

AQUARIUS

SUN IN AQUARIUS
21 JANUARY - 18 FEBRUARY
RULED BY SATURN



AQUARIUS is a sign of paradoxes, at the same time both deeply conservative and intensely revolutionary, a combination which accounts for its famous eccentricity. Aquarians are individualists and prize their independence above all else. The Arabs noted that they 'like wealth', but were 'anxious about world affairs'. It was also noted that Aquarius is the sign of the gourmet. This is a hot, moist, masculine air sign.

AQUARIUS ENVIRONMENT

Aquarius rules bars, inns, pubs, taverns, vineyards, fish farms and water mills. The sign is associated with running water, so ideal Aquarian places include riverside restaurants and seaside cafés. Many Aquarians enjoy a high-tech environment with luminescent colours and weird lighting effects. Others are more traditional, but even so they like to be unusual, to stand out from the crowd.

AQUARIUS FOODS

The true Aquarian is an experimenter and innovator willing to try any new dish, however modern or exotic, however strange the combination of ingredients. Some revive ancient recipes, others are happier with the latest developments. In the 1960s many Aquarians happily accepted additives which were considered a great step forward in the preservation and presentation of food. In the 1980s many were at the forefront of the wholefood movement. Paradoxically, they are as likely to be strict advocates of macrobiotics as they are to argue the virtues of irradiation in the preservation of food. Aquarius rules aquatic birds such as geese and ducks, salt, which is connected to this sign in homeopathic medicine, and cumin. Other foods associated with this sign are those ruled by Saturn.





A GREEN SOUP

Serves Four

This is based on a Russian recipe, for a light summer soup, made to go further by the addition of a poached egg. If sorrel, which gives a needed acidity, is not available, you can add lemon juice at the end of cooking. Best served with Melba toast and butter.

1 onion
2 carrots
2 sticks celery
1½ pints/900ml ham stock (make sure it is not too salty) or beef stock
1 lb/450g spinach and sorrel
1 tablespoon chopped dill
salt and pepper
4 eggs
5 fl oz/150ml sour cream

Prepare and chop the onion, carrots and celery very finely. Put them with the cold stock in a casserole and boil, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Wash the spinach and sorrel and strip away the larger ribs. Put them in a collander and pour boiling water over them. Chop them fine. Add to the soup and cook at a simmer for another 10 minutes. Add the dill, taste for salt and pepper. Take the casserole off the heat, cover, and put it in a warm oven, 225°F/110°C/Gas Mark ¼, for 20 minutes.

Poach the eggs. Bring the soup up to serving temperature. Pour the soup into a tureen and swirl in the sour cream. Put an egg in each diner's bowl and serve the soup onto it.

FRESHWATER CRAYFISH WITH A LEMON SAUCE

Serves Four

The finest delicacy of Swedish waters is the freshwater crayfish. A great thing is made of them in late summer when the season for catching them is opened — even special crayfish parties by lake and stream. Fresh live crayfish (they must be live) are only available at the very best of fishmongers, so this recipe may have to be adapted for prawns

or live Dublin Bay prawns. The sauce is very good. Serve the crayfish with chopped dill, coarse sea salt and rye bread with butter. Remember to have finger bowls and extra napkins on the table.

1 lb/450g crayfish or prawns, in their shell
salt
small *bouquet* of thyme and fennel
4 fl oz/120ml double cream
4 fl oz/120ml stock (see recipe)
grated rind and juice of 1 lemon
4 oz/125g unsalted butter, cut in 8 pieces
salt and pepper
fresh dill for decoration

If your shellfish are live, boil 4 pints/2.3 litres water and 2 teaspoons salt (for freshwater crayfish), treble the salt for saltwater shellfish. Put the shellfish in with the herbs, bring rapidly back to the boil. Boil briskly, uncovered, for about 8 minutes. (Small prawns will need much less time.) Refresh in cold water.

Take the tail shells off and put them in a blender with 4 fluid ounces/120ml boiling water. Blend and strain the stock. Put the double cream and stock in a saucepan and boil for 3 minutes. Add the grated rind and juice of the lemon. Take the pan off the heat and whisk in the butter piece by piece to obtain a smooth sauce. Season with salt and pepper. Keep warm in a bowl set over a pan of hot water.

Serve the crayfish arranged on each plate, with some dill for decoration. Put the tepid lemon sauce in a bowl in the centre of the table with the other condiments.

PRAWN BALLS WITH A TAMARIND SAUCE

Serves Four

This is based on a recipe from the Arabian Gulf using the shellfish favoured by Saturn once more. The sourness imparted by the tamarind is also in tune with the sign and its planet. Tamarind can be bought dried from Oriental food stores, it needs to be treated as described below. Offer some flat Arab bread to mop up the juices.

8 oz/225g frozen prawns, defrosted
1 handful fresh coriander



a good pinch turmeric
2 oz/50g ground rice
½ teaspoon salt
2 shallots
1 oz/25g butter
grated rind of ½ lemon
6 peppercorns, 10 coriander seeds, seeds from 2
cardamom pods and 2 cloves, ground together

For the sauce

1 piece of dried tamarind 1 inch/2.5cm square
1 small onion
1 tomato
1 oz/25g butter
6 peppercorns, 10 coriander seeds, seeds from 2
cardamom pods and 2 cloves, ground together
½ dried chilli
salt
1 teaspoon sugar

First make the sauce. Soak the tamarind in 6 fluid ounces/175ml boiling water for 1 hour. Strain and sieve, retaining the liquid.

Peel and chop the onion; skin, seed and chop the tomato. Heat the butter in a saucepan and fry the onion for 5 minutes. Add the tomato, spices and chilli and fry for 4 minutes. Add the tamarind water and 6 fluid ounces/175ml cold water. Season with a pinch of salt and the sugar. Simmer for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, drain the prawns and pat dry. Blend to a paste with the fresh coriander, turmeric, ground rice and salt in a food processor. Peel and chop the shallots.

Heat the butter in a frying pan and fry the shallots for 5 minutes, add the lemon rind and spices and continue cooking 2 minutes. Mix with the prawn paste. With wet hands, roll into 16 small balls.

Put the prawn balls in the sauce and poach, covered, for about 30 minutes.

WELSH SALT DUCK

Serves Four

This Welsh recipe uses salt to produce a wonderfully delicate duck such as you have never

tasted before (and tender, too, for it tames the toughest old bird). It can be eaten hot or cold. In Wales, a dish of laver (the edible seaweed that is a speciality there) might well come with it, but a simple orange or watercress salad and some baked potatoes with butter are good as well.

1 oven-ready duck, without giblets

4-6 oz/125-175g salt

bay leaf

1 stick celery

watercress for serving

Rub the bird with salt all over. Place in the cool for three days, rubbing salt in and turning the bird every morning and night.

Wash off the excess salt. Put the duck in a large casserole with the bay leaf and celery. Cover with cold water and cook uncovered in a cool oven at 300°F/150°C/Gas Mark 2 for 2 hours, until tender. Remove the duck and leave to rest or to cool completely. Serve on a dish with watercress. It should carve a light pink.

DUCK BRAISED WITH RED CABBAGE

Serves Four

This is a Polish dish. Serve with buttery mashed potatoes.

It is possible to prepare and cook the cabbage the previous day, keeping it overnight in the refrigerator.

1 small red cabbage

2 onions

2 cooking apples

6 rashers streaky bacon

2 tablespoons brown sugar

2 tablespoons ruby port

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

bouquet of thyme, parsley stalks and marjoram

salt and black pepper

1 roasting duck, about 3-4 lb/1.4-1.8kg

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Remove the ragged outer leaves of the cabbage. Quarter, core and slice the cabbage. Then rinse and drain. Peel and slice the onions; peel, core and slice the apples; cut the bacon into strips. Mix all



these with the sugar, port and vinegar in a large, heavy casserole. Add the bouquet of herbs and seasoning. Bring to the boil on top of the stove then cover tightly and cook for 2 to 3 hours in a cool oven, 225°F/110°C/Gas Mark ¼.

Rub the duck all over with salt and leave for 30 minutes. Heat the oil in a heavy pan and brown the duck well, on all sides.

Bring the red cabbage back to the boil and place the duck on top. Cover the casserole and replace in the cool oven. Continue to cook for approximately 1½ hours, until the duck is tender. If you have no casserole large enough to hold a whole duck, you can quarter it before frying. It may take less time to cook.

Serve on a large oval platter, the duck surrounded by the red cabbage.

SPICED SPINACH AND PRUNES

Serves Four

Spinach is one of the favoured vegetables of Saturn.

18 jumbo prunes

1 sweet red onion

1½ lb/700g spinach

3 oz/75g butter

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

juice of ½ lemon

salt and black pepper

4 eggs

paprika

Soak the prunes overnight in cold water. Cook them for 15 minutes in water. Stone them and cut them in quarters. Put aside. Peel and chop the onion; thoroughly wash and strip the spinach.

In a casserole or large saucepan, fry the onion in 1½ ounces/40g of the butter until transparent for 5 minutes. Add the spices and fry for a minute longer. Add the spinach together with the lemon juice, prunes and seasoning. Cover the pan and cook for about 10 minutes over medium heat.

Butter 4 cocotte dishes and divide the spinach

between them. Make hollows in the centre and break an egg in each. Melt the remaining butter and spoon it over the top. Sprinkle with paprika. Bake for about 4 to 6 minutes (depending on whether you like your eggs thoroughly cooked or not — ideally they should be runny, the whites barely set) in a preheated oven at 375°F/190°C/Gas Mark 5.

JANSSON'S TEMPTATION

Serve Four to Six

A Swedish way with potatoes — said to have tempted one Jansson, a divine who had denied himself all pleasures. Perhaps he too was an Aquarius, and these potatoes the only way to break his obstinate mould.

2 lb/900g potatoes

3 large onions

oil for greasing the dish

2 cans anchovies, 1¼ oz/45g each

pepper

10 fl oz/300ml whipping cream

Peel the potatoes and slice them into matchsticks. Do not rinse. Peel and slice the onions. Mix the potatoes and onions together. Grease a gratin dish and put in two layers of the potato mixture, topped in each instance by a crisscross of anchovies and a grinding of pepper. Pour in half the cream and pour the oil from the anchovy cans over the top.

Bake in a preheated oven at 425°F/220°C/Gas Mark 7 for 20 minutes. Add the remainder of the cream and turn the oven down to 300°F/150°C/Gas Mark 2. Continue baking for 40 minutes or until the potatoes give no resistance when poked through with a knife and the top is a golden brown. Finish under the grill if the crust is too pale. Serve hot.

TOMATO SALAD

Serves Four

The taste of fresh coriander (the most used green herb in world cooking) strikes as having some affinity with Aquarian characteristics. To the



Western palate it has the element of surprise that parsley rarely possesses. This makes a simple tomato salad, but will make your guests rethink the meaning of the description!

6 tomatoes
3 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander
1 small green chilli
1 tablespoon lemon juice
4 tablespoons olive oil
salt

Peel the tomatoes and slice them. Arrange them overlapping on a flat dish. Sprinkle the coriander

over the top. Split and seed the chilli and chop it very finely. Mix it with the lemon juice and whisk in the olive oil. Season with salt. Dribble the dressing all over the salad. Leave at room temperature for at least 30 minutes before serving.

STUFFED CABBAGE ROLLS

Serves Four

Stuffed cabbage was introduced to Sweden by the Turkish creditors of a Swedish king at the beginning of the 18th century; they camped on his palace doorstep until he paid up. These cabbage

Northern Fruit Jelly





rolls have a resemblance, therefore, to the Greek *dolmades*, or stuffed vine leaves. They are customarily eaten with plain boiled potatoes. You may also care to serve the rest of the cabbage from which you have taken the wrappers cooked in some contrasting, yet simple, fashion.

16 large outer leaves of a Savoy cabbage
salt
3 oz/75g rice
1 onion
8 oz/225g minced beef
6 oz/175g minced pork
1 egg
black pepper
milk
2 oz/50g butter
1 oz/25g brown sugar
10 fl oz/300ml water
5 fl oz/150ml double cream
1 teaspoon paprika

Wash the cabbage leaves and plunge them into boiling salted water for about 2 minutes until pliable. Refresh in cold water and drain.

Cook the rice in salted water for about 15 minutes until tender. Refresh in cold water, drain and put in a bowl. Peel and chop the onion finely and add to the rice with the meats, egg and some salt and pepper. Mix well adding a little milk to make the mixture soft and pliable. Wet your hands if the mixture sticks to them.

Cut out the central rib from each cabbage leaf and lay it flat on the work surface. Shape the stuffing into fingers and place in the centre of each leaf. Fold in the sides then roll the leaves into sausages. Fasten the flaps with cocktail sticks.

Melt the butter in a large frying pan and brown the rolls on all sides over high heat. Arrange them close packed in one layer in a casserole. Sprinkle with the brown sugar. Return the frying pan to the heat. Pour in the water and bring to the boil, stirring and scraping. Pour into the casserole to just cover the cabbage rolls adding more water if necessary. Cover the casserole and simmer over very low heat for 20 to 30 minutes until tender.

To make the gravy, transfer the rolls to a serving dish, reduce the liquor to less than a cupful by boiling hard. Add the cream, seasoning and paprika. Pour over the cabbage rolls and serve.

NORTHERN FRUIT JELLY

Serves Four

Scandinavia, northern Germany, the Baltic region in general, sport a wealth of wild berries delicious in their fruity astringency. Some, like the difficult to obtain lingonberry, are unique to Scandinavia and prized there as a delicacy. Others, like raspberries, have gone on to be tamed, captured for the garden, where domestic varieties are much sweeter and more luscious. But the wild berry often retains an indefinable edge in flavour, perhaps no more than an intimation of nature's generosity. For Aquarians, of course, the greater acidity of the wild, or near wild, fruit is highly fitting. The method for extracting the juice is slow and aims at conserving as far as possible its original flavour.

8-12 oz/225-350g each of bilberries, cranberries, raspberries and strawberries
1 oz/25g powdered gelatine
12 fl oz/350ml near boiling water
cream
sweet biscuits
icing sugar
lemon juice

Put each fruit in a pottery jar, covered with a fitting lid. Place the jars in a pan of simmering water, almost up to the neck. As they gently cook, they will express juice. Periodically pour the juice off, then return the jars to the pan to continue the process which may take up to 1 hour. You will have enough when you have 10 fluid ounces/300ml from each fruit.

In each of 4 bowls, dissolve $\frac{1}{4}$ oz/7g gelatine in 3 fluid ounces/75ml of the very hot water. Add a little of each fruit juice to its gelatine, stirring until completely dissolved, then stir in the rest. Taste each in turn, adding sufficient icing sugar and, if necessary (for instance with the bilberries),



lemon juice. Bear in mind that they will taste less sweet when chilled.

Leave them to cool, but not in the refrigerator. Rinse a jelly mould with cold water. Put in the first of the jellies, strawberry. Leave to set in the refrigerator. Then add the next layer, raspberry. When that has set, the third layer, cranberry, can be poured in, and so on to the last, bilberry. Cover the mould with clingfilm and leave in the refrigerator until set.

To turn out, hold the mould in a bowl of hot water for as short a time as possible (5 to 10 seconds if the mould is metal, longer for china) then unmould onto a dish. Serve with pouring cream and sweet biscuits.

LOGANBERRY KISSEL

Serves Four

The same taste for red fruits and wild fruits touched on by Northern Fruit Jelly (*see* previous page) is seen in some of the cooking of the USSR. Kissel, although perhaps German in origin, is a naturalized Russian dish and a useful standby, especially if your fruit is overripe, more refreshing than a cream or custard fool. In Russia, some very tart wild fruits — cherries, barberries and so on — are used. Arrowroot is the suggested thickening agent, but you can use potato flour, and a kissel can be made with cornflour too.

6 oz/175g loganberries (but any red or soft fruit will do)

4 fl oz/120ml red wine

10 fl oz/300ml water

4 oz/125g caster sugar

2 tablespoons arrowroot

juice of ½ orange

4 slices white bread

butter

caster sugar mixed with ground cinnamon

cream for serving

Pick over the fruit, removing stalks and leaves, and purée in a blender. Strain the juice and reserve. Put the pulp into a saucepan with the wine and water. Bring to the boil and cook uncovered for

4 minutes. Strain and return the liquid to the pan. Add the sugar to the hot liquid and stir to dissolve. Mix the arrowroot in the orange juice. Stir it into the syrup. Bring to the boil and cook for 1 minute. Add in the reserved fruit juice, pour into glasses and leave to cool.

Toast the bread on one side only. Butter the other side. Sprinkle generously with the sugar and cinnamon mixture. Put back under a low heat and toast to a golden brown. Cut into quarters and serve hot with the kissel along with some cream.

SALZBURG DUMPLINGS

Serves Four

These 'dumplings' are ethereal puffs of sweet egg — a definitive answer to the sweet omelette, or a simple soufflé. The ascetic side of Saturn, loving small portions, is here met by the fact that this will only just feed four.

4 egg yolks

1 tablespoon kirsch

6 egg whites

pinch of salt

3 oz/75g vanilla sugar

2 tablespoons flour

1 oz/25g butter

3 fl oz/85ml single cream

icing sugar for dredging

Beat the yolks together with the kirsch until light and creamy. Whisk the whites with the salt until really stiff. Add 2 ounces/50g of the sugar by degrees and continue whisking. Success relies on a light and stiff egg white. Fold the yolks into the whites, ensuring complete absorption but without beating. Sift the flour over the top and fold that in. Melt the butter in a pan. Add the cream and the rest of the sugar. Stir to dissolve as it heats to near boiling.

Have a large oval gratin dish already warmed. Pour in the cream mixture, covering the bottom entirely. Spoon in the soufflé mixture in three piles — they will spread to form one. Bake in a preheated hot oven, 425°F/220°C/Gas Mark 7 for about 7 minutes. Dredge with icing sugar before serving.