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DESSERTS

How to make Pumzion Pie, a 350-year-old recipe perfect for Thanksgiving

Pumpkins and apples are a hugely underrated flavor combination.



— You can make "pumzion" pie for yourself with the recipe Miller transcribed from the 1670 cookbook "The Queen-Like Closet." Courtesy of Max Miller

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By Randee Dawn

We've all got some legendary family recipes that have been handed down over the generations.

But those "old" recipes seem rather new when compared to the ones Max Miller turns up on his YouTube show "Tasting History." Miller, who creates weekly segments from his kitchen featuring

recipes that are hundreds of years – if not centuries – old.

— Max Miller whips up historic concoctions on "Tasting History." Riker Brothers

He's been doing it since the pandemic drove everyone indoors – and he was furloughed from his job selling films to theaters for Disney. Now, he has around 40 short videos up that take deep, deep dives into Rome, ancient China and medieval Britain, just to name a few, and over 426,000 subscribers.

"I've loved history all my life," he told TODAY Food. "I only got into cooking about six years ago, so I'm pretty new to it actually. But I focused on the high middle ages and Victorian era in college, and about 10 years ago I really got into the Anglo-Saxon era. There's no part of history I can't get excited about."



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Pumpon Pie

Max Miller

Miller's videos feature his breezy, charming style where he quips about ingredients and shares recipes and quotes pulled from old, dusty texts like the 14th century "The Forme of Cury," England's first cookbook, deciphers the ingredients (turns out "sack" is just sherry), then attempts to make each dish in his own kitchen. One of the best parts is where he tastes it, usually for the first time, right on camera to deliver the verdict.

"I have a great deal of respect for those people who created those recipes and would cook without standard weights and measures, or an oven that stays at 400 degrees," said Miller. "There's so much that has to be done by sight and smell and touch. Another thing I've learned is that, while our palates have changed in some ways we're still very much the same as human beings."

"Pumpon" Pie from 1670 | The History of Pumpkin Pie



Which brings us to the video he posted on Tuesday, "Pumpon Pie." And no, that's not a misspelling; it's just from the 1600s. If you check out the video, not only do you get to see how the pie is made, but Miller explains how pumpkins went from being cultivated in Mexico in 5000 B.C. (the Aztecs were big fans) to appearing in an Italian cookbook in 1570.

Though no one was eating pies of any kind at the first Thanksgiving, Miller says in the video. For one thing, flour and sugar – or ovens for baking – were nowhere to be found.

The good news is that you can make Pumpon Pie for yourself with the recipe he transcribed from the 1670 cookbook "The Queene-Like Closet."

Related

FOOD

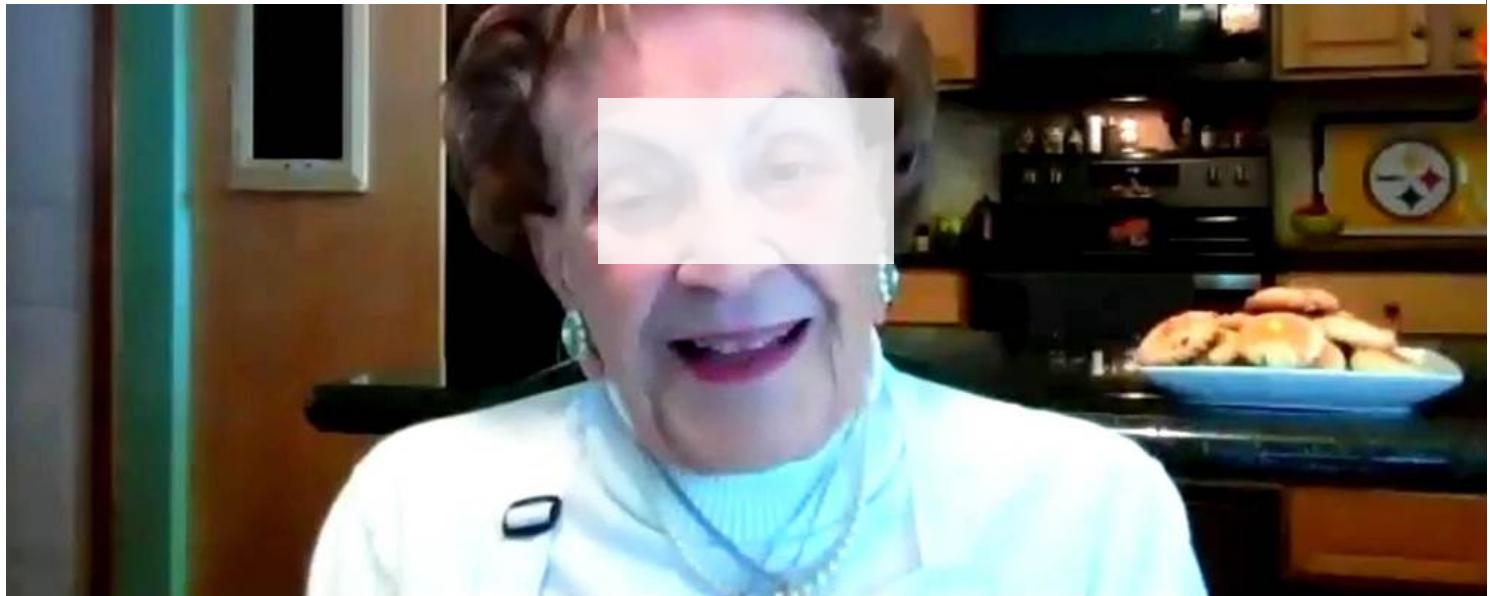
From pecan to pumpkin: 9 Thanksgiving pies you won't be able to stop eating

That recipe is quite simple and features odd capitalizations: "Take a Pumpon, pare it, and cut it in thin slices, dip it in beaten Eggs and Herbs shred small, and fry it till it be enough, then lay it into a Pie with Butter, Raisins, Currans, Sugar and Sack, and in the bottom some sharp Apples; when it is baked, butter it and serve it in."

Not a whole lot of information there, but fortunately, Miller has translated that into the delicious, modern version he presents in the video.

And if you don't get a chance to make the pie this season, rest assured: Miller has four holiday-themed recipes (including one for Saturnalia on Dec. 17) that you can check out for later in the year.

98-year-old Lucy the Baker shares her tips



As for "Tasting History," Miller says he certainly plans to continue with it even when the pandemic fades and he (hopefully) gets his old job back. But he wouldn't say no if Food Network or a streaming service called up to offer him a cooking show.

"I'd love to take this on the road and go to some of the places I'm talking about," said the Phoenix-born YouTuber. "But if that doesn't happen and I go back to Disney and this is on the side, that's just fine. I love my job. It's all gravy!"



Randee Dawn

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