significantly more than I need, I cut this recipe back by one fifth.

Messibugo does not give us any clear instructions or order but just to simply “knead these things all together.” I have mixed the ingredients the way I watched my grandmother make her Italian pastries a hundred times as a child.

Place anise in a small dry frying pan and gently heat until the anise perfumes the air. Set them aside to cool. When completely cooled, put the anise in a mortar and grind them finely. I sieved it and then reground the larger particles that did not go through.

I mixed the flour, sugar and anise together and placed it on the counter making a well in the center. I mixed the rosewater, milk, eggs and melted butter together and then poured it into the well in the flour. I mixed this dough the same as I described in the above Scappi recipe.

Messibugo does say that each “*brazzattelle*” should be four ounces and that after forming the dough that they should be joined again. I made a rope, as above, and then joined the ends together.

Messibugo instructs us to rinse the boiled *brazzattelle* in fresh water. He gives us no insight or explanation and I can only speculate as to why he tells us to do this.



I put a pot of water on to boil as I was forming my *brazzattelle* and when the water was boiling I put 2-3 *brazzattelle* into the pot at a time and waited for them to float up signaling they were done. Using a slotted or pierced spoon I then withdrew them from the boiling water and placed them into the clear water for a quick dunk. I removed them after about 5-10 seconds and placed them on a rack to cool and dry.

Messibugo gives no indication of the temperature that the oven should be so I baked them at 350° for 20 minutes until just starting to color.

Period Recipe

From *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi* (1570). Trans. Terence Scully. 2008

Book VI Recipe 140

“To Prepare Ciambellette with Eggs

Get ten fresh eggs and six ounces of fine sugar and make a dough of them with as much fine flour as the eggs can hold; the dough should be thick. Knead it for an hour, taking care not to add any flour when you knead it or when you make them, but rather greasing your hand with almond oil or Greek wine. When they are made, put them into boiling water and leave them boiling until they float up. Take them out with a holed spoon, put them into a basket to let them drain. When they are cooled, set them out in tourte pans of a big enough size, with edges that are not too high, and that have nothing on their bottom; arrange the ciambelle regularly in the pans. Bake them in a moderate oven which is hotter above than beneath. And before you take them out of the oven, make the rosette on them with a feather dipped in fresh egg white. Serve them however you like.”

My Ingredients

Durum wheat flour (Semolina)

Sugar

Eggs

My Redaction

2 ½ c. finely ground durum wheat flour from Italy

3 oz. Sugar

5 Eggs

I measured the semolina and sugar together, placed it on the work surface and made a well in the center. I cracked the eggs into the center and using my hands I incorporated the eggs into the flour mixture.



When it became a shaggy dough I starting kneading it. At first I thought Scappi’s direction to “knead it for an hour” was excessive, but I found that if it was kneaded for a shorter period of time, the texture of the final product is lacking. When I kneaded for an hour the dough became softer and more supple and the finished *ciambellette* were a shorter, more crisp texture.



After the kneading was finished, I cut small slices of the dough and rolled it between the counter and my hands into long ropes approximately one half inch in diameter. Using my finger I wrapped the rope around it and pinched the excess off and worked the dough into a ring.



While I was forming the *ciambellette*, I put salt into a pot of water and started it boiling. When all the *ciambellette* were formed I put them into the boiling water, several at a time. It was important not to crowd them or put them one on top of each other. As soon as they floated up, I scooped them up with a slotted spoon and let them drain and cool on a rack.

When they were completely dry and cool, I preheated the oven to 350° and baked them for 15 minutes. As Scappi says I pulled them out and brushed them with egg whites and put them back in for 10 minutes.

Stuffed Ciambelle

Period Recipe, Terence Scully's Translation

From *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi* (1570). Trans. Terence Scully. 2008.

Book V Recipe 150

“ To Prepare filled ciambelle

Get a pound of creamy, plump, moderately soft cheese - that is, of cow's milk, without salt - a pound of grated Parmesan cheese, six ounces of fresh butter, 12 fresh eggs and a little saffron; mix all that together. Then make up a dough of three pounds of fine flour with ten ounces of warm goat's milk, four ounces of bread crumb soaked in that milk, six egg yolks, four ounces of butter and enough salt. When the dough is well kneaded, gradually knead in further four ounces of butter. Split the dough up into two ounce lumps and with a pin roll them out making them round and leaving them the thickness of a tourte shell. On one side of each round of that dough put two ounces of the above filling, rolling them one and a half times and brushing them with melted butter. Then make them into little ciambelle, flattening them with the palm of your hand. Put them on greased butter paper in a tourte pan and color them as offelle are colored. Bake them in an oven. When they are done serve them hot....”

It is interesting to note that when I translated the original Italian (see Appendix D) I noticed some of the recipe had been omitted in Terrence Scully's translation. Scully used the first printing of *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi* from 1570. It was printed by the Tramezzino brothers and was reprinted by them in 1581.

I also used the 1570 version of Scappi's *Opera* (archives.org accessed 1/1/2020) and I looked at the 1622 printing just to see if it was the publisher who altered the text. (See Appendix E) Both texts state “...*oncie sei d'uva passa ben netta, un' oncia di cannella, quattro oncies di zuccaro...*” (6 ounces of raisins well cleaned, an ounce of cinnamon, four ounces of sugar.) Whatever the reason, Scully's translation does not include these three ingredients. It seems to be an oversight on his part as the 1570 and the 1622 printings both include this line of text.

I have chosen to make two versions of these *ciambelle*. The first version uses Terrence Scully's translation and the second uses my translation.

My Ingredients

Dough

Durum wheat flour (Semolina)

Milk

Breadcrumbs, soaked in milk
Egg Yolks
Butter
Salt

Filling

Mascarpone Cheese
Parmesan Cheese
Eggs
Butter
Saffron

My Redaction

Dough

9 oz. finely ground durum wheat flour from Italy
5 oz. Warm Milk
2 oz. Breadcrumbs, soaked in milk
3 Egg Yolks
8 oz. Butter
1 tsp. Salt

Filling

3oz. Mascarpone Cheese
3oz. Parmesan Cheese, grated
3 Eggs
1 ½ oz. Butter
Saffron 2-3 strands

This same dough and method is used for all the stuffed *ciambelle*.



I was curious as to why Scappi tells us to warm the milk when there isn't anything that can be considered leaven in these pastries other than egg. I researched this and found that phyllo dough is always made with warm liquid and a fat. In modern phyllo, olive oil is used most often, but you can use any liquid fat i.e. melted butter, melted lard etc. I am not sure Scappi was making a "proper" phyllo dough but the indication is that he was making a dough with some of the same properties.

I put the milk into a small pan and warmed it to about 120° because for this dough Scappi tells us to soak the breadcrumbs in the warm milk. This will bring the temperature of the milk down slightly. Once the milk is up to the correct temperature, I added the breadcrumbs to let them soak.

While the milk was warming, I measured my flour and salt and mixed them together. I made a well in the center. When the breadcrumbs were soaked with the milk but still warm to the touch, I added this to the well in the center of the flour along with the egg yolks and half of the butter. I mixed this with my hand until it held together enough to knead. When the dough was kneaded well, I added in the other half of the butter and kneaded it until all the butter was incorporated and the dough was soft and supple. I wrapped in the dough in plastic wrap and left it for an hour.

While the dough is resting, I put together the filling. I first grated parmesan cheese with a microplane to create a finer grate. I added the eggs to the mascarpone using a fork until it was well incorporated. I then mixed the parmesan cheese into the egg mixture until it was well mixed. I found it almost impossible to thoroughly incorporate the butter into the cheese mixture until it had considerably softened, almost melted. When I melted the butter, magic happened! The fat in butter latches onto the fats in the eggs and cheese so that it becomes thicker and more cohesive creating a spreadable cheese custard without being runny and loose. I put a few strands of saffron in with the butter while it melted and pulled them out before I added the butter to the cheeses.



Scappi now directs us to take two ounce lumps of dough and roll it out round the thickness of a tourte shell. I used a pastry scraper to cut the dough into the correct size lumps and rolled them out round. A slightly oval shaped seemed to work better. Scappi also says to use two ounces of filling and to only roll the dough one and a half times. I found out that if you roll it more than that there are too many layers of dough and the layers on the inside are still doughy and raw while the outside is overbrowned.



As directed by Scappi in his recipe, I placed two ounces of filling on one side of the dough and brushed melted butter on all the remaining exposed dough. I rolled it up one and a half times and brushed the ends with melted butter and joined them, pushing down with my palm to seal them.

I baked them at 350° for thirty minutes

Stuffed Ciambelle

My Translation

Period Recipe, My Translation

From The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi (1570). Trans. Aislinge MacCuithein (Carla Neal) 2019.

Book V Recipe 150

“ To Prepare filled ciambelle

Get a pound of creamy, plump, moderately soft cheese - that is, of cow's milk, without salt - a pound of grated Parmesan cheese, six ounces of well cleaned raisins, one ounce of cinnamon, four ounces of sugar, six ounces of fresh butter, 12 fresh eggs and a little saffron; mix all that together. Then make up a dough of three pounds of fine flour with ten ounces of warm goat's milk, four ounces of bread crumb soaked in that milk, six egg yolks, four ounces of butter and enough salt. When the dough is well kneaded, gradually knead in a further four ounces of butter. Split the dough up into two ounce lumps and with a pin roll them out making them round and leaving them the thickness of a tourte shell. On one side of each round of that dough put two ounces of the above filling, rolling them one and a half times and brushing them with melted butter. Then make them into little ciambelle, flattening them with the palm of your hand. Put them on greased butter paper in a tourte pan and color them as offelle are colored. Bake them in an oven. When they are done serve them hot....”

My Ingredients

Dough

Durum wheat flour (Semolina)
Milk
Breadcrumbs, soaked in milk
Egg Yolks
Butter
Salt

Filling

Mascarpone Cheese
Parmesan Cheese
Eggs
Butter
Saffron

My Redaction

Dough

9 oz. finely ground durum wheat flour from Italy
5 oz. Warm Milk
2 oz. Breadcrumbs, soaked in milk
3 Egg Yolks
8 oz. Butter
1 tsp. Salt

Filling

3oz. Mascarpone Cheese
3oz. Parmesan Cheese, grated
3 Eggs
1 ½ oz. raisins
1 oz. Sugar
¼ oz. Cinnamon
1 ½ oz. Butter
Saffron 2-3 strands

I used the same technique to make the dough as described on page 19-20. I wrapped the dough with plastic wrap and let it rest while I prepared the filling.

While the dough was resting, I prepared the filling the same as on pg. 20 making sure to add in the raisins, cinnamon and sugar.

I continued by rolling the dough out and filling it with the cinnamon cheese mixture and rolling and baking as in recipe 150 above.

Period Recipe

From *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi* (1570). Trans. Terence Scully. 2008.

Book V Recipe 151

“To Prepare Another Sort of Pastry Filled with Chicken

With knives beat two capon breasts that have been first been boiled or spit-roasted. To them add two ounces of Milanese almonds, shelled and ground in a mortar, two ounces of Neapolitan mosticcioli, four ounces of a creamy cheese, eight uncooked egg yolks, an ounce of cinnamon and a little saffron. With that filling make up ciambellette using the same dough and following the same directions as in the previous recipe. Otherwise make little flans of it. Fry them in rendered fat.

In the same way you can do a calf’s kidney that has been roasted on a spit along with it’s tenderloin.”

My Ingredients

Dough

Durum wheat flour (Semolina)
Milk
Breadcrumbs, soaked in milk
Egg Yolks
Butter
Salt

Filling

Capon Breast
Almonds
Mosticcioli
Creamy Cheese
Egg Yolks
Cinnamon

My Redaction

Dough

9 oz. finely ground durum wheat flour from Italy
5 oz. Warm Milk
2 oz. Breadcrumbs, soaked in milk
3 Egg Yolks
8 oz. Butter
1 tsp. Salt

Filling

- 1 small chicken breast, boiled
- 1 oz. Almonds, ground
- ½ ounce Mosticcioli (See Appendix C)
- 1 oz. Mascarpone Cheese
- 2 Egg Yolks
- ¼ oz. Cinnamon

I used the same technique to make the dough as described on page 19-20. I wrapped the dough with plastic wrap and let it rest while I prepared the filling.



I started by boiling the chicken breast in water for 20 minutes. I then sliced it very thin and used two knives to mince it which is not easy to do! I placed the almonds in hot water for a few minutes just to loosen their skins. I then put them into a mortar and ground them.

Scappi does not specify how course or fine to chop the chicken or the almonds so I decided to mince them on the finer side but still large enough to have some tooth.

I mixed the chicken, almonds, *mosticcioli*, mascarpone, cinnamon and eggs together until smooth and uniform. Doing as Scappi directs I then pinched off small two-ounce pieces of dough and rolled them into rounds about 1/16 inch thick. I added two ounces of filling and buttered the remaining exposed dough.

I rolled them up as Scappi states, one and a half times, and then buttered the ends and brought them around to form a circle. Using the palm of my hand I sealed the dough together. I brushed them with butter and baked them for 30 minutes on 350°.



Period Recipe

From *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi* (1570). Trans. Terence Scully. 2008.

Original Recipe

Book V, Recipe 152

“To prepare a filling with which you make small ciambelle and small flans.

In butter stew 4 lbs of peeled apples cut into small pieces, along with an ounce of ground cinnamon. When they are done, take them out and let them cool. Add in an ounce and a half of ground mostaccioli, six ounces of a creamy cheese, four ounces of shelled, crushed pinnate that have been steeped, six raw eggs yolks and six ounces of sugar. Use that filling to make small ciambelle, small flans, tortellini, and other preparations fried in rendered fat. You can also make filled twists with it, baking them in a tourte pan in the oven. When they are done, they need to be served hot.”

My Ingredients

Dough

Durum wheat flour (Semolina)
Milk
Breadcrumbs, soaked in milk
Egg Yolks
Butter
Salt

Filling

Apples
Cinnamon
Sugar
Mosticcioli
Creamy Cheese
Pine Nuts
Egg Yolks



My Redactions

Dough

9 oz. finely ground durum wheat flour from Italy
5 oz. Warm Milk
2 oz. Breadcrumbs, soaked in milk
3 Egg Yolks
8 oz. Butter
1 tsp. Salt

The Filling

- 1 lb. of sweet apple
- .25 oz of cinnamon
- 1.5 oz sugar
- .375 oz. mostaccioli (See Appendix C)
- 1.5 oz. mascarpone
- 1 oz. pinenuts
- 1 egg yolk



I used the same technique to make the dough as described on page 19-20. I wrapped the dough with plastic wrap and let it rest while I prepared the apple filling.



I steeped the pine nuts in boiling water for 20 minutes and then crushed them in a mortar. While pine nuts were steeping, I peeled and cored the apples. I then sliced the apples as thinly as possible and then minced them with a knife. I melted the butter in a pan large enough to hold the apples in a thin layer and then added the apples and cinnamon. I cooked the apples until they were cooked through and soft. I let the apples cool.

When completely cooled, I added in the remaining ingredients and mixed until they were all incorporated.

I pinched off small one-ounce pieces of dough and rolled them into a round about 1/4 inch thick. I added one ounce of filling and rolled it up. I buttered the ends and brought them around to form a circle. I used my palm to seal the dough together. I then brushed them with butter.

Scappi states that these can be fried or baked. I baked these in a 350 degree oven for 25 minutes.

Conclusion

When I researched *ciambelle* I was curious what the sweets of the 16th century were like. I originally thought that *ciambelle* were an overly sweet treat such as today's doughnuts. As I practiced and perfected Scappi's *ciambelle* I learned the diversity of these small breads and pastries.

I was surprised to learn that several other countries and regions had their own variations of these ring shaped breads. Poland has *obwarzanek* first mentioned in 1394, China has a *Girde* that differs in that it is steamed and not boiled before it is baked. In Germany there were pretzels which according to Irene Krauss were originally a ring shape (Balinska p. 15).

I discovered through trial and error that semolina flour makes a much better finished product both in taste and texture. While a mixture of soft and hard wheats does create a palatable *ciambelle*, it produces bread that has a floury taste and is much denser. Scappi never says what wheat he used for flour but we do know he did have access to hard white wheat and durum (Scully pg. 61).

I realized that Scappi gives us specific instructions for good reason. When making any of the stuffed *ciambelle*, Scappi tells us to roll the pastry up only one and a half times. He says this because if you roll it up several times, like I did at first, then the layers of dough on the inside will be raw and the outside is over browned.

I found that my respect for Scappi's knowledge and expertise increases the more I study his recipes. For the stuffed *ciambelle* I did not understand why he called for the milk to be warm when there was no yeast in the dough. Or why he added an additional amount of butter when kneading that same dough. I realized that what Scappi was making was some form of dough that had similar characteristics to phyllo dough. The "magic" of phyllo dough comes from adding a warm liquid to flour and adding in a fat. Warming the liquid denatures the proteins in the flour resulting in a dough that is very tender and pliable.

Scappi also advised his apprentice to knead a biscuit dough for one hour. I foolishly thought that an hour was too long and the resulting *ciambelle* suffered for it. It had a displeasing texture being chewy or spongy. I repeated the recipe this time taking Scappi's advice, kneading for an hour, and discovered that the more I kneaded the dough, the softer and more supple it became. The end *ciambellette* was firm, crispy, and crunchy.

Scappi has recipes for a non yeasted bread-like treat that was boiled and then baked, some were filled with sweetened fruit and sometimes with savory fillings like chicken or cheese and rolled. Some were a biscuit type texture that were again boiled

and baked. Some were baked only and sprinkled with sugar and some were even made from just egg and sugar.

So it seems that *ciambelle* is not a particular dish or recipe but more describes the finished shape, a ring. Whether *ciambelle* was made as a food that would keep and last for long journeys or as a more elaborate but immediate luxury food, *ciambelle* in Scappi's period, were as diverse as his imagination.

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Appendix A

Secondary Recipes

Bread Crumbs

Recipe

5 cups flour (I used 00 bread flour from Italy)
2 cups warm water
1 Tablespoon sugar
1 teaspoon salt
2 1/2 teaspoons yeast

I dissolved sugar into the water. I stirred in yeast and allowed to sit for 10 minutes, until the yeast bloomed. I sifted flour into a mound, made a well in the center and added salt.

I poured water into the well and mixed it together using fingers as a whisk until all the liquid was worked into the flour. Using a bench scraper, I continued to work the flour into the dough until it was firm enough to start kneading. I kneaded it for 5-10 minutes, until smooth and supple, then placed the dough into an oiled bowl, covered with a damp cloth and allowed to rise until doubled in volume, about 1 hour. I turned it out onto a work surface, divided and shaped the dough, then allowed it to rise again for about 30 to 45 minutes. I baked it at 400 F for 30 minutes. I checked to see if the bread was done by tapping on the bottom to see if it sounded hollow. I allowed it to cool, then cut it into 1 1/2 inch slices, then cut the slices into cubes. I allowed it to air dry completely before crushing it into fine crumbs and sieving it.

Mostacciolo

Period Recipe

From The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi (1570). Trans. Terence Scully. 2008.

Book VI Recipe 142

To prepare dainty morsels- that is Milanese-style mostaccioli.

