

# Clarrey

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## What is it?

Clarrey is a wine sweetened with honey and seasoned with a variety of spices. Other period sweet wines include hippocras, which differs from clarrey in that it uses sugar instead of honey for sweetening. Depending on the specific recipe you are using, these drinks are made with either white or red wine and a variety of spices including cinnamon, cloves, galanga, ginger, grains of paradise, mace, nutmeg, pepper, and spikenard. Spiced wine recipes usually call for red wine, but white was also used.

## When & where is it from?

This specific recipe is from England c. 1390, but various spiced wines frequently appear in manuscripts from the 14th & 15th centuries.

## Who drank it & why?

Spiced wines were enjoyed by noble and common man alike. It was recommended by physicians since the wine and spices were both thought to help digestion and had medicinal purposes for a variety of medical problems as well. There were many recipes for spiced wines, and it was so popular that some spicers sold pre-ground and packaged packets of spices that their clients could add to wine.

## Period Recipe from Form of Cury ~ F. 205

Take kanel and galinga, greyns de paris, and a lytel peper, and make pouder, and temper hit wyt god wyte wyne and the þrid parte honey and ryne hit þorow a cloþ.

## My Translation:

Take cassia cinnamon and galangale, grains of paradise and a little pepper. Make it a powder and mix it with good white wine with the third part honey. Drain it through a cloth.

## My Redaction:

1/4 tsp each cinnamon, galangale, grains of paradise  
14 white peppercorns  
1 750 ml bottle (4 cups) white wine  
1 c clover honey

Grind all spices together and wrap in cheesecloth or similar fabric. Over medium heat, warm wine and honey so honey melts and integrates with the wine. Add spices and heat wine through, but do not allow it to boil. Allow spices to steep for 24 hours. Wring out as much liquid as you can from the cloth-wrapped spices, and then strain all juice through a second cloth.

## Creating Clarrey:

I translated the period recipe from Middle English to Modern English with the help of the Gode Cookery's Glossary. Since the recipe did not have any kinds of measurements, I used equal parts of the spices. I started the trial and error aspect of this redaction with small quantities and using white grape juice to not waste the more costly wine.

In my first attempt, I read "the third part honey" to mean that it was to have two parts wine and one part honey. This made the juice overly sweet. After doing this, a friend suggested that the honey measure was to be one-third that of the wine, which made a big difference in my second batch. The balance of spices, juice and honey seemed just right to me with this, and I was ready to try this out with the wine. As the redaction given on the Gode Cookery website calls for at least a

month's worth of aging, I made sure that my recreation was made by 1/30/07. This mellowing allows the flavors to blend together.

In recreating this recipe, I used many modern conveniences like my kitchen's electric stove, aluminum saucepans, metal strainers covered with cotton cloth for straining out spices and plastic measuring cups and spoons. I purchased my galangale & cinnamon already ground into powder to save time and effort. The wine I selected was Camelot brand Sauvignon Blanc since it was recommended as a good mid-priced white wine. I have since learned in my research that this type of wine only goes back to the 17th Century. It would not have been used to make claree in period. In the 14th or 15th centuries, I am sure they used a thin linen fabric for both the spice bag and also for further straining to get a clear appearance. For this recreation I used a very lightweight cotton, since it was in my fabric stash and much less expensive than today's linen. After the wine sat for a couple of months, the spices that were left in the claree gathered at the bottom of the bottles. I siphoned off the clear wine, and then put the remaining mixture through a coffee filter to get it as clear as possible.

While the period recipe does not call for heating the honeyed wine, warming it melts the honey and makes it much easier to combine the two liquids together. Spiced and mulled wines of today are heated for this reason, and also to enhance the flavors. I think it is plausible that this was done in period as well.

Despite using these modern techniques and items, I stayed as close to having this be a period recipe as I could. I made sure to track down grains of paradise and galanga instead of substituting these with cardamom and ginger respectively as some recipes I ran across suggested. In doing the translation and redaction of this recipe myself, I also made sure to follow what was done and used in period practice since I wasn't taking someone else's word on what to include.

### *Other Period Spiced Wine Recipes:*

- ❖ Hellenistic Greeks enjoyed a simple peppered wine that called for ground peppercorns, honey and white wine.
- ❖ Bartholomæus de Glanville included information on spiced wines in his encyclopedia from the first half of the 13th century. He does not include a recipe but instead mentions that the benefits of the spices are enhanced when they are added to wine.
- ❖ A 14th century medical manuscript "A Lord's Claree" called for cinnamon, ginger, pepper, long pepper, grains of paradise, cloves, galangale, caraway, mace, nutmeg, coriander, brandy, and honey.
- ❖ A recipe in *Coment l'en deit fere viande e claree* (How prepared dishes and claret should be made), an Anglo-Norman recipe collection, included cinnamon, ginger, mace, cloves, nutmeg, cardamom, squinant and spikenard. An alternate recipe calls for cinnamon, ginger, mace, cloves and spikenard.
- ❖ The *Book of Nurture* by John Russell (c.1460) has two recipes for hippocras. The first is for the wealthy and has ginger, cinnamon, grains of paradise, sugar & turnsole for color. The second is for "commyn people" and calls for ginger, canella, long pepper and honey. These same recipes are also included in *The Forme of Cury*.

### *Origin of Spices Used in this Recipe:*

- ❖ Cinnamon – There are two types of cinnamon used in period. Cassia cinnamon is more prevalent in America as it was in Europe in period. It is a spice gained from grinding the bark of *Cinnamomum cassia* tree. The more valuable Ceylon cinnamon is from the bark of the *Cinnamomum zeylanicum* tree and was also used in period. I used a high quality cassia cinnamon in this recipe. In the Middle Ages, cinnamon originated in Sri Lanka and Southern India.
- ❖ Galangale – Called galanga when sold as a powder, this spice is a close relative to ginger. While there are a few varieties of the plant this is gotten from, the most common (both in period and today) is from the root of *Alpinia galangal*. It is originally from southern China.

- ⌘ Grains of Paradise – This spice got its name because it was an extremely valuable and expensive spice sold in period in Liberia to European merchants and sailors. In appearance and taste it is similar to black peppercorns, and is used as a pepper substitute. Melegueta pepper is the botanical name of the plant this seed is taken from.
- ⌘ Peppercorn – By varying harvesting times, peppercorns of four colors (black, green, pink and white) can be retrieved from one fruit from the Piperaceae plant. White peppercorns which was used in this recipe are fully ripened peppercorn fruit. Piper nigrum is native to southern India.

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