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## FOREIGN INFLUENCES ON THE LANGUAGE OF COOKERY IN MIDDLE ENGLISH<sup>1</sup>

The linguistic situation in the Middle English period was complex, with three languages (Latin, French and English) playing the crucial role depending on such factors as register, medium, context and language user. Latin was the written language of high status, French was the official language both written and spoken, and English was the language of low status used in informal, spoken contexts (see for instance Crespo 2000). Additionally, one should not forget that, apart from the three languages being present in various areas of language, it was in the Middle English period that a great number of Scandinavian loanwords, which had been borrowed after the Scandinavian invasions, surfaced in the written English sources (e.g., Miller 2012; Moskowich 1993).

The aim of the proposed paper is to show how the multilingual situation of medieval England has been reflected in the culinary recipes of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The recipe has already been analyzed by a number of scholars, for instance Görlach (1992, 2004) or Carroll (1999). They all agree that one of the distinctive features of the text type is the use of verbs (or verbal structures) – an issue already investigated by the present author (see Bator 2013, 2014). In the present paper our attention will be put on the following verbal triplets: ME *nym* ~ *take* ~ *recipe* (= ‘to take’), ME *mess* ~ *serve* ~ *(a)dress* (= ‘to serve’), ME *boyle* ~ *seethe* ~ *parboile* (= ‘to cook’). The analysis is to reveal the differences which arose among the synonyms, such as the semantic shades of meaning of the verbs, or their dialectal distribution. The study is also to reveal whether any of the languages mentioned above dominated the semantic area. The data used for the present research come from a corpus of over 1,500 recipes from the 14<sup>th</sup>- and 15<sup>th</sup>-century culinary collections.

KEYWORDS: culinary recipe, multilingualism, foreign influence, Middle English

### THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION IN ENGLAND

The linguistic situation in Medieval England was extremely complex, due to multilingualism present approximately from the Norman Conquest until the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Stewart (1970: 531) defines it as “the use within a single policy of more than one language”. And thus, in Medieval England it was Latin, (Anglo-) French and English which played important roles. Latin, which was taught via the medium of French, was the international language of the Church and scholarship.

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Moreover, it was used for administrative and legal matters, for which (Anglo-) French was also typical. As a result, English was ousted by the two languages and for a few hundred years after the Conquest it was mainly the everyday spoken vernacular. Crespo (2000: 24) shows the distribution of the three languages in contact in the Early Middle Ages:

LANGUAGE	REGISTER	MEDIUM	STATUS
Latin	formal-official	written	high
French	formal-official	written/spoken	high
English	informal-colloquial	spoken	low

Language conflict, as well as a certain degree of overlap, apart from the external factors<sup>2</sup>, helped English regain its popularity also within the formal domains. However, Latin and French were not removed from the speakers' repertoire. Rothwell (2001: 539) refers to evidence showing that Anglo-French was being used "exactly as before, along with Latin and English, right up to and even beyond the middle of the fifteenth century".<sup>3</sup> Following Ingham (2009: 80), in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries the use of English or Anglo-French depended on the speaker's choice, "the relationship between French and English in the later medieval period was a matter of complementarity. The two languages represented, not differing communities with opposed interests, but choices available to those who possessed bilingual competence".<sup>4</sup>

It cannot be denied, though, that the revival of English led to a gradual replacement of Latin and Anglo-French. And thus, following Crespo (2000), England's linguistic situation changed from trilingual in the Early Middle Ages<sup>5</sup>, through bilingual (French / English) in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, to monolingual from the 15<sup>th</sup> century on. The tri- and bilingual speakers in order to enhance the shift, especially within the technical language domains, incorporated into English more and more foreign vocabulary, which with time might have spread from specialist to general usage (see Durkin 2014: 229-230). As noticed by Rothwell (2000), the wide use of French lexis was not accompanied by the common knowledge of French syntax, and thus the vocabulary was set into English structures.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the influence of the external factors on the reassessment of English as the L1 in the Middle English period, see Crespo (1996).

<sup>3</sup> He claims that after 1362 "it [French] remained in place alongside the traditional Latin of legal records" (Rothwell 2001: 545). When it comes to the coexistence of French and English, it was visible in the areas such as the Parliament, port records, as well as other 'important correspondence'. Rothwell says (2001: 545): "Parliament was far from the only area of medieval life where English shared the stage with French for many generations".

<sup>4</sup> Ingham (2009) presents some orthographic evidence for the use of later Anglo-French as both, spoken and written, register.

<sup>5</sup> Following Jefferson and Putter (2013: xi), "trilingualism is a considerable simplification of the linguistic situation in medieval England". On the complexity of the multilingualism in the Middle Ages, see also Sharpe (2013).

Crespo explains the notion of multilingualism as involving “the influence of several languages upon the development of another” (2000: 28). Following her view, it is French which mostly influenced Middle English. Rothwell (2001) writes about a constant influx of French vocabulary into English since the Conquest, and his study of vocabulary in “*Femina Nova*” (Rothwell 2000) proves that the incorporated vocabulary represented various registers (the general and the refined). A significant influence of the lexicon came also from Latin. Durkin’s (2014) analysis of the headwords found in the *Middle English Dictionary* gives the following numbers of words first attested in the Middle English period:

- 20% words of French (or Anglo-French) etymology
- 15% words of Latin etymology
- 13% words of both (French and/or Latin) etymology
- 52% words of other origins

Additionally, when discussing the linguistic situation in medieval England, we should not forget about the Scandinavian languages. Even though they were no longer spoken in England, a great number of Norse borrowings were first attested in English only in the Middle English period. Following Hug (1987), the largest number of Norse borrowings found in the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (ODEE) were first recorded in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Durkin (2014: 186) adds that “a good deal of Scandinavian-derived lexis only appears rather later, either in very late Middle English texts or later still” (see also Bator 2006 on the late appearance of Norse loanwords in English).

### THE RECIPE AS A TEXT TYPE

According to Görlach (2004: 105), a text type is “a specific linguistic pattern in which formal/structural characteristics have been conventionalised in a specific culture for certain well-defined and standardised uses of language”. It should be distinguished from a genre, with which it has been frequently confused, and which unlike a text type is defined on the basis of non-linguistic criteria (Biber 1989).<sup>6</sup> Following Görlach (1992: 739), particular genres comprise text types. However, Diller (2001: 31) is of the opinion that “[m]uch that is called ‘text type’ or ‘register’ in historical corpora corresponds to what is called ‘genre’ in other disciplines: a category whose coherence is guaranteed by perceived salient similarities”. For a detailed discussion on the differences between a text type and a genre (as well as other similar categories), see for instance Taavitsainen (2001a, b), Lee (2001), Barrera (2009).

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion on the notion of a genre, see Diller (2001: 3-40).

The bulk of studies devoted to the recipe dealt with its textual features. The recipe as a text type has been investigated among others by Görlach (1992, 2004), Carroll (1999), and Taavitsainen (2001a, b). Görlach concentrates on the culinary recipe. Carroll uses examples from both the medical and culinary collections; and Taavitsainen discusses exclusively the medical recipe.<sup>7</sup> In his diachronic analysis of the recipe as a text type, Görlach (2004: 121-140) describes it as a well-defined and stable form in terms of its function. Due to the lack of Old English culinary recipes, the only conclusions concerning this period may be drawn from the medical recipes (which in the later periods differ from the culinary texts). The earliest culinary data can be found only in the (late) Middle English period. The linguistic features of the recipe, which are worth mentioning are (cf. Görlach, Carroll):

- a) the form of heading;
- b) the degree of ellipsis in sentences;
- c) the form of verbs;
- d) the possessive pronoun;
- e) the object;
- f) temporal sequence;
- g) lack of complex sentences;
- h) a certain degree of technical language of cookery.

Additionally, Carroll (1999) defines the social features of the medieval culinary recipe thus:

- i) the language being Middle English, and
- j) the audience being the aristocracy.

The most striking technical feature of the Middle English recipe is the lack of quantifications.<sup>8</sup> Taking these features into consideration and looking at the later periods, Görlach (2004: 140) concludes that “it appears likely that the text type ‘cooking recipe’ has seen less development than many other types have”.

## THE CORPUS

The corpus for the present study has been collected from a number of various culinary recipe collections from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (for the full list of the collections, see the Appendix). Altogether 1588 recipes were collected (431 and 1157 from the respective centuries). Due to the unequal size of the material coming from each century (not only the number of recipes differs but also their length – see Table 1), the number of occurrences of the particular lexemes is not

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed comparative study of the culinary and medical recipes see Bator and Sylwanowicz [forthc.<sup>1</sup>].

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of the measure terms within Middle English culinary and medical recipes, see Bator and Sylwanowicz [forthc.<sup>2</sup>].

a reliable indicator of their frequency. Thus, next to the absolute frequencies, the relative normalised frequencies will be given.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1. The size of the analysed material.

period	nr of recipes	nr of words
1 <sup>st</sup> half of 14 <sup>th</sup> c.	65	3,741
2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 14 <sup>th</sup> c.	366	25,282
TOTAL (14 <sup>th</sup> c.)	431	29,023
1 <sup>st</sup> half of 15 <sup>th</sup> c.	650	57,147
2 <sup>nd</sup> half of 15 <sup>th</sup> c.	507	42,117
TOTAL (15 <sup>th</sup> c.)	1,157	99,264

## CULINARY VERBS

The linguistic (multilingual) situation described at the beginning of the article affected the choice of lexical items found in the available culinary recipe collections. It will be shown on the examples of three synonymic verbal triplets: ME *nym* – *take* – *recipe* (‘to take’), ME *boyle* – *seethe* – *parboile* (‘to boil’), and ME *mess* – *serve* – *(a)dress* (‘to serve’). The verbal groups will show the degree of influence which various languages had on the development of the English lexicon, as well as the relation between lexical items of various origins in the culinary texts of the Middle English period.

### ME *NYM* – *TAKE* – *RECIPE*

The rivalry between the verbs *nym* and *take* in Middle English has already been widely dealt with, see for instance Rynell (1948), Iglesias-Rabade (2000), or Wełna (2005). In the analysed material these verbs constituted one of the most numerous verbal groups (in terms of tokens; see Bator 2014), since hardly any recipe, being “the instruction on however to prepare a meal” (Görlach 1992: 745), started in a different way than with the imperative telling the reader what ingredients to take for the preparation of a particular dish. The analysed material

<sup>9</sup> The relative frequency is obtained by dividing the number of occurrences of the analysed lexeme by the total number of words in the analysed (part of the) corpus. The numbers will be then normalised to 10,000 words. For a discussion on normalising data, see Römer and Wulff (2010).

revealed three verbs with the sense ‘to take’, i.e., *nym*, *take* and *recipe*. The number of occurrences of the particular verbs in the two centuries has been shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The number of occurrences of the verbs *nym*, *take* and *recipe* in the analysed material. Relative frequencies have been given in brackets (normalised to 10,000 words).

verb	14 <sup>th</sup> c.	15 <sup>th</sup> c.
<i>nym</i>	112 [38.6]	67 [6.7]
<i>recipe</i>	0	90 [9]
<i>take</i>	610 [210]	2356 [237.3]

The most popular of them, *take*, comes from ON *taka*. It was borrowed in the late Old English period with the sense ‘to touch’. Gradually, it gained a number of senses, one of which (recorded from the 12<sup>th</sup> century) was “to transfer to oneself by one’s own action or volition” (*OED*: s.v. *take*, v.). Its Old English synonym, *niman*, corresponded to *take* with most of its senses (see Rynell 1948: 41-44). Both Rynell (1948) and Wełna (2005) notice that the choice between the two equivalents was dialectal. The third of the verbs, *recipe*, comes from a classical Latin verb meaning ‘to receive’ (*OED*: s.v. *recipe*, v.).<sup>10</sup> It was introduced into English at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as a verb typical for medical recipes. As such, the verb functioned as the head word in physicians’ prescriptions, in which it took the imperative form and meant ‘take (an ingredient)’, see example (1). However, in medical context, the verb was not necessarily restricted to recipe-initial position, see example (2).

(1) [{A}{ne emplastre pat is called Nerbone is made pus:  
**Recipe** diaquilon, and with comon oile or with oleo siriaco  
resolue it vp[on{ } pe cole3, (...)

(MEMT\_Arderne, Clysters\_27)

(2) []3ef aman haue dronke venym or poyson}] [{T}ake betoyn & dry yt & make poudyr  
per of & **Recipe** ij peny weght of pat poudyr & boyll with j pynte of wyn to p=e= thryd  
parte be wastede & 3ef p=e= seke to drynk fastyng.

(MEMT\_Killeen Medical Texts\_14)

As presented in Table 2 above, *take* definitely prevails in the culinary material of the period. The data show the tendency to push *nym* to obsolescence. Moreover, only a few texts contain both verbs (as in example (3)). In the majority of the texts either *take* or *nym* were used. This confirms what Rynell and Wełna stated, i.e., that the choice between the two verbs was dialectally determined. Unfortunately, the provenance of hardly any culinary recipe collection can be specified. However, the

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion on the noun *recipe* and its synonyms, see Bator and Sylwanowicz (forthc.<sup>3</sup>).

majority of the 14<sup>th</sup>-century recipes which contain *nym* rather than *take* come from only two culinary collections: *Diuersa cibaria* (DC) and *Diuersa sericia* (DS). The former originates from Herefordshire, the provenance of the latter has not been established. In the DC collection only two records of *take* were found, which proves that the native English form was still widely used in that region. In the DS collection, the ratio of *take* over *nym* is 92 to 57. Only four recipes contain both verbs. This variety of forms might account for different geographical origin of the particular recipes included in this collection.

Additionally, three and two records of *nym* were found in the *Forme of Cury* (FC) and *Gathering of Middle English Recipes* (GR), respectively (see example (3)). However, these numbers are so insignificant that we may assume that the two collections were written in the area where *take* was dominant in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

(3) **Tak** clene whete & braye yt wel in a mortar tyl pe holes gon of; sepe it til it breste in water. **Nym** it vp & lat it cole. **Tak** good brop & swete milk of kyn or of almand & tempre it perwith. **Nym** 3elkys of eyren rawe (...)

(FC\_1)

In the 15<sup>th</sup>-century material, *nym* was found only in the collections edited by Austin (see Table 3 below for the exact numbers). Only one of the collections could have been assigned provenance, i.e., Aus\_Laud. It is the collection which contains the largest number of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century occurrences of *nym*. The collection, similarly to the 14<sup>th</sup>-century DC collection, originates from Herefordshire. In the other collections edited by Austin, the number of occurrences of *nym*, when compared to that of *take*, is extremely insignificant.

Table 3. The number of occurrences (absolute frequencies) of *nym* and *take* in the collections edited by Austin.

collection	<i>nym</i>	<i>take</i>
Aus_Laud	30	5
BM	12	141
LV	9	210
PD	16	430

Looking at the data from the two Herefordshire collections from the two analysed centuries (i.e., DC and Aus\_Laud), we may conclude that the conservative form was still prevailing in the South Western dialect even in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This contradicts Weřna's conclusions (2005: 66), who writes about a "rise in the incidence of *take*" in the western dialects. However, it should be borne in mind that drawing conclusions on the basis of single collections, not being able to establish the provenance of the others, may be misleading.

Furthermore, the popularity of *nym* in some of the collections may also suggest a certain degree of technicality that the term has obtained. Carroll (1999: 32) notices that certain verbs were used within the culinary recipes as technical language. She writes: “There are Middle English words which have been found only in recipes, (...). Moreover, some cooking verbs are used by non-cookery writers differently from the way they are used in the recipes, indicating the existence of a technical language of cookery”. *Nym*, apart from becoming a dialectal verb, might have played a similar role in the culinary context as the verb *recipe* did in the medical texts (see further this section).

Following the *EDD*, *nym*, with a sense derived from Old English, was used until the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the dialects of Scotland, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Kent, Somersetshire, and Devonshire, meaning ‘to catch up quickly; to take or catch up on the sly; to filch, steal’ (obsolescent). Figure 1 illustrates the dialectal use of the verb.



Figure 1. The dialectal distribution of *nym* (*EDD*: s.v. *nim* v.).

The 15<sup>th</sup>-century material revealed the use of a third verb, i.e. *recipe*. The majority (90%) of its records were found in the Harley collection (Ht\_Hrl). Following *LALME*, the collection originates from Lincolnshire. The typical use of the verb was as the head word in medical prescriptions. In the analysed culinary material *recipe* occurs exclusively in the recipe-initial position, see examples (4)-(5). Eighty nine recipes in the Harley collection begin with a ‘take-verb’, mostly with *recipe*. The other recipes begin with verbs such as *make*, *lay*, *cast*, *seethe*, etc. or with a subjunctive. However,

these are only single occurrences. Figure 2 shows the ratio of the occurrence of the particular verbs in the recipe-initial position. Moreover, *recipe*, even though it is restricted, outnumbers any other verb found in the collection. Figure 3 presents the ratio of occurrence of *recipe* and *take*, which is second most frequent verb in the collection.

(4) Berleggs. **Recipe** creme of almonds & alay it with floure of ryse, & cast perto gyngere;  
(Ht\_Hrl\_7)

(5) To make a Balowbroth. **Recipe** pikes & splate pam on brede, or els if pu have stokfysh,  
(Ht\_Hrl\_21)

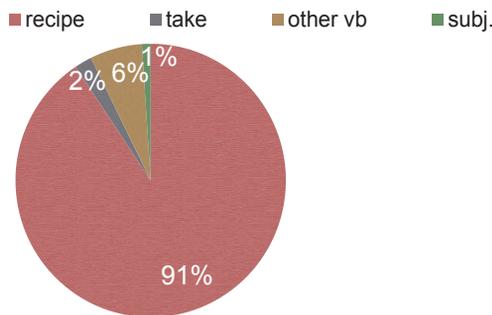


Figure 2. The ratio of occurrence of the particular verbs in the recipe-initial position of the Harley collection.

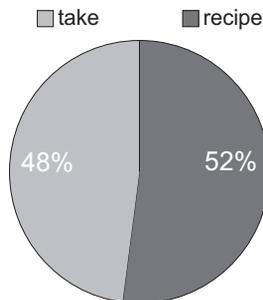


Figure 3. The frequency of occurrence of the particular take-verbs within the recipes of the Harley collection.

The data show that the verb *recipe* was dialectally (occurred only in one collection) and contextually (only in recipe-initial position) restricted. However, bearing in mind that it was typical for medical recipes, one might conclude that it was the author of the collection who was either not familiar with the proper usage of the verb or misinterpreted the recipes as being medical (not culinary).

ME *BOYLE* – *SEETHE* – *PARBOILE*

The second group of verbs refers to ‘cooking in liquid’ (usually in water, but also in wine, broth, etc.). The three verbs selected for the present analysis are ME *boyle*, *seethe* and *parboile*. The first one was derived from Old French *boillir* (from Latin *bullire*) ‘to form bubbles, to boil’. Following the *OED*, its first attestations date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the verb was used with the following senses:

- (i) ‘to reach the boiling point, to turn from the liquid into the gaseous state’ (1225-);
- (ii) ‘to move with an agitation like that of boiling water; to bubble, to seethe’ (1300-);
- (iii) ‘to cause (a liquid) to bubble with heat; to bring to the boiling point: esp. said of food, wholly or partly liquid, in the process of cooking; also of the containing vessel’ (1475-).

The verb *seethe* is a common Germanic verb, which was initially used with the sense ‘to boil; to make or keep boiling hot; to subject to the action of boiling liquid, esp. to cook (food) by boiling or stewing; also to make an infusion or decoction of (a substance) by boiling or stewing’ (*OED*: s.v. *seethe*, v.). And finally, *parboil*, from Anglo-Norman *parboillir*, *perboillir* ‘to cook partially by boiling, to cook thoroughly by boiling’ and Old/Middle French *parboilir* ‘to cook thoroughly by boiling’, was first recorded in English from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with the sense ‘to cook partially by boiling’ (*OED*: s.v. *parboil*, v.).

The frequency of occurrence of the three verbs, as found in the analysed corpus, has been presented in Table 4. The data show that in the 14<sup>th</sup> century it was *seethe* which prevailed, whereas a century later its records diminished by half. In case of *boil* the tendency is quite opposite, it outnumbered the other verbs in the 15<sup>th</sup>-century recipes. The two verbs were originally used synonymously, which can be observed in the 14<sup>th</sup>-century material. Both verbs were used either (i) with the general sense ‘to cook’ – without specifying the vigour of cooking or below the boiling point, see (6)-(7); or (ii) with the specific sense ‘to cook in the temp. of 100°C; to bubble’, see (8)-(9). In a number of cases the title of the recipe suggested boiling, whilst the recipe instructed to seethe certain products, as in (10).

Table 4. The number of occurrences of the verbs of cooking in the analysed centuries. The relative frequencies have been given in brackets (normalised to 10,000 words).

verb	14 <sup>th</sup> c.	15 <sup>th</sup> c.
<i>boyle</i>	200 [68.9]	892 [89.9]
<i>seethe</i>	288 [99.2]	494 [48.8]
<i>parboile</i>	38 [13]	94 [9.5]

- (6) Take wine and hony and found it togyder and skym it clene, and **seep** it long.  
(FC\_96)
- (7) Tak powder of peper & safroun & almandys, & do al togedere. **Boyl** hem long & held yt on a wet bord (...)  
(FC\_110)
- (8) (...) cast perto erbes yhewe gode won, and a quantite of oynouns mynced, powdour fort and safroun, and alye it with ayren and various: but lat not **seep** after.  
(FC\_18)
- (9) (...) lat it nau3t **boyle** after pe eyren ben cast perinne.  
(FC\_1)
- (10) For to **boile** fesautes, pertruches, capouns, and curlewes. Take gode broth and do perto the fowle, and do perto hool peper and flour of canel, a gode quantite, and lat hem **seep** perwith;  
(FC\_37)

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century *boil* dominated the semantic domain and finally pushed *seethe* to metaphorical use. Certain differences in the use of the two verbs have been noticed in the 15<sup>th</sup>-century recipes. The majority of the records of *boil* referred to the complete dish or certain mixtures of products rather than individual ingredients, for which *seethe* was used, see (11). Seething was hardly ever preceded by any other procedures, except for parboiling or cutting larger/harder foodstuffs (such as meat), and was usually followed by further processing, such as roasting, frying, boiling, cutting or cleaning. This suggests that seething became one of the preliminary cooking procedures.

- (11) Take Eyroun, breke hem, an **sethe** hem in hot Water; pan take hem vppe as hole as pou may; pan take flowre, an melle with Mylke, & caste per-to Sugre or Hony, & a lytel powder Gyngere, an **boyle** alle y-fere, & coloure with Safroun;  
(PD\_101)

The third of the verbs in this group referred to a preliminary process of cooking, usually of raw or unprocessed ingredients, in order to soften them, to remove hair or skin, or to make cutting easier. In most of the cases it preceded other culinary procedures, such as cooking (seething, boiling, roasting, etc.), cutting or cleaning. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century a slight decrease in the frequency of *parboil* can be noticed (see Table 4). This might have been caused by the changing denotation of *seethe*, which to a certain degree gained meaning close to that of *parboil*. As a result, the use of the three verbs in the 15<sup>th</sup> century reflects a certain hierarchy of senses, in which *parboil* referred to the most and *boil* to the least preliminary cooking procedure, *seethe* being in between. This hierarchy has also been noticed in phrases which specify the medium in which cooking takes place. And thus, parboiling was conducted in seething- or boiling water/broth (see examples (12)-(13)), seething

only in boiling water/broth (see example (14)), whilst no specifying phrase was found for the verb *boil*.

(12) Take spynoches; **perboile** hem in **sepyng water**.  
(FC\_188)

(13) Take parcill, Swynes grece or suet of shepe, and **parboyle** hem in faire water and fressh **boyling broth**;  
(BK\_72)

(14) (...) & do it to **seep** in **boillyng water**.  
(FC\_182)

#### ME MESS – SERVE – (A)DRESS

The analyzed culinary recipes, unlike in the case of the previously discussed triplets, contained four verbs which were used with reference to serving food. These were: *(a)dress*, *dish*, *mess* and *serve*. However, the only native item, i.e., *dish*, was found only twice in the 14<sup>th</sup>-century material. Thus, it was too infrequent to be taken into account in the present study. All the other verbs are of French/Latin etymology (*OED*; *AND*):

- (i) *(a)dress*, from Old French *dresser* ‘to arrange’, was first recorded in English with the culinary sense in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century;
- (ii) *serve*, from Old French *servir* (from Latin *servire* ‘to be a servant or slave, to serve’), was borrowed into English in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The sense ‘to set (meat or drink) on the table or before a person; to bring in or dish up (a meal)’ was first recorded at the end of the century;
- (iii) *mess*, from the Anglo-Norman noun *mes* ‘portion of food, dish, course’, entered English at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Table 5 shows the frequency of occurrence of each of the borrowed verbs.

Table 5. The number of occurrences of the verbs referring to serving. The relative frequencies have been given in brackets (normalised to 10,000 words).

verb	14 <sup>th</sup> c.	15 <sup>th</sup> c.
<i>(a)dress</i>	52 [17.9]	84 [8.5]
<i>mess</i>	69 [23.8]	24 [2.4]
<i>serve</i>	176 [60.6]	835 [84]

The dominant element in this group was definitely the verb *serve*, both in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. None of the verbs is typical of any collection, which rules out geographical differences in their use (as was the case with the verbs referring to

taking). All the verbs of serving seem to have been synonymous; however, certain shades of meaning can be noticed. And thus, *(a)dress* indicated the manner of serving food, for instance ‘in dishes’ (see example (15)); *serve* and *mess* indicated the readiness of a particular dish to be taken to the table, see (16)-(17). The difference between *(a)dress* and the other verbs can be seen in example (18). *Mess* and *serve* might have been used interchangeably, but only if used separately. When they occurred in the same recipe, the former instructed how to serve a certain dish, for instance with herbs, whilst the latter indicated readiness of the dish to be served, see example (19). Both *serve* and *mess* might have been followed by the particle *forth* (on the occurrences of the verbs with or without the particle, see Bator 2014: 183).

(15) (...) and **dresse** hit **in platers** and pour vynegur thereon,  
(GK\_25)

(16) (...) Aftirward take almaund mylke and do perto, and colour it wip safroun & salt, & **messe** forth.  
(FC\_11)

(17) (...) and loke that hit haue sugur right ynogh, and **serve** hit forth.  
(BK\_99)

(18) (...) & wan it is sodyn **dresse** it into dischis & strew peron powder & **serue** it **forth**.  
(DS\_76)

(19) (...) Cast perto safroun, sugur, & salt, & **messe** it **forth** with colyaundre in confyt rede, & **serue** it **forth**.  
(FC\_132)

Both *(a)dress* and *mess* lose frequency in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, *serve* on the other hand became more popular (see Figure 4).

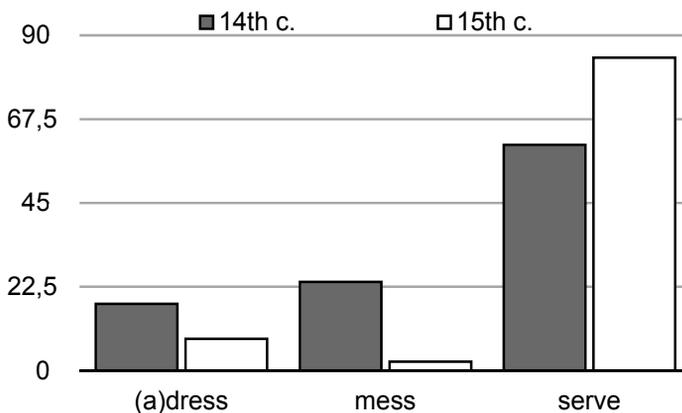


Figure 4. The ratio of occurrence of the verbs *(a)dress*, *mess* and *serve* in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (based on the RNFs).

The rise in the frequency of *serve* can be accounted for by the fact that it was the most general verb of serving – it could have been used with the shades of meaning of the other two verbs. Moreover, the verb was introduced into English a century earlier than the other lexemes, thus, it must have been better assimilated. Both *serve* and (*a*)*dress* were polysemous. But following the *Middle English Dictionary* (s.v. *dressen*, v. 2e), only a single sense of (*a*)*dress* referred to cooking, i.e., “(e) *cook*. to arrange (sth.) for serving, divide into portions; serve (a dish)”, at the same time (*a*)*dress* was gaining more and more senses not related to the semantic domain of serving (see for instance the *OED*); on the other hand, *serve* referred to cooking with five of its senses:

(a) To serve at table, present or distribute food; ~ at bord; ~ in sale (halle); ~ of cuppe (botelerie, win, etc.), be responsible for serving drink; (b) to serve (sb.) at table; present (sb., a hawk) with food or drink; ~ of (with, withal), serve (sb.) using (a cup, vessel, etc.); sengli served, ?attended at table by one servant; (c) to serve (food); also *fig.*; ~ forth (in, forth in), present (food); -- also without obj.; ~ up; (d) to serve (sb. with food or drink) at table; ~ of (with); ~ to the chese, ?serve (sb.) all the courses of a meal, serve (sb.) a complete meal; (e) to present (vessels) at the table; ~ with, spread (the table) with (food).  
(*MED*: s.v. *serven*, v.<sup>1</sup> 12a-e)

*Mess* was becoming restricted to dialectal use (cf. *EDD*).

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study was to illustrate the linguistic results of multilingualism present in England in the medieval period, as well as the effects that the numerous language contacts had on English of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, specifically on the language of cookery. The analysis of the three verbal groups chosen for the present study has shown that native verbs did not play an important role within the analysed culinary domains. In all the verbal groups it was the borrowing which gained dominance within the semantic group. The native element, on the other hand, followed one of the paths:

- (i) it might have become limited to dialectal use, as was the case with the verb *nym*, which gave way to *take*, borrowed from Old Norse;
- (ii) it might have undergone a shift of meaning, as was the case of the verb *seethe*;
- (iii) its culinary denotation might have been lost or limited, as in terms of the verb *seethe*.

The culinary material was dominated by verbs of French / Anglo-Norman origin. However, a certain degree of rivalry can be noticed between the borrowings, similar to that between native and foreign elements. For instance, within the group of verbs of serving, one of the verbs became dialectal (= *mess*), another one was limited in use, to finally lose its culinary reference (= (*a*)*dress*), and the third verb (= *serve*) dominated the domain.

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APPENDIX:  
LIST OF COLLECTIONS AND EDITIONS USED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

collection	abbreviation	date	nr of recipes	length (nr of words)
Austin	Aus_Ashm	1410	19	992
Austin	Aus_Laud	1430	25	1,286
Austin	Aus_Douce	1450	12	1,096
Bake metis	BM	1435	41	4,462
Boke of kokery	BK	1450	182	18,464
Diversa cibaria	DC	1325	63	3,608
Diversa servisa	DS	1381	92	5,894
Forme of Cury	FC	1390	205	12,610
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_AshmB	1390	5	202
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_Har	1395	2	150
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_Ashm	1410	35	1,522
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_SI	1420	11	734
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_Whit	1425	6	282
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_Raw	1435	1	145
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_ASC GR_Roy	1445	2	40 70
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_Rwl GR_Har	1450	85	6,968 46
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_TC	1465	7	388
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_WW	1470	19	1,165
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_SI GR_SA	1480	31	1,601 1,130
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_CUL GR_Pen	1485	111	4,913 3,507
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_TCC GR_Hunt	1490	6	129 302
Gathering of ME recipes	GR_eMus GR_Hus	1495	36	2,734 29
Goud kokery	GK	1340	2	133
Goud kokery	GK	1380	7	801
Goud kokery	GK	1395	9	1,857

continuation of Appendix

collection	abbreviation	date	nr of recipes	length (nr of words)
Goud kokery	GK	1410	1	82
Goud kokery	GK	1420	1	81
Goud kokery	GK	1425	1	62
Goud kokery	GK	1450	3	213
Goud kokery	GK	1480	1	90
Hieatt_Harley	Ht_Hrl	1490	96	5,976
Hieatt_Medium Aevum	MAe	1450	8	678
Historical menus	Cosin	1397	9	661
Leche viaundez	LV	1435	64	6,063
Ordinance of pottage	OP	1460	197	19,912
Ordinance of pottage	OP	1475	3	241
Potage diverse	PD	1435	153	13,861
Utilis coquinario	UC	1395	37	3,107
TOTAL:			1,588	128,287