

To make mince-pies the best way.

This recipe is from Hannah Glasse's The Art of Cookery 1740.

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Take three pounds of suet shred very fine, and chopped as small as possible; two pounds of raisins stoned, and chopped as fine as possible; two pounds of currants nicely picked, washed, rubbed, and dried at the fire; half a hundred of fine pipins, pared, cored and chopped small; half a pound of sugar pounded fine; a quarter an ounce, of mace, a quarter of an ounce of cloves, two large nutmegs, all beat fine; put all together into a great pan, and mix it well together with half a pint of brandy, and half a pint of sack [wine]; put it down close in a stone pot, and it will keep good for four months

She then goes on to give instructions for actually making the pies

Originally, minc't or shred pies included meat, sometimes mutton, sometimes beef, but during the eighteenth-century cooks began to leave the meat out sometimes, as here. Mince pies were eaten year-round not just for Christmas though and Hannah Glasse also had a recipe for 'Lenten mincemeat' which used chopped hard-boiled eggs instead of fat (but also quite a lot of alcohol!)

Below is the recipe suitably modernised with the amounts reduced to more manageable proportions

Ingredients:

300g suet (fresh or from a packet) – you can use vegetable suet, although the taste will be slightly different

250g raisins (chopped small)

250g currants

10 small apples (an older English variety if possible) peeled, cored and chopped small

150g brown sugar

1/4 tsp ground mace

1/4 tsp ground cloves

1 tsp grated nutmeg

150ml brandy

150ml white wine (or dry sherry)

Method:

If you are using fresh suet it must be chopped very finely or grated. Add the wine and brandy, suet and dried fruit to a large non-metallic mixing bowl Then start adding the peeled cored and chopped apples. Do the apples in small batches and immediately put them into the bowl with the brandy and wine (coating them) to stop them going brown. Mix everything in, stirring thoroughly, and cover with a clean cloth or cling film and leave overnight in the fridge. The next day stir the mixture again and then spoon into sterilized jars and seal. Store in a dark, cool place for up to 2 months. The mincemeat will darken as it ages.