

**WINTER RECIPES 2**  
**QUINCE DISHES – ONE SWEET & ONE SAVOURY**  
**Diane Wells**

. I was about 14 when I first read “The Eve of St Agnes” (Keats) Since then the images of exotic fruits, creams and jellies have remained with me influencing some of my favourite dishes. Only since living in Frome have I had easy access to so many quinces. My own tree has produced a few fruits most years, but there are never enough. In the autumn they are usually for sale at Wessex Organics in the Market Place Wednesdays and Saturdays, and at the Fruit and Veg stall in the Market Yard on Saturdays. In a fairly cool place quinces may last through the winter. Its January and I have a few left which will be divided between the following 2 dishes. First I would like to go back to Keats as it was this verse that made me aware of a fruit called quince .

“And still she slept an azure lidded sleep  
In blanched linen, smooth and lavender’d  
While he from forth the closet brought a heap  
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd.  
With jellies soother than the creamy curd  
And lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon;  
Manna and dates in argosy transferr’d  
From Fez, and spiced dainties, every one,  
From silken Samarcand to cedar’d Lebanon “

Stanza 30 “The Eve of St Agnes” by John Keats

**CRYSTALISED QUINCE**

2 large quinces  
300 g sugar preferably unrefined  
1 lemon

Make a syrup with about 300 g unrefined sugar and 400 ml water  
Cook gently for a few minutes. Do not allow to burn.

Cut quinces into quarters. Remove any grubby looking parts of the cores but otherwise leave core and skin in tact. Slice each quarter into about 4 slices keeping the shape of the quartered quince. Drop the slices into water and lemon juice or rub each piece with lemon juice to prevent browning.

Take a shallow pan such as a large frying pan. Arrange the slices of quince to cover the bottom of the pan and make second and third layers as necessary.

Pour over the syrup and cook gently on low heat. If the syrup is drying out too much cover the pan. If you cover throughout the cooking, it is difficult to achieve the amber colour that is one of the attractions of cooked quince.

I have also cooked these quince slices in a large tray in a very slow oven. Again I find cooking the quince to softness and getting the amber colour requires some time covered with foil and some of the cooking time uncovered. The latter helps the syrup to reduce and become slightly sticky.

When you have soft amber slices of quince in a rich amber syrup remove from pan and allow to cool. This can be stored in the fridge for several weeks,

Serve 2 /3 slices for each person with cream or yoghurt. Small glass dishes show off the amber fruit although parts may be chewy and best eaten with the fingers.

### **STUFFED QUINCE – PERSIAN STYLE**

This dish is an adaptation of one in Claudia Roden's "A Book of Middle Eastern Food". Roden talks of the liking for sweet and sour in ancient and modern Persian dishes. British food also has this tradition less prevalent now, but still evident in dishes such as pork and apple sauce, and lamb with mint or plum sauce

Stuffed Quinces can be served alone as a first course or as part of a main course. I have served it with roast chicken and rice, and with guinea fowl and rice. The original dish uses beef mince but I have substituted pork to go with fowl.

6/8 Quinces – one each for first course or 2 for main course

#### Filling

150 g yellow split peas  
1 medium onion, finely chopped  
2 tablespoons oil  
250 g minced pork  
salt and pepper

Boil the split peas until soft – about 30 minutes  
Fry onion until soft  
Add pork and fry gently until it changes colour but do not brown  
Season and mix with cooked peas

Wash quinces and core, Fill with the peas and pork mixture.  
Place in baking tin and pack tightly side by side  
Add water to half way up the fruit

Cover and bake for about 1½ hours in a slow/moderate oven until quinces are soft.

