

# MAKING AND BREAKING NARRATIVE

I began my research in an area of interest: archaic/traditional British food. I have been reading Dorothy Hartley's 'Food in England', and have been enjoying discovering elements of English culture that have been gradually expropriated and erased, to be replaced with more profitable and marketable forms of sustenance as we have moved through industrialisation to more advanced stages of capitalism.

My family has ancestry in butchery (believed to be the etymological root of the surname "Stuffins", although I am sure that is pure conjecture) and a love of cooking is ubiquitous throughout all branches of the tree. I talked to my grandpa about this, and he sent me a very old family recipe for brawn, alongside his adaptation of it, because the original makes 27 kilos. Brawn is a dish of pigs head meat (sometimes bolstered with cubes of pork, trotters, etc) set into jelly, and it is not common to see it made any more. I attribute this to the development of capitalism, with a lot of archaic foods that were once common dying out as we move through the 20th and into the 21st centuries. A pig's head is always going to make less profit than more expensive cuts like a pork shoulder or belly, so there is less incentive to advertise it. The necessity for profit would drive a butcher to try and sell as many pigs as possible, which would make it a lot less worthwhile trying to sell the head and organs.

In an effort to reclaim some shard of lost culture, I decided to make this dish and film it, so I went and got a pig's head from the butchers. It was free, because literally nobody buys it ever. I went about butchering, cleaning, and preparing the pig's head for the cooking process.

One of the things I enjoy about old archaic recipes are the bits of information that are out of touch, like old names for

ingredients, or chunks of important information left out with unnecessary detail in other sections. When editing this video, I placed extra emphasis on the butchering of the pigs head, because that was not at all mentioned in any recipes and was the hardest bit to get to grips with, and then left out a chunk at the end between taking the meat off the bone and arriving at your finished dish, because this is the part with the most detail in recipes, and it is quite self explanatory.

I thought it would be interesting to shift the emphasis of the traditional narrative to the butchering because that is the least common necessity of contemporary recipes, and it was apparently self explanatory in the 18th-20th centuries. I also enjoy the juxtaposition of a tutorial video for an archaic recipe on a modern platform, and the title of the video reflects this, satirising current fashions in cooking videos, whilst still being accurate to the content.

(video contains pigs head being cut up which could be disturbing for some viewers)

Reading 'Food in England', one of my favourite bits is the old etching style illustrations of food, and every recipe or so is accompanied by a bit of poetry or prose. One idea I had for a final outcome was an illustrated recipe for this dish, with illustrations and prose of my own that subvert traditional recipe tropes (thinking abstract, visceral type images).

After my seminar on the 23rd, I have decided to conduct further research and work towards an outcome that has my research more present in it. I have called my grandpa again and have discussed this topic with him, and found some interesting inspiration to develop the project further.

g: nowadays theres no family butchers , they used to go to the market buy a pig and butcher it themselves, youre not allowed to do that nowadays you have to take them to a standard EU sort of sanctioned slaughterhouse and have them slaughtered so

most butchers, our butcher in the village he doesn't but he has any meat he buys a tray of chops, a tray of legs a tray of shoulders

me : he doesn't even cut it up?

g: all the butchering is done mechanically at the slaughterhouse

- this is particularly interesting and relevant – to butcher an animal yourself there is an incentive to make the most of the animal you would have to eat all of it that you could, and there is a lot to be eaten in the organs and more obscure off-cuts. It would be a huge waste to throw that away. If you are selling animals however, your goal is to make money rather than to make the animals stretch, so it is more profitable to not deal with the bits people are less likely to buy, so you're less likely to put emphasis on advertising and selling it.
- To finalise this project I wish to reflect on the increasingly mechanised processes of butchery. I am going to do a similar butchery video, this time with a packet of thin sliced ham from the supermarket

This video is to be watched in succession with the cheap and easy student meal. The same butchery processes are applied, but on a product which obviously doesn't require them. This contrast with the first video aims to highlight how detached we have become from the processes of food production. The pig head in the first video – a visceral and identifiable part of an animal, is supplanted with a homogenised unidentifiable sliced meat product, in sterile plastic packaging. It is mechanically processed to the point of being completely abstracted from its origin.

