

*Chelsea Monroe-Cassel*

# THE SHIRE COOKBOOK

RECIPES FROM A HALFLING'S KITCHEN

  
Zauberfeder



Chelsea Monroe-Cassel  
The Shire Cookbook – Recipes From a Halfling's Kitchen

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# THE SHIRE COOKBOOK

RECIPES FROM A HALFLING'S KITCHEN

*For my parents,  
who gave me a great love of fantastical realms,  
usually let me read by flashlight after bedtime,  
and almost always forgive the near disastrous  
state of my kitchen ...*





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## About the Author



Chelsea grew up in rural New York, surrounded by cows and an appreciation for small farms. However, her real love affair with food began during a year abroad in Turkey, which sparked a passion for both culinary matters and history. A lifelong artist and fantasy fan, she greatly enjoys foreign languages, treasure hunting, and all things related to honey. Like the literature she loves, Chelsea's work is a synthesis of imagination and historical research. She is focused on bringing other fantasy worlds to life through food, photography, art, and digital media. She and her husband live in an old Vermont farmhouse with their two kids and an assortment of pets.

## Foreword

The best cookbooks tell stories, and the story of this cookbook starts with a box of handwritten documents that I found in my basement. Upon a closer look it turned out to be an exceptional compilation of recipes, which made the impression of having been written by a halfling cook herself. I modernized this precious collection here and there, commented on it and made a book of it to share with you.

It is perfectly fine to simply use this as you would a normal cookbook. But if you are looking for more, it is there, along

with a few halfling lessons for living a better life: Cherish your friends. Be generous. Welcome unexpected visitors. Don't be hasty. Plant seeds. Tell stories. Be polite to trees. Hope, always.

Leafing through the notes, cooking the dishes, and sensing the fragrances and flavors, I feel myself pulled closer to this fantastical world, where those short, happy eaters live in a secluded bit of countryside, set apart from the bustle of the modern world. And then I like to imagine this world really exists.

Chelsea





# *First Breakfast*

## SAVORY

*From the look of the recipes in this section, it seems that "First Breakfast" was a savory affair, meant to kickstart one's day. It took me by surprise, but I find that I quite like the idea of a first breakfast ...*



# OATCAKES

MAKES A DOZEN SMALL BISCUITS · PREPARATION: 5 MINUTES · COOKING: 30 MINUTES

*This recipe produces crispy little biscuits that are quite plain, but oddly enticing. Ideal for a little savory snack with some cheese or pickles.*

## INGREDIENTS

*½ cup all-purpose flour  
1 cup rolled oats  
1 tsp baking powder  
pinch of salt  
3 Tbsp butter, melted  
2 Tbsp lard, or bacon drippings  
hot water to mix*

*Pre-heat the oven to 300°F. Combine all the dry ingredients in a bowl, and make a small well in the middle. Pour in the butter and lard, and mix until you have a crumbly texture. Gradually add in hot water, just a little at a time, until the dough becomes a workable consistency.*

*Roll out the dough to ⅛ inch thick on a lightly floured surface. You can either cut the oatcakes into triangles or into other shapes with either a glass or cookie cutters. Shift the oatcakes to a baking sheet and bake for 30 minutes.*

*Enjoy warm or store in an airtight container.*







# CUSTARD SAUCE

MAKES ABOUT 1 PINT • PREPARATION: 10–15 MINUTES • CHILLING: AT LEAST 6 HOURS

## INGREDIENTS

2 cups milk or cream  
2 eggs  
½ cup sugar  
1 Tbsp brandy  
pinch of nutmeg

*Creamy, rich, and decadent, this sauce was made to be savored. Try it with fresh, chilled fruit, or alongside some cake. Dip cookies in it, or eat it with a spoon — it's that good.*

Create a double boiler by setting a medium bowl on top of a small saucepan with about an inch of water at the bottom. The bottom of the bowl should not touch the water at all. It should be suspended over the water to let the steam heat the bowl. Set on the stove over medium-low heat. Combine the milk, eggs, and sugar in the bowl of the double-boiler and whisk vigorously for several minutes. Continue to whisk until the mixture thickens noticeably, around 15 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the brandy and nutmeg.

Transfer to a clean container and either serve warm over a hot dessert or chill until cooled. Consider serving over a variety of fresh fruit, such as berries.







# WESTFARTHING RABBIT

MAKES 2 SERVINGS / 4 SLICES • COOKING: 15 MINUTES

*Similar to an open-faced grilled cheese, this dish combines cheddar, beer, and mustard, fluffs it up with some egg, then broils the whole thing on slices of toast. The resulting snack provides a wonderful array of textures, from the crunch of the toast to the rich, fluffy give of the topping. The taste is reminiscent of beer mustard on a pretzel, and the choice of a darker rye bread gives the whole dish a wonderfully rich earthiness.*

## INGREDIENTS

2 Tbsp butter  
1 shallot, sliced thin  
1 cup grated cheddar  
½ cup ale or lager  
1 tsp mustard  
pinch of salt  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
4 slices of bread, your choice  
black pepper

*Melt the butter in a saucepan, then add the shallot until it has softened. Add the cheddar, ale, mustard, and salt. Stir over low heat until the cheese has just melted. Add the eggs and stir until the mixture has slightly thickened, around 2 minutes. Be sure to not overcook, or you'll end up with scrambled eggs!*

*Toast the bread, then spoon the cheesy mixture over the top of the toast. Cook under a hot broiler until the top is puffy and golden. Sprinkle generously with black pepper, and serve.*



# PROPER TEA

*The making of tea is not so complicated a matter as some might suspect. So long as you have boiling water and enough of the pleasing leaf, then the tea will almost always be good.*

*To be sure that the tea is extra hot, warm the teapot by filling it with boiling water for a few minutes. Pour out the water, then add one spoonful of tea leaves for each person, plus one for the pot, then pour the boiling water over top.*

*Milk is optional but encouraged for all black teas. It should never be added to herbal or green teas. Sugar or honey may be added to taste, but too much can obscure the flavor of the tea.*

*Black teas, such as Ceylon, Darjeeling, Assam, and tea blends such as Earl Grey and English Breakfast are all lovely and flavorful options. Looseleaf tea is often superior to our modern teabags, which have small bits of leaf to make the water darken quickly, rather than larger leaves for better flavor. Herbal tisanes, while not proper tea, can also be quite enjoyable, especially in the evening.*







# mushroom soup

MAKES 4 SERVINGS • PREPARATION: 10 MINUTES • COOKING: 45 MINUTES

*Incredibly rich and creamy, a little of this soup goes a long way. The beef broth and smoked salt bring out the earthiness of the mushrooms, while the cheese and cream add to the wonderful texture. Consider serving with some crusty white bread to soak up every bit of soup from the bowl.*

## INGREDIENTS

2 Tbsp butter  
1 large onion, diced  
1-2 cloves garlic, minced  
4 oz shiitake mushrooms, roughly chopped  
10 oz cremini mushrooms, roughly chopped  
2 cups beef broth  
1 cup cream  
1 tsp smoked salt  
1 Tbsp sherry  
½ cup finely shredded sharp cheddar,  
plus more for garnish

Melt the butter in a saucepan, add the onion and garlic, then cook until they are softened but not yet brown. Add the chopped mushrooms and stir to coat them with butter. Cover with broth and cream, add the salt, and bring to just under a simmer for 30 minutes.

Using a slotted spoon, scoop out ½ cup of the cooked mushrooms and onions, and set aside as a garnish. Puree the rest of the soup using either a submersible blender or a food processor. When the texture is smooth and creamy, add the sherry and the grated cheese, then stir to combine.

Scoop into bowls, garnish with the reserved mushrooms, and shred a little extra cheese over the top.





# BRANDY SNAPS

MAKES AT LEAST 2 DOZEN · PREPARATION: 45 MINUTES

*The brandy snap is a fabulous, simple, yet decadent little dessert. The wafers crunch with a dark sweetness, full with the flavors of warm spices and filled with the lightest slightly boozy cream.*

## INGREDIENTS

### WAFERS

$\frac{3}{4}$  cups flour  
 $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp ground ginger  
1 stick butter  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup molasses  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup brown sugar  
1 Tbsp brandy

### FILLING

2 cups heavy cream  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup sugar  
2 Tbsp brandy  
(more to taste)

Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or a silicone sheet and pre-heat the oven to 350°F. Sift together the flour, salt, and spice, then set aside. Have several wooden-handled spoons nearby.

Melt together the butter, molasses, sugars, and brandy in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir gently until the sugar has dissolved, then remove from the heat. Quickly beat in the dry ingredients until just combined.

Drop a teaspoon at a time of the batter onto the prepared baking sheets, leaving about 4 inches of space between each. When the sheet is full, bake for just about 5 minutes, until each drop has spread out and is bubbly. Remove the tray from the oven and allow to cool just until it is cool enough to handle. Carefully peel each disc from the sheet and wrap around the handle of one of the wooden spoons to shape into a tube. Slip off the spoon and place onto a cooling rack. If the discs harden before shaping, return to the oven briefly to soften again.

When you are ready to serve, whip the heavy cream with the sugar until it forms stiff peaks. Add the brandy and beat for another minute. Transfer the whipped cream into a piping bag fitted with a decorative tip. Squeeze the whipped cream into each tube and serve immediately.

The shaped and unfilled wafers can be kept in an airtight container for several days.



# WAYBREAD

MAKES ABOUT 20 • PREPARATION: 10 MINUTES • BAKING: 20 MINUTES

*This is one of the more curious recipes in the collection. It seems to be intended for travel, so the ingredients are high in protein for maximum nutrients. The flavor is quite unique. Between the elderflower, honey, and fresh thyme, the sweet and savory blend with one another, creating a subtle taste experience. They are filling, yet strangely enticing. I have to think that the "original" of which the recipes speaks would have been a different dish altogether.*

## INGREDIENTS

½ cup butter  
½ cup honey  
2 tsp dried elderflower  
1-2 tsp minced fresh thyme  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup oat flour  
½ cup nut flour, such as chestnut,  
hazelnut, acorn, or almond  
¼ cup hot water  
large fresh leaves, about 20  
grass or twine, for tying

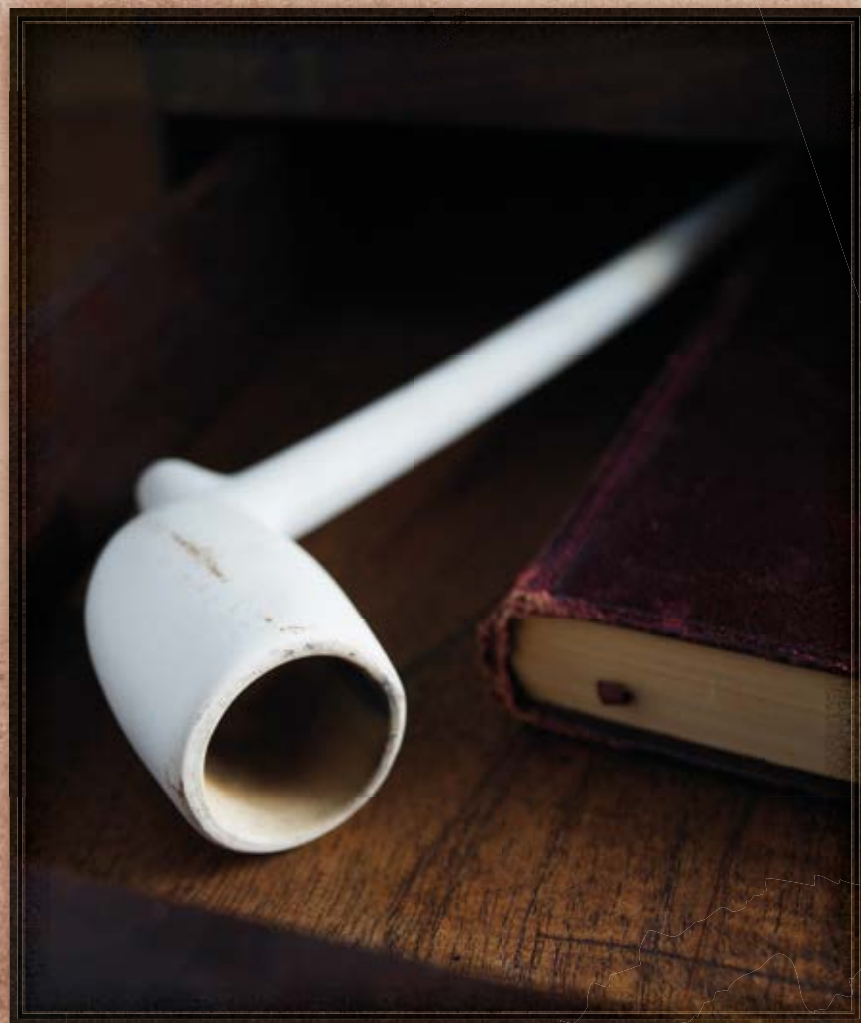
Pre-heat the oven to 300°F. Beat butter and honey in large bowl until the mixture is light and fluffy. Add the elderflower and thyme and work into the mix. Gradually add the flours, beating well after each addition. Add the hot water gradually, until you have a stiff dough that is not too crumbly. If dough becomes too stiff to stir, knead in remaining flour by hand.

Roll out to ½ inch thick on a papered baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes, or until slightly golden. Cut into squares while still warm. Allow to cool, then wrap in leaves of your choice.





# *A note on inspirations*



In the process of writing this cookbook, I have made every effort to thoroughly research the recipes. Some are inspired directly by Tolkien's works, others are based on popular recipes from the era and regions that were the basis for the Shire: the rural England of the late 1890s.

I have used historical recipes contemporaneous to that period, predominantly those drawn from *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*, originally published in 1861. I have also explored traditional dishes from the areas where Tolkien lived and worked. For each recipe, I tried to take into consideration possible trade routes, time period, culture, climate, and a number of other factors.

## *Acknowledgements*

Brent, as always, for his tireless encouragement and patience.

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