

ONE

Early Ices and Ice Creams

A royal dinner in seventeenth-century Naples was a dazzling spectacle. The splendor of the décor complemented the magnificence of the foods, to the delight of the guests. Confectioners seized the opportunity to demonstrate their considerable talents and turned tabletops into showcases of their art. They carved hams from ice and displayed them in baskets made of sugar paste; they shaped lions and bulls from butter and posed them in battle stance. They created fruit-and-flower-filled ice pyramids that glistened in the candlelight. They molded gods from marzipan to watch over the mortals at the table.

The foods that the diners actually ate were equally splendid. They feasted on a dozen or more courses, possibly spit-roasted pork topped with a crown of lemons, fresh strawberries bathed in wine and served atop a mound of snow, lasagna sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon, and dishes of fresh fennel, pears, grapes, and artichokes adorned with snow and flowers. Parmesan cheese was served with sage under it and laurel leaves painted silver and gold over it. There was an abundance of wine. The grand finale was an array of cookies, pastries, and the fashionable new dessert: *sorbetti*.

At the time, Naples was still part of the Spanish empire, and Charles II was its king. Although Spain's power and influence were declining, its nobles entertained as sumptuously as they had when Spain was the dominant power in Europe. They were in the vanguard of the dining changes sweeping through the continent. During the seventeenth century, wealthy Europeans were enjoying products from the New World, tasting tomatoes,

chocolate, peppers, and other new foods. At the same time, changing theories of science were revolutionizing medical and nutritional doctrines, and new techniques and inventions were transforming culinary practices. Nowhere were the changes more pronounced than in fashionable Naples. It was the perfect setting for *sorbetti* to make its debut.

Turning to Ice

All the dining changes taking place were important to the development of ice cream, but first and foremost among them was the discovery of freezing techniques. Long before anyone made ices and ice creams, much less served them to kings, ice and snow were highly valued. They were hard to get, difficult to store, and expensive. In other words, they were perfect status symbols. Those who were able to acquire them flaunted them, using them to add elegance to tables, cool the air on hot summer nights, and crown foods. Athenaeus, the second-century Greek philosopher and author of *The Deipnosophists*, wrote that “in the island of Cimolos underground refrigerators are constructed in summer, where the people store jars full of warm water and draw them out again as cold as snow.” Alexander the Great is said to have had pits constructed in which he stored snow and ice. A fourth-century emperor of Japan, Nintoku, was so pleased by a gift of ice that he designated the first of June as the Day of Ice. On that day each year, he gave chips of ice to palace guests in a ceremony called the Imperial Gift of Ice.¹

By the fifteenth century, the elites of Spain and Italy could send their servants or slaves to nearby mountains, where they gathered snow, packed it down, wrapped it in straw, and carried it home, sometimes on mules' backs, sometimes on their own. They stored the snow in pits dug for the purpose on their masters' estates. Those who lived in areas where shallow ponds froze in winter harvested the ice and stored it in pits. Initially, the storage pits were simply holes in the ground filled with alternating layers of snow and straw and covered with straw or wooden planks. Over time, Europeans built larger and more elaborate pits and lined them with bricks or wooden

slats. The pits were located in dry, cool spots, often on a slope so they would drain well. Later, the well-to-do constructed large, aboveground ice-houses, often of brick. Some of the icehouses were so well constructed that water in them could be frozen into ice, cream could be chilled, and meltwater channeled to cool wine in a nearby cellar. In England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, icehouses became architectural whimsies: they masqueraded as Greek temples or Chinese pagodas.²

But an icehouse allows only storage. The key to making ices was in finding out how to make ice or snow freeze other substances. That happened in the mid-sixteenth century, when Italian scientists learned that immersing a container of water in a bucket of snow that was mixed with potassium nitrate, or saltpeter, would freeze the water. Giambattista della Porta described the theory in his *Natural Magick*, published in 1558 and soon translated and disseminated throughout Europe.

Wine may freeze in Glasses.

Because of the chief thing desired at feasts, is that Wine cold as ice may be drunk, especially in summer. I will teach you how Wine shall presently, not only grow cold, but freeze, that you cannot drink it but by sucking, and drawing in of your breath. Put Wine into a Vial, and put a little water to it, that it may turn to ice the sooner. Then cast snow into a wooden vessel, and strew into it Saltpeter, powdered, or the cleansing of Saltpeter, called vulgarly Salazzo. Turn the Vial in the snow, and it will congeal by degrees. Some keep snow all the summer. Let water boil in Brass kettles, and pour it into great bowls, and set them in the frosty cold air. It will freeze, and grow harder than snow, and last longer.³

Eventually, scientists and then cooks learned that common salt would work as well as saltpeter. For centuries, the combination of ice and salt was used for freezing. Even today, some home cooks use the method when they're making ice cream. Mixing salt with ice lowers the ice's freezing point, causing it to melt. As it does, heat is transferred away from the ice cream mixture and it freezes.

When Della Porta filled his vial with wine diluted with water and turned it in the salted snow, the result was a semifrozen, slushy wine that was a hit at banquets. Illustrations of vials or flasks being turned in their tubs look uncannily like later illustrations of ice cream freezers being turned in their ice-filled tubs. A Spanish doctor practicing in Rome at the time, Blas Villafranca, wrote that this was the new way to cool wine and water, and that all the nobility and gentry of Rome used the method.⁴

In addition to slushy wine coolers, the new technique made possible all sorts of fanciful ice artistry. Cooks dipped fresh fruits in water, froze them until their icy exteriors sparkled, and then displayed them. They set marzipan boats afloat on seas of ice. They created tall pyramids of ice with fruits and flowers frozen within them. For a dinner in Rome celebrating the feast of the Assumption on August 15, 1623, Antonio Frugoli, a steward and author of *Practica e scalcaria*, made an ice pyramid with a fountain in its center. During dinner, fragrant orange-flower water splashed over the icy fountain for more than half an hour, according to Frugoli's account.⁵ The coolness as well as the fragrance and beauty of the centerpiece must have charmed the guests.

Best of all, the new freezing technique made it possible for cooks and confectioners to begin experimenting with making ices and ice creams.

“The Stomach Grows Chilled”

Not everyone took to all this iciness immediately. Dietetic beliefs were still governed by the humoral doctrine in the early seventeenth century, and its adherents prized moderation above all. Based on the writings of Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Galen, the doctrine classified people according to four humors or temperaments: sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic. Each had its own characteristics and required particular foods or food preparation methods to achieve the ideal, which was defined as a slightly warm, slightly moist body.

Those whose dominant humor was sanguine were of a hot and moist character, so they required cooling, drying foods. Choleric were hot and

dry and needed cooling, moistening foods. Foods were classified as hot, cold, dry, or moist to varying degrees, a classification that had little to do with their physical properties. For example, strawberries were cold and dry in the first degree, and dates were hot in the second degree and moist in the first degree.⁶

Temperature was also important, since extremes of any kind were to be avoided. Very cold foods and drinks were considered especially dangerous. Hippocrates had written, “Cold things, such as snow and ice, are inimical to the chest, being provocative of coughs, of discharges of blood, and of catarrhs.”⁷ In the fifth century, Anthimus wrote, “The stomach grows chilled and loses its efficacy”⁸ as a result of consuming cold drinks. Colic, convulsions, paralysis, blindness, madness, and sudden death were some of the problems attributed to putting ice in drinks. According to French food historian Jean-Louis Flandrin, the prejudice against iced drinks was based on the belief that wine turned into blood when drunk. To avoid serious injury it had to be drunk at body temperature.⁹

In addition, some believed that chilling drinks by immersing a decanter in ice and saltpeter was dangerous because particles of saltpeter could penetrate the decanter, get into the water or wine, and burn up the intestines.¹⁰ Small wonder that, despite changing ideas about science and nutrition, many seventeenth-century doctors disapproved of cold drinks, not to mention ices.

Of course, people don't always follow their doctor's advice today, and many didn't then either. Their rationalizations—everyone else does it, I don't do it often, I don't use much—are familiar, too. The sixteenth-century French essayist Michel de Montaigne was visiting Florence when he wrote, “It is customary here to put snow into the wine glasses, I put only a little in not being too well in body.”¹¹ The noted seventeenth-century English diarist John Evelyn blamed “an *Angina* & soare Throat” on drinking wine with “Snow & Ice as the manner here is” when he was staying in Padua.¹²

Long after humoral theory had been forgotten, some of its tenets remained in popular consciousness. At the turn of the twentieth century,

famed cookbook writer and cooking school director Fannie Farmer wrote of ices, “Hygienically speaking, they cannot be recommended for the final course of a dinner, as cold mixtures reduce the temperature of the stomach, thus retarding digestion until the normal temperature is again reached.”¹³

However, most physicians were leaving the humoral system behind by the latter part of the seventeenth century. Chefs and diners alike were only too happy to follow their lead. European eating habits were changing; heavily spiced and sweetened foods were off the table, herbs and salads were on. Wines sparkled. Sugar found its home in the dessert course.

A Sip of Sherbet

Once scientists had mastered freezing, and medicine had more or less given its approval, creating recipes for ices and ice creams was relatively simple. After all, cooks had for many years been making the drinks and creams that were the precursors of ices and ice creams.

In the Middle East, drinks known as sherbets—*sharâb* or *sharbât* (Arabic), *sharbate* (Persian), *serbet* (Turkish)—have been ubiquitous since medieval times. European travelers encountering them for the first time often wrote about them with great enthusiasm. Sir Thomas Herbert, who traveled in Persia from 1627 to 1629, wrote, “Their liquor is sometimes fair water, sugar, rose-water, and juice of lemons mixed, and sugar confected with citrons, violets or other sweet flowers; and for the more delicacy, sometimes a mixture of amber; this we call sherbet.” He said sherbet was “a drink that quenches thirst and tastes deliciously.” The Persians served their sherbets over ice or snow in large porcelain or gold bowls and sipped them from long-handled wooden spoons.¹⁴

A nineteenth-century English novelist, James Morier, described the flavor of Persian sherbets as “so mixed that the sour and the sweet were as equally balanced as the blessings and miseries of life.”¹⁵ Sour flavors were popular in Middle Eastern sherbets, and in fact, sour Cornelian cherries (*Cornus mas*) were so commonly used in Turkish sherbets that the cherries were also called, simply, sorbet. Pomegranate, citron, lemon,

lime, and quince were also popular drink flavors in the Middle East. European drink flavors included lemon, strawberry, raspberry, cherry, apricot, peach, pistachio, and hazelnut. The drinks were made by blending fruit juices and other flavorings with sugar and water, or a sugar syrup, then chilling them with snow or ice. We make lemonade the same way today, although ice has replaced snow. To freeze the drinks into smooth ices requires added sugar, something cooks figured out after they had made a few very icy ices. Eighteenth-century drink recipes often directed the reader to double the sugar when turning a drink into an ice.

Iced sherbet drinks were also made from powders. That may sound like a modern-day shortcut, but the use of powders is centuries old. Jean Chardin, another seventeenth-century traveler in Persia, wrote, “In Turkey they keep them in Powder like Sugar: That of Alexandria, which is the most esteem’d throughout this large Empire, and which they transport from thence every where, is almost all in Powder. . . . They keep it in Pots and Boxes; and when they would use it, they put a Spoonful of it into a large glass of Water. It mixes of itself with the Water, without being forc’d to stir it, as we do our Syrups, and makes a most admirable Liquor.”¹⁶

Some nineteenth-century confectioners made what they called “essences” by combining the grated rind of a lemon or other fruit with sugar, pressing the mixture into a stone jar, covering it, and storing for a month before using it as a base to make ices.¹⁷ The essences may have made something like the sherbet powder Chardin observed.¹⁸

The word *sharbat* appeared in Italian in the late sixteenth century as the name of a Turkish beverage. The frozen dessert became known as *sorbetto* in Italian, *sorbet* in French, *sorbete* in Spanish. The English language kept the *h* and called it sherbet. Middle Eastern sherbets are still drinks, but European and American sherbets are generally ices or ice milks.¹⁹

Iced Cream

Cooks had been making creams and custards, both simple and sophisticated, since the Middle Ages. In medieval England, “cream of almonde”

was a popular dessert. Spanish cooks made a *crema Catalana*, which was golden with saffron. The Italian *crema della mia nonna* (my grandmother's cream) was sweetened with honey and flavored with citron. The English made a sage cream with red sage and rose water. They also made cabbage cream by building up skins of cream "round and high like a cabbage."²⁰ The cream did not contain cabbage. It was meant to look like the vegetable, not to taste like it.

A seventeenth-century Italian cook, Bartolomeo Stefani, made a custard he called *latte alla spagnuola*, or "Spanish-style cream." Made with milk, cream, sugar, and eggs, it is flavored with musk, the only ingredient that makes it seem dated. After it was cooked, Stefani heated a paddle in the fire and used it to brown the top, which he sprinkled with sugar. It's very like a *crème brûlée*.²¹

Another cream dessert, popular in France and Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was called *neige*, or "snow," in France; *latte miele*, or "whipped cream," in Italy; and snow in England. Cooks whipped cream, sugar, and sometimes a flavoring such as rose water or orange flower water, scooped off the frothy puffs of faux snow, and let them drain. As frugal as they were fanciful, the cooks put cream that drained off back into the original mixture and rewhipped it, so as not to waste any. After the snows had drained, they were either served immediately or set on ice to chill before serving. Occasionally they were stabilized with the addition of meringue. Later frozen desserts were also called snows.

Some creams were made with unusual (to us) ingredients such as laurel leaves, saffron, musk, tarragon, celery, violets, and rose petals. Others are as familiar to us as the flavors on an ice cream shop menu: caramel, lemon, ginger, almond, strawberries, raspberries, and even crumbled cookies. Some recipes were simple mixtures of cream, sugar, and flavorings or pureed fruit. Others were custards, made just as they are today with cream or milk or both, egg yolks, sugar, and a flavoring. In his 1685 work, *The Accomplish'd Cook*, English chef Robert May made some of his creams with egg yolks,

some with egg whites, some with whole eggs, and some, rather casually, “with eggs, or without.”²²

Often custards were baked in pies, and then as now, they were the stuff of farce. A clown jumping into a giant custard pie and splashing the filling on the guests was a high point of eighteenth-century English banquets. In the early part of the twentieth century, actors hurling custard pies at each other was the height of hilarity in American silent films.²³

Most of the early creams and custards could have served as the basis for ice creams with very little change. In fact, in the early days of freezing, cooks gave detailed instructions on how to freeze ice cream but sketchy directions for making the mixture, perhaps because *everyone* knew how to make creams but not how to freeze them. Once they understood that, they turned their creams into “iced creams,” as they were quite logically called at first.

Snow Wonders

Antonio Latini was one of the first to write in detail about making and serving ices. He was the author of *Lo scalco alla moderna*, or *The Modern Steward*, a two-volume work published in 1692 and 1694,²⁴ one of the most extensive European culinary texts published before the end of the century. Latini, whose title reveals that he considered himself a “modern steward,” was at the forefront of many of the culinary changes of the day: using New World foods, promoting regional specialties, and taking advantage of the latest scientific discoveries. When he wrote the book, Latini was the *scalco* for the household of Don Stefano Carrillo Salcedo, first minister of the Spanish viceroy in Naples. It was a position of consequence in a noble household. As *scalco*, Latini was responsible for overseeing everything from food to finances. No detail was too large or too small for his attention, from planning menus and selecting wines to directing the fanciful folding of napkins. The *scalco* supervised the cooks, carvers, and other servants, selected the musicians and singers, and balanced the budget. He planned and managed everything from royal picnics to wedding banquets. Most important, he made sure all was carried out with panache.

Latini was an unlikely candidate for such a position. Born in a small town called Coll'Amato in the Marche region on the east coast of Italy in 1642, he was orphaned when he was five. He had to beg for food and a place to sleep until he found work as a servant. It was an inauspicious start to a remarkable life.

In seventeenth-century Europe, birth was generally destiny. Most people were poor and illiterate, and few ever traveled more than fifty miles from their birthplace. Latini was an exception. In one home where Latini worked, a priest who served as a cook taught him the rudiments of reading and writing. When he was sixteen, Latini went to Rome to try to better himself. There he worked as a cook, a waiter, and a wardrobe attendant in the household of Cardinal Antonio Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII. Working for one of the most powerful families in one of the world's most sophisticated cities, Latini honed his skills. He became more literate; he learned the duties of a *cuoco* (cook), *trinciante* (carver), and *scalco*. Most important, he saw how a grand ecclesiastical household was managed. After working for officials in Rome and Faenza, Latini went to Naples and became the *scalco* for the Salcedo household in 1682.²⁵

While working in Cardinal Barberini's household, Latini would have worn clerical garb since, at the time, the clothing of the staff reflected the style of those they served. When he moved to Naples and rose to the rank of steward, he wore elegant Spanish attire and was allowed to wear a wig. In his book's frontispiece portrait, Latini looks more like a king than a cook. He sports a lace jabot and flowing robes, and his wig's ringlets rival those of France's king, Louis XIV. Latini's intense deep-set eyes, imposing nose, and serious demeanor all convey the impression of a man of substance. To emphasize his intellect, he's depicted holding a book; Latin inscriptions and ornate curlicues decorate the oval frame around him. It's a portrait of a man of elegance and erudition.

In his book, Latini described the duties of a *cuoco*, *trinciante*, and *scalco* in detail. He devoted several pages to the many responsibilities of a *scalco* and stressed that he owed complete loyalty to his master. He wrote that

a *cuoco* should be good and faithful and not overly fond of drink. He explained how a *trinciante* was supposed to carve all kinds of meats, fish, and fruit. In Latini's world, a carver not only had to be highly skilled, he had to be a showman as well. He was expected to be able to spear a roasted bird on a fork, hold it up in the air for the guests to see, and then, still holding it aloft, carve it precisely.

Latini listed food specialties from each region in the Kingdom of Naples, explained how to select fish, and noted where to find the best prosciutto, the finest rice, and the most abundant saffron. His recipes included soups, meats, fish dishes, pastas, sauces, drinks, and pastries. He offered multi-course menus for banquets, weddings, and other events, even one for a trip to watch Vesuvius erupting. Although he included a few medieval leftovers such as sugared pasta, *Lo scalco alla moderna* made it clear that Latini was embracing modern ways. In one chapter, he advocated cooking with fresh herbs such as parsley, thyme, and mint instead of sweet spices such as cinnamon and clove, citing the longevity of Capuchin monks as proof that the regimen was healthy.

So thoroughly have New World foods been integrated into the European diet that today people find it difficult to imagine Italy without tomatoes, France without haricots verts, and Ireland without potatoes. However, it took Europeans a long time to accept some of the new foods. Well into the eighteenth century, people looked on potatoes with fear and contempt, and some thought they caused leprosy.²⁶ Jean Le Rond d'Alembert and Denis Diderot's eighteenth-century *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751–1780) conceded that potatoes were nutritious, but suggested that they were more appropriate for peasants and laborers than for the upper classes. The now-ubiquitous tomato was not widely eaten in Europe until the eighteenth century, and it was not used as a sauce for pasta until later still. Most paintings of macaroni eaters show the pasta dressed only with cheese, and printed recipes for pasta with tomato sauce didn't show up until the nineteenth century.²⁷ So, even though he was writing two hundred years after Columbus landed in America, Latini's

use of New World foods such as tomatoes, which he called variously *poma d'oro* and *pomodoro*, was modern and innovative. In fact, his recipes for tomato sauces are thought to be the first recorded in Italian. One, which he called "Sauce in the Spanish Style," was made with roasted and then peeled and minced tomatoes, along with minced onions, hot chili peppers, thyme, salt, oil, and vinegar. Latini wrote that it was a very tasty sauce for boiled dishes or anything else, but did not suggest using it with pasta.

Latini's *sorbetti* recipes were the first published in Italian, and to this day Italian ices and ice creams are prized. In his introduction to the section on ices, Latini said every Neapolitan was born knowing how to make them. He said great quantities were eaten in Naples, and they had the consistency of sugar and snow. Latini explained that he was not writing for the many Neapolitan experts, but was trying to help those who had yet to learn how to make ices. He promised he would not give away any professional secrets, and he did not. By today's standards, his recipes are not explicit enough to work from unless one is experienced. But they tell us what kinds of ices were eaten in Naples at the time and, roughly, how they were made. He also gave us nine recipes when others of the era offered no more than one or two. In his recipes, Latini used the feminine *sorbetta* (singular) and *sorbette* (plural) rather than today's masculine *sorbetto*, *sorbetti*.

Here is his recipe for lemon sorbet:

PER FARE VENTI GIARE DI SORBETTA DI LIMONE

Si richiedono trè libre di Zuccaro, Sale libre trè, e mezza, tredici libre di Neve, Limoni numero trè, quando sieno grossi, se saranno piccioli, ti regolerai a giudizio, particolarmente nella Stagione estiva.

TO MAKE TWENTY GOBLETS OF LEMON SORBET

You need three pounds of sugar, three and a half pounds of salt, thirteen pounds of snow, and three lemons, if they are fat. If they are small, you must adjust the amount according to your judgment, particularly in summer.

Latini was writing for professionals; they would have understood that the snow and salt were intended to go into the freezing pot, not into the sorbet itself. But if they weren't familiar with the method, they would not learn it from Latini. He didn't offer any instructions as to cooking, freezing, stirring, or timing. When he said ices had the consistency of sugar and snow, he implied that he was making what we would call scoopable ices rather than hard, icy ones.

The balance of sugar and liquid is critical in making ices. Use too much sugar, and you get a thick, sweet slush that never freezes completely. Use too little, and you get an ice so icy you can't get a spoon through it. Although it's difficult to judge exactly, since measurements and lemons have changed over the years, Latini's lemon sorbet would seem to have been tooth-achingly sweet, not very lemony, and unlikely to freeze very well. He was making enough to fill *venti giarre*, or twenty goblets. A *giarre* was just over six ounces, so twenty goblets would be nearly four quarts. But he used, roughly, eight cups of sugar.²⁸ For the same amount of sorbet, we'd use about four cups. He used just three lemons, but how big and how juicy were they? We'd use the juice of four or five lemons plus water to make one quart of lemon sorbet.

Among Latini's ices was one he called a milk sorbet. He never used the word *gelato*.

SORBETTA DI LATTE

Per fare altra Sorbetta di Latte, che prima sia stato cotto, ci vorrà di Dosa una Carrafa, e meza di Latte, meza d'acqua, trè libre di Zuccaro, oncie sei di Cedronata, ò Cocuzzata trita; nella Neve, e nel Sale, ti regolerai, come sopra.

MILK SORBET

To make another sorbet of milk, which first you must cook, you need a carafe and a half of milk, half of water, three pounds of sugar, six ounces of candied citron or pumpkin finely cut up; the snow and salt you'll measure as above.

Latini's *carrafa* was just over half a liter,²⁹ so a carafe and a half of milk plus a half carafe of water would be a little more than a liter of liquid, mixed with three pounds of sugar. A mixture that sweet seems unlikely to freeze well. And why use any water? How rich and creamy was his milk? We don't know. Interestingly, this was the only sorbet Latini cooked. Was this an early ice cream or, more likely, a harbinger of ice creams to come?

When Latini was writing, chocolate was a popular hot drink in Europe. Spanish conquistadors had first tasted it in the form of the bitter, cold drink of the Aztecs and rejected it. But after they sweetened it, added Old World spices like cinnamon and anise, and heated it, they adopted it as their own. Chocolate was introduced to Spain during the late sixteenth century, initially as a medicine. It traveled throughout Europe, in the words of Sophie and Michael Coe, authors of *The True History of Chocolate*, "from one court to another, from noble house to noble house, from monastery to monastery."³⁰ It was made in special chocolate pots, mixed not only with sugar and cinnamon but also with chili peppers, almonds, honey, milk, eggs, musk, bread crumbs, and ground maize. Finally, it was whisked into a froth with a grooved wooden beater called a *molinillo*. In the early seventeenth century, hot chocolate became a fashionable drink at the Spanish court. Royals and their guests sipped their chocolate from porcelain cups on saucers garnished with gold. They drank it first thing in the morning and in the afternoon, at court and at bullfights, and they dunked their biscuits into it.

Making ices with chocolate was an innovation, and Latini had two recipes. The first was frozen in tablets or bricks, which, he said, required more salt and snow to freeze. He called the second ice a chocolate mousse and said it should be stirred constantly during the freezing process to make it foam, then served as soon as it was frozen. This was his only comment about the necessity of stirring ices, something future cooks would emphasize.

Given the many ingredients people added to hot chocolate, it's interesting that Latini's chocolate ice recipes simply called for chocolate and sugar.

It's possible that he was using chocolate to which cinnamon or other spices had already been added. Or perhaps he preferred his chocolate plain and simple.

His cinnamon ice had the happy addition of pine nuts. Again, since he simply listed ingredients, we don't know exactly how he made the sorbet. He may have stirred in the pine nuts at the last minute to add crunch, as we would today. But it's more likely that he steeped them in the liquid to add flavor and then strained them out, as most recipes dictated throughout the next century. Smooth, not chunky, was the preference in ices for many years.

Latini was a little more explicit about some details. His recipe for strawberry sorbet specified that the strawberries be fresh, picked not more than a day before, and he instructed his readers to be sure to get every bit of the stones out of the cherries when making his sour cherry sorbet. He also had a recipe calling for dried cherries when fresh ones were out of season.

One of his more enigmatic recipes calls for *robba candita diversa*, which translates to "varied candied things," most probably lemon, citron, or pumpkin, as in the milk sorbet. However, although he included the recipe among the *sorbetti*, he says the mixture was intended to be frozen in the tall pyramid shapes so popular at the time; so it may have been destined to be a glistening icy centerpiece, one of the *trionfi*, literally "triumphs," that decorated royal banquet tables, rather than an edible dessert. In that case, the varied candied things could be almost anything.

Latini was as generous with his ices as he was with his recipes. At one of his banquets, the last course included an abundance of *sorbetti*, and he said that he had them served to guests and servants alike. When he made this highly unusual gesture, perhaps he was remembering his own days as a humble servant.

Sugar and Snow in France

Imagine Paris without coffee or cafés or sorbets. It is nearly impossible. Yet until the mid-seventeenth century, Parisians knew coffee only as an exotic

Middle Eastern beverage; the classic Parisian café did not yet exist; and ices were a dessert reserved for the privileged few. The three new arrivals would soon transform life in the city of light.

Europeans began to hear about coffee from travelers' accounts of their experiences in Persia, Turkey, and other Middle Eastern countries where they first tasted the curious and bitter drink. Often they described it with less than enthusiasm. Sir Thomas Herbert, the early-seventeenth-century traveler, wrote of Persia:

Here be coffee-houses, which also are much resorted to, especially in the evening. The coffee, or coho, is a black drink, or rather broth, seeing they sip it as hot as their mouth can well suffer out of small China cups; 'tis made of the flower of bunny or choavaberry, steeped and well-boiled in water; much drunk, though it please neither the eye nor taste, being black and somewhat bitter (or rather relished like burnt crusts), more wholesome than toothsome, yet (if it be true as they say) comforts raw stomachs, helps digestion, expels wind, and dispels drowsiness, but of the greater repute from a tradition they have that it was prepared by Gabriel as a cordial for Mussulmans.³¹

Coffee was introduced to the French royal court in the mid-seventeenth century, but some did not take to it initially. Madame de Sévigné, whose letters to her daughter so brilliantly described life among French nobility at the time, thought coffee drinking was nothing more than a passing fad at first. Then she discovered that, with enough milk and sugar, this “lait cafeté ou café laité” was “très jolie,” and a great consolation during Lent.³²

By the 1670s, coffee drinking was also becoming popular with the public. Coffee was sold by street vendors who often dressed up as turbaned Turks, regardless of their actual country of origin, to emphasize the exotic nature of the drink. One such vendor was a young Sicilian named Francesco Procopio dei Coltelli. He was employed by an Armenian man known as Pascal, who sold coffee in a stall at the popular Saint Germain

Fair in the heart of Paris. When Pascal decided to go to London to seek his fortune, Procope, as he became known, took over the stall. Later, he joined the guild of *distillateurs-limonadiers* and opened a small café on the Rue de Tournon. In 1686, he moved to the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain and opened the café called Le Procope. Although at the time Parisians could buy coffee at the fairs, from street vendors, and in a handful of dark and dank shops, there were few fashionable public places in which to enjoy the new drink. Procope's café boasted glittering crystal chandeliers, marble-topped tables, and shimmering mirrors and was, by all accounts, dazzling. It set the standard for all that followed.

Just a year after Le Procope opened, the Comédie Française moved in across the street. (The street name was later changed to the Rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie.) The café soon attracted writers, actors, and other artists, as well as audiences from the theater. Procope served coffee, chocolate, liqueurs, and ices. Although he did not introduce them to Paris, Procope made ices popular when he gave fashionable Parisians a setting in which to enjoy them.³³ Later, leading intellectuals of the Enlightenment, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot, and Voltaire, made Café Procope their headquarters. When he was in Paris, Benjamin Franklin was another of its habitués. Voltaire set one of his plays, *L'Écossaise*, in a café modeled on Café Procope.³⁴ Perhaps inspired by the ice cream he enjoyed there, he is credited with having said, "Ice cream is exquisite. What a pity it isn't illegal."

In 1692, the same year the first volume of *Lo scalco alla moderno* was published in Naples, *La maison réglée* was published in Paris. Written by Nicolas Audiger, it is a book about running what he called a household of quality. Audiger was writing toward the end of a long career as a confectioner, distiller, and maître d'hôtel, a position that corresponded to that of a *scalco*. When he had started working, more than thirty years earlier, France was becoming the culinary epicenter of Europe.

Over the years, Audiger served many of the members of the court of Louis XIV. He worked as a confectioner and *liqueuriste* for one of the Sun

King's favorites, the Comtesse de Soissons. He worked for the king's chief minister, Colbert, and for Colbert's son-in-law, the Comte de Saint-Aignan. Audiger helped prepare festivities at Versailles, Chantilly, and other royal settings. Eventually he opened a shop as a confectioner and *distillateur* at the Place de Palais Royal, and often provided refreshments, including *eaux glacées*, or ices, for royal feasts.

Audiger wrote that, early in his career, he went to Italy to learn how to make "en perfection" the ices, as well as liqueurs and other drinks that later became so fashionable in Paris.³⁵ He said that, although he was experienced in French confectionery and distillation and had traveled in Spain, Holland, and Germany, it was only in Italy that he could perfect his skills. He learned how to make chocolate, tea, and coffee there, and claimed that he helped introduce them to France. By the time he wrote his book, they were all very well known in Paris, but perhaps he was one of those who had helped to popularize them.

Audiger spent fourteen months in Italy, and after he returned to France, he tried—ceaselessly and unsuccessfully—to have the king give him the exclusive right to produce and sell the liqueurs of Italy in France. As he tells the story in his book, Audiger was on his way back to France in January 1660 when he happened upon some early peas growing in Genoa.³⁶ He says that he had them gathered up and packaged in a box along with some rosebuds, and took them back to France. He presented them to the king, who was impressed with their freshness and flavor and offered Audiger a monetary reward for the out-of-season treat. Audiger turned it down. He wanted, instead, the monopoly on producing the Italian drinks. The king and various court officials smiled on Audiger, but never granted him his request. He describes his quest in some detail in his book and seems never to have come to terms with his disappointment. He was furious when a guild of liqueur makers was established and people who, in Audiger's opinion, knew nothing of the craft were allowed to buy their masterships without undergoing a test of their skills. Procope may have been one of those who inspired Audiger's scorn.

La maison réglée, however, is a much greater legacy—if not so profitable at the time—than the liqueur monopoly would have been. In the book, Audiger described in detail how a noble household should be run. He discussed staffing, shopping, budgeting, menu planning, and table setting. He described the responsibilities of each member of the staff, including the maître d’hôtel and the redundantly titled *officier d’office*, both positions he himself had held. The development of haute cuisine brought about a division of kitchen labor in large noble households that would later be reflected in grand restaurants, and Audiger described the way it was organized. The large kitchen, or *cuisine*, was where most foods were prepared. This was the domain of the head cook, called the *écuyer* or *officier de cuisine*; the roastcook, or *rôtisseur*; and their assistants and aides. A smaller, cold kitchen was known as the *office* and was presided over by the *officier d’office*. He and his assistants made salads, pastries, liqueurs, jams, syrups, marzipan, and candy. They were responsible for the wine cellar, the silver, and the linens. When coffee, tea, and hot chocolate became chic, the *officiers* learned how to make and serve them. And when ice cream came along, it, too, was in their purview.³⁷

In the section of his book devoted to making liqueurs and waters “à la mode d’Italie,” Audiger gave instructions for distilling liquors and for making the nonalcoholic drinks called waters. His flavors included orange flower, lemon, strawberry, currant, raspberry, cherry, apricot, peach, pear, almond, pomegranate, *verjus* (literally “green juice,” the sour juice of unripe grapes that is still used in place of lemon juice or vinegar), pine nut, pistachio, hazelnut, cinnamon, coriander, chervil, and fennel. The word *sorbet* was not yet in common use. Audiger used the phrase *sorbec de levant*, which would seem to refer to the Middle Eastern origin of sherbets. His book did not include any recipes specifically for ices. Instead, he wrote that, to freeze any of the waters into ices, one should double the sugar and increase the fruits, flowers, or seeds by half in order to make the taste stand up to the cold. Freezing does make flavors come through less strongly, and experienced cooks know mixtures should taste a little too strong when

they're warm if they are to have enough flavor when frozen. Here is Audiger's lemonade:

POUR FAIRE DE BONNE LIMONADE

Sur une pinte d'eau metez trois jus de citron,³⁸ sept ou huit zestes, et si les citrons sont gros et bien à jus il n'en faut que deux, avec un quarteron de sucre ou tout au plus cinq onces. Lorsque le sucre est fondu et le tout bien incorporé, vous le passerez à la chausse, le ferez rafraicir et le donnerez à boire.

TO MAKE GOOD LEMONADE

Add the juice of three lemons to a pint of water, along with seven or eight zests, and if the lemons are fat and full of juice, you'll only need two, with a quarter pound of sugar, or at most five ounces. When the sugar has dissolved and is completely incorporated, strain it, chill it and offer it to drink.

To turn it into a lemon sorbet, Audiger would have us double the sugar to about ten ounces. Weighing sugar with a simple kitchen scale, that's about one and a third cups of sugar. So Audiger's sorbet was sweet but probably not as sweet as Latini's. He also added lemon zests, which Latini didn't mention, so Audiger's would have had more flavor.

Unlike Latini, Audiger gave us lengthy freezing instructions. He said that the waters should be put in containers, covered, and placed in a large tub at one finger's distance from each other. Then he filled the tub with ice that had been crushed well and mixed with salt. He explained that the containers had to be completely covered with ice and the tub had to be full. After letting the containers sit for half to three-quarters of an hour, he opened them and mixed the contents with a spoon. Then, being careful not to let any of the salted ice get into the containers, he recovered them and piled the ice back around and over them. Audiger instructed his readers to use a tub with a hole cut in the bottom and to supply it with a plug to let the melting water drain out from time to time.

Freezing ices was a chilly, laborious task; but neither Latini nor Audiger discussed that aspect of sorbet making. Having servants or apprentices to do the grunt work made it much lighter.

Audiger emphasized the importance of stirring the ices as they froze so their texture would be more like snow than ice. They would also taste better, he said, since otherwise the sugar would settle on the sides and bottom of the container, and the sorbet would be weak and watery. Except for his frozen chocolate mousse, Latini didn't mention stirring. Despite their very different recipes, both Latini and Audiger wanted sorbet to have the consistency of snow.

Audiger had just one recipe for ice cream:

POUR FAIRE DE LA CRÈME GLACÉE

Prenez une chopine de lait, un demi-setier de bonne crème douce, ou bien trois poissons, avec six ou sept onces de sucre et une demi-cuillerée d'eau de fleur d'orange, puis la mettez dans un vaisseau de fer blanc, de terre ou autre pour la faire glacer.

TO MAKE ICE CREAM

Take a *chopine* of milk with a *demi-setier*, or three *poissons*, of good sweet cream, with six or seven ounces of sugar and a half spoonful of orange flower water, then put it in a container of lead, terra cotta, or other material to freeze.³⁹

A *chopine* was sixteen ounces and a *demi-setier* or three *poissons*, about eight ounces.⁴⁰ Audiger used more milk than cream (but how thick and rich were his milk and cream?), and a little more than a cup of sugar to make less than one quart of ice cream. Today, most recipes for a quart of ice cream call for from one-half to one cup of sugar. So Audiger's was on the sweet side but not achingly so. If he cooked the mixture, he didn't tell us.

Audiger made ice pyramids for centerpieces just as Latini did. But unlike Latini, he gave us explicit directions for making one. He said he filled a lead mold with fruits or flowers, which he selected carefully and

arranged delicately so that the largest would be at the bottom and the tiniest at the top. He filled the mold with water and surrounded it with salted ice until it was frozen. Just before serving, he unmolded the pyramid by rubbing the outside of the mold with a cloth dipped in boiling water. Then he placed the pyramid on a platter and surrounded it with individual goblets of *eaux glacées*. This made a beautiful presentation on a table of consequence, Audiger noted. The spectacular ice pyramid would also have given the dessert ices arranged around it more prominence.

The great French chef François Pierre de La Varenne did not have any recipes for ices or ice creams in his 1651 masterwork, *Le cuisinier françois*. But in *Le nouveau confiturier*, a supplement to a later edition attributed to him, he included two recipes for frozen *neiges*. The first, for *neige de fleurs d'orange*, “orange flower snow,” is very like Audiger’s *crème glacée*, except that it called for cream, not milk, and that he used fresh orange flowers when they were available, and a combination of candied orange flowers and orange flower water when they were not.⁴¹ The other recipe, for *neige de coriante*, “coriander snow,” is actually an ice. In both cases, measurements were less than precise. The first recipe called for sweet cream, no amount specified; two handfuls of sugar; a bed of ice; handfuls of salt. The second recipe called for two handfuls of coriander, some water, and a handful or two of sugar as well as the juice and peel of a lemon.

However, the freezing instructions were specific. The author said the containers should not touch; they should be a finger’s width apart, just as Audiger instructed. Rather than stirring the mixture, he shook the ice cream container from time to time so that the ice cream wouldn’t freeze into a solid lump of ice. Like Latini and Audiger, he was aiming for the consistency of snow—hence the name he gives his recipes—rather than that of ice. He also stated rather emphatically that the ice cream would be ready in two hours.⁴² Limiting the freezing time may have also served as a way to keep it from freezing too hard.

English Creams

One ice cream recipe written in English predates those above. Called an “icy cream,” it appeared in an unpublished manuscript cookbook by Lady Anne Fanshawe, the wife of Sir Richard Fanshawe, who was ambassador to Portugal and then to Spain during the Restoration. The manuscript is dated 1651–78, and the ice cream recipe is in the section that was written around 1665–66. Lady Fanshawe returned to England from Madrid in 1666, after the death of her husband. Perhaps she discovered the recipe in Spain.

TO MAKE ICY CREAM

Take three pints of the best cream, boyle it with a blade of Mace, or else perfume it with orang flowerwater or Ambergreece, sweeten the cream, with sugar let it stand till it is quite cold, then put it into Boxes, either of Silver or tinn then take, Ice chopped into small peeces and putt it into a tub and set the Boxes in the ice covering them all over, and let them stand in the Ice two hours, and the Cream Will come to be Ice in the Boxes, then turne them out into a salver with some of the same Seasoned Cream, so serve it up at the Table.⁴³

There is just one problem with Fanshawe’s recipe. Without salt, the ice would not freeze the ice cream. Did she forget to put the salt in the instructions, but remember it when she had her servants make the ice cream? Did she receive a faulty recipe from someone without realizing what was wrong? Did she ever have the ice cream made according to the recipe? We don’t know.

There are similarities among these recipes. Fanshawe, like Latini, called for cooking the cream (or milk, in Latini’s case). She, Audiger, and La Varenne all flavored their ice creams with orange flower water. It was the vanilla of its day. Used frequently in Middle Eastern cookery, orange flower water is still available, and a small amount adds a lovely flavor to ice cream.

The recipe considered the first published ice cream recipe in English appeared much later. It was in *Mrs. Mary Eales’s Receipts*, a book on

confectionery and pastry which was published in 1718. Mrs. Eales, who is identified as “Confectioner to her late Majesty Queen Anne” on the title page of the book, was specific about freezing techniques, but at first reading seems rather cavalier about her mixture.

TO ICE CREAM

Take Tin Ice-Pots, fill them with any Sort of Cream you like, either plain or sweeten'd, or Fruit in it; shut your Pots very close; to fix Pots you must allow eighteen or twenty Pound of Ice, breaking the Ice very small; there will be some great Pieces, which lay at the Bottom and Top: You must have a Pail, and lay some straw at the Bottom, then lay in your Ice, and put in amongst it a Pound of Bay-Salt; set in your Pots of Cream, and lay Ice and Salt between every Pot, that they may not touch; but the Ice must lie round them on every Side; lay a good deal of Ice on the Top, cover the Pail with Straw, set it in a Cellar where no Sun or Light comes, it will be froze in four Hours, but it may stand longer; than take it out just as you use it; hold it in your Hand and it will flip out. When you would freeze any Sort of Fruit, either Cherries, Raspberries, Currants, or Strawberries, fill your Tin-Pots with the Fruit, but as hollow as you can; put to them Lemmonade, made with Spring-Water and Lemmon-Juice sweeten'd; put enough in the Pots to make the Fruit hang together, and put them in Ice as you do Cream.⁴⁴

However, when Mrs. Eales said “any Sort of Cream you like,” she may have been referring to her recipes for nonfrozen creams, which immediately precede the freezing instructions. They included creams flavored with mace and lemon, with chocolate, and with almonds. She also had a recipe for trout cream, but, happily, it was named for the basket it was shaped in, not for an ingredient. Her cream recipes did lack specific amounts. She simply said sweeten the cream “as you like it.” But someone who was skilled at making creams could turn hers into ice creams by following her freezing instructions.

Finally the stars were aligned. New World ingredients had made their debut. Science had discovered the secret of freezing. Medical opinion

had come around. And cooks were embracing the chance to innovate. Latini's "sorbetta," Audiger's "crème glacée," La Varenne's "neiges," Lady Fanshawe's "Icy Cream," and Mrs. Eales's "Cream" were just the beginning. At the turn of the eighteenth century, people were poised to create and enjoy all sorts of splendid ices and ice creams.