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Eat like royalty — on a budget

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Eleanor is a popular name in my family, and with good reason. One of the first Eleanors that I know of was born in 13th century Spain. She was the princess known as Eleanor of Castile, who later became Queen of the British Empire. Her father, Ferdinand III, had been at war with Henry III of England, an enterprise that proved costly for both empires. As the culmination of a peace treaty it was announced that a marriage had been arranged between Eleanor and her second cousin, Edward I, who was Henry III's son. This is their story.

1290, A.D., Part I

The list was finished save one item. Hunched over a finely carved desk, the man dipped his quill into the ink but was hesitant to pen this final addition. His long dark hair, now touched with gray, obscured a drooping shoulder. He spoke with a slight lisp, and one eye listed downward. Despite these physical imperfections, his words carried great authority and his six foot, three inch frame commanded respect.

He was, in fact, greatly feared. Those confronted by his legendary temper were known to faint or even fall dead at his feet. Indeed, he had killed many outright and had ordered the executions of hundreds more. Bent on conquest, he was a lifelong soldier and consumed with strengthening his empire. Yet in this moment of deepest heartache, he was none of that. He was Edward I, the King of England that was known as Longshanks.

Looking up from the page, Edward thought back on all that had occurred in his 51 years....

Art Of The Deal

In childhood, Edward was prone to tantrums but physically delicate, surviving a series of illnesses in an age when surviving to adulthood was as much of an exception as a rule. His parents, King Henry III and Eleanor of Province, had lost several children and doted on him.

However, by 1254 Edward had grown into a healthy 15 year old. In an effort to boost the coffers of the kingdom, it was announced that a marriage had been arranged between Edward and his second cousin, Eleanor of Castile. Various accounts give a range in age for Eleanor of somewhere between 9 and 15, not unheard of in medieval marriages. Along with a wife, Edward received a knighthood and valuable land grants making him, in theory, a very wealthy prince.

Despite Henry's efforts to finance the kingdom, the decline continued until in 1258 he faced excommunication by the Church. He was forced to agree to a list of reforms known as the Provisions of Oxford. By this agreement Henry III's debts would be paid, but in exchange a 24 member council, called a Parliament, would become largely responsible for running the kingdom. Civil war broke out and it wasn't until 1267, with the diplomatic aid of Edward, that relative peace and calm was restored.

For Better

Despite the calculated nature of their marriage and the financial straits of their future kingdom, Eleanor and Edward I were truly devoted to one another. In an era where it was not only accepted but expected for rulers to acquire numerous mistresses, Edward did not. In public Edward was fierce and merciless; toward Eleanor and his children he was indulgent and kind.

Perhaps as a counter to her husband's public persona, Eleanor was quite generous toward English universities and religious institutions, especially the Dominicans. She was intelligent,



Aerial view of the Castle at Leeds, home of Edward I and Eleanor.

wikimedia photo



well educated and a collector. Eleanor established the only scriptorium in Northern Europe, a sort of publishing house where books were hand copied and painted. She loved hunting and kept her own dogs and horses for the purpose.

Additionally, Eleanor was a woman of taste. Upon her arrival in England she used her collection of Spanish tapestries to decorate her new home at Leeds Castle. In doing so, she played a major role in shaping the world of medieval style and much of what we recognize as medieval art was influenced by her. Eleanor was also an expert in garden design, and forever transformed the royal English gardens.

As for Edward, whatever else may be said of him he was hopelessly in love with Eleanor. With the aid of Eleanor's maids, he staged mock kidnappings of himself each year on the Monday after Easter. The maids would only release him to visit to his wife's bedchambers after a receiving token ransom. The couple had a total of sixteen children.

For Worse

Throughout their marriage, Edward and Eleanor endured a number of hardships, including the loss of ten children. Of their remaining children, only three outlived their parents. In 1264, shortly after King Henry III's victory at Lewes, Edward was taken hostage as a measure to insure that his father honored the provisions of the treaty. Several months later, Edward escaped while on a hunting trip. Throughout the ordeal, Eleanor's support of her husband never wavered.

In 1270, Edward left to join King Louis IX on crusade, but the French king was weak from bouts of illness and died before Edward's arrival. Historically,

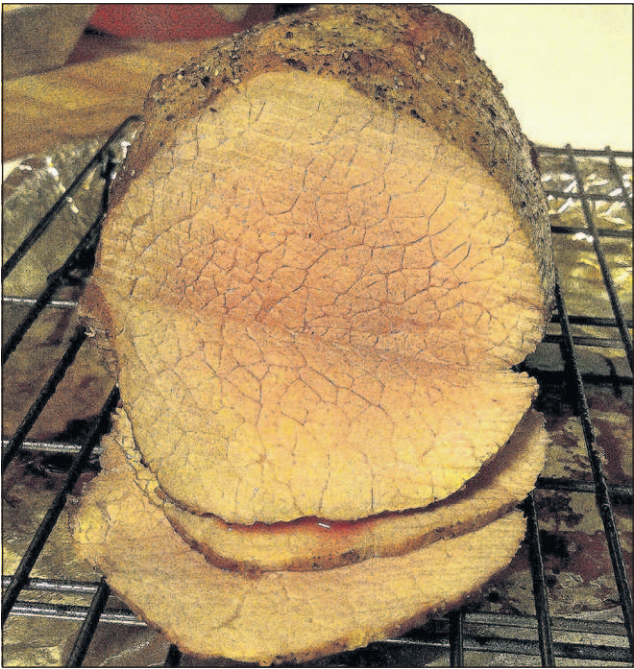
it was believed that Louis died from the bubonic plague, but this is unlikely since the Black Death first appeared in Europe in 1347. There were many other types of plague, though, including dysentery which historians now believed was Louis IX's true cause of death.

Edward's thwarted crusade had been financed via a heavy tax on citizens of the realm, and he was determined to enter the fray. So when the opportunity arose again in 1271, Edward, along with his brother, Edmund, and one thousand knights set out for the ninth crusade. Eleanor accompanied him as she had on other campaigns, and gave birth to at least two children while in Acre. Also while on this crusade, Edward's father, King Henry III died, but Edward continued with the battle, finally returning home in 1274 for his official coronation. During his absence, Parliament pledged allegiance to him and governed the kingdom.

Till Death Do Us Part

In 1287, Eleanor fell ill with what was called a "double quartan" fever, believed to have been a type of malaria. She continued to suffer from this off and on for 3 years. During this time, she arranged for the marriage of her daughters, Margaret and Joan, and began negotiations for a marriage between her son, Edward, and Margaret of Norway, the heir to the Scottish throne.

Believing that her time was short, Eleanor began a tour of her properties in the summer of 1290, but upon reaching the home of a friend, Richard de Weston, at Harby, Eleanor could go no further. Knowing that her death was imminent, a priest was called to administer the last rites. Then the children were sent for. Finally, on Nov. 28, 1290, Eleanor



breathed her last, with Edward at her side.

Eleanor's funeral cortege extended from Harby to Westminster Abbey and took 17 days. During the journey Edward devised a memorial befitting his queen.

1290 A.D., Part II

With tears in his eyes, Edward once again applied pen to page and steeled himself to finish the task at hand. It was a final act of love for the queen he had adored for most of his life. She had stayed faithful to him through thick and thin, so it was with a steady hand that he wrote the last few words on his list: a cross at Charing.

With razor like precision he tri-folded the page, applied a carnelian circle of wax and pressed his ring into it. With this act Edward commissioned a series of stone crosses, one for each stop along the route of Eleanor's funerary procession, as a memorial to his bride.

Post Script

Edward's memorials came to be known as the Eleanor Crosses. The final and most famous cross was the one at Charing. Only 3 of the crosses remain to this day, but as with Charring Cross, evidence of them lingers in the names of the towns where they once stood.

Eventually many of Edward and Eleanor's descendants spread throughout Europe, and then across the ocean to the New World, where, on a fall day almost exactly 600 years after Eleanor and Edward's wedding, my grandmother, Carrie Moseley, was married on the front porch of her father's Hopkins County farm. Of course, no one in attendance — least of all Carrie — was aware that the bride had the blood of European royals running through her veins. Carrie was, in fact, the 21st great-granddaughter of

Left: Serve this classic roast beef to your loved ones and they will feel like royalty.

Laura Hunt Angel photo

Far left: This early 14th century illuminated manuscript initial depicts Edward I and Eleanor, clearly demonstrating Edward's drooping eye.

Artist unknown, public domain

Eleanor and Edward. For better or worse, among Carrie's ancestors were Charlemagne, a host of Plantagenets and other kings and queens from across Europe.

The Recipes

Today there are actually thousands of Americans walking around completely unaware of their royal ancestry. However, living like a king requires a bounty of treasure. Fortunately, eating like one does not. Here is a recipe that is perfect for royals who have the budgets of paupers.

The Best Roast Beef

For most of us, roasting meat is a bit of a mystery. We are never quite sure how long to cook it or at what temperature. Here is a no fail way to cook up a classic, English style roast beef that will be medium on both ends and medium rare in the middle. As you'll see it is deceptively simple, but you must follow the directions exactly.

1¾ pound eye round roast
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 ½ teaspoons coarse kosher or sea salt

Remove the roast from the fridge about an hour before cooking. Preheat the oven to 500 degrees; make certain that the oven is fully preheated before putting in the roast. For easy clean-up, cover the bottom of a shallow roasting pan with foil, then spray a roasting rack with high heat non-stick spray (like Pam for grilling), and set the rack on the pan.

Drizzle the roast with the olive oil, then evenly apply the salt and pepper. (If you wish, you can use garlic salt in place of regular salt, but do not use a flavored salt that contains sugar or the roast will burn.) Rub the seasonings into the meat, making sure all parts are well seasoned.

Position the roast, fat side up, on the roasting rack and place in the oven. Immediately reduce the oven temperature to 475 degrees. Allow the meat to roast, without opening the oven door, for 7 minutes per pound of meat. (For a 4-pound roast this would be 28 minutes.) Turn the oven off but do not open the oven door.

Leave the roast in the oven for 2½ hours. When the time is up, remove the roast, slice it in thin slices and serve it with au jus, horseradish or English mustard. Leftovers make wonderful sandwiches.