

## Hersir Snorri skyti Bjarnarson



Greetings! I am Hersir Snorri skyti Bjarnarson, a craftsman living in the Shire of Coppertree, which is as far North and East as you can go in Æthelmearc and still be in Æthelmearc. In the SCA, I am an archer and fletcher, a wordsmith and a musician, a voice herald, a leatherworker, and a jeweler.

I've also dabbled in block printing of fabric (and 3D printing the blocks), illumination, medieval yard games (I've been Known Worlde Bocce Champion), haberdashery, bardic performance, garb sewing, armoring, knifemaking, crossbow building, heavy fighting, and combat archery. I even accidentally became Kingdom Thrown Weapons Champion once. You can follow a lot of the stuff I'm doing by going to my blog: [www.snorri.blog](http://www.snorri.blog) Warning: it sometimes contains unsupported assertions, unpopular opinions, and adult language.

My persona is that of a Norseman from 1025 (I do current year minus 1000), but I'm also often found dressed as Freiherr Nörri, a 14<sup>th</sup> century Bavarian nobleman, Bâro Snorricus Maximus, a Roman noble from 100 BCE, or Dan-shaku Snorri-san, a Japanese nobleman of the Sengoku period.



For the last few years, I have mostly been concentrating on my jewelry-making. This includes lots of SCA regalia (circlets, coronets, and award medallions), Viking-era hacksilver, and early period finger rings. I've developed a bit of a reputation as a maker of Viking hacksilver, having recently competed in the A&S War Point at Gulf Wars and Pennsic, and winning Queen's Prize at A&S Faire earlier this year. I also taught classes at spring Æcademy, War Practice, and Pennsic on Viking hacksilver, and did demos at those events where I set up a small forge, melted silver, poured an ingot, and hammered it into a hacksilver arm ring or finger ring.

Viking hacksilver is cut-up or broken pieces of silver—typically fragments of arm rings, neck rings, ingots, and sometimes chopped coins—used as bullion money in the Viking Age (c. 8th–11th centuries).

Key points:

- Pay-by-weight system: Value was measured on small balance scales, not by a coin's face value. Merchants carried sets of weights.
- What it looked like: Irregular silver bits ("hack" from chopping), often with peck marks or nicks where traders tested the metal's purity with their knife points.
- What it came from: Finished jewelry and ingots were made to be divisible; foreign coins (especially Arabic dirhams) were frequently melted down for ingots.
- Why they used it: It worked across cultures and coin systems, doubled as raw material for smiths, and solved problems of coin shortages or mixed currency zones.
- Where it's found: Common in hoards across Scandinavia, the British Isles, the Baltic, and along the Rus trade routes. Notably absent from grave finds and burial mounds.

In short, hacksilver was the Vikings' flexible, international, silver-by-weight currency for trade and payments.

Some pictures of my hacksilver:





I work traditionally with hammers and small anvils, and historically accurate metal stamps I've made myself. I also work almost exclusively in what I call "Viking Silver", which is silver that's approximately 95%–97% pure silver; almost all the hacksilver found in Viking hoards is of this purity. I mix this myself by alloying sterling silver and pure silver together in precise amounts to reach silver of 96% purity. Almost all my work gets marked with my maker's mark, a seven-pointed star containing a Sowilo rune. You can see it on the picture of the silver finger ring above, hidden amidst the stamp-work.

My upcoming projects, when not busy being the Royal Treasurer (largesse coordinator) for the incipient reign of Andreas and Kallista III (please enter the Artisan's Triune Tribute: "Third Time's the Charm", their largesse derby series!), consist of my voluminous backlog of things I owe people, including: refurbishing a silver Pelican pin and a Laurel/Pelican medallion, making two Baronial coronets, a Millrind medallion, a dozen arrows, a Hedeby bag, a "phone book" (a leather hollow book to disguise your cell phone at events), a leather belt with tablet weave and gold-plated hardware, a knight's belt, another coronet, some Roman rings with intaglio, and a rattan seax in a leather scabbard. I also have to make some prizes for the Triune Tribute winners.

Additionally, I've taken over coordinating A&S activities for the Shire of Coppertree, and have scheduled bi-weekly A&S meetings on Wednesday nights from October through January. I am currently scheduling teachers, demonstrators, and instructors to present at these meetings, so if you're interested, please reach out to me—we still have some open nights!

If you want to attend one of my classes, I'll be teaching and demoing Viking hacksilver at Fall Æcademy, and maybe at Gulf Wars. I am also ALWAYS willing to jibber-jabber about things I'm interested in at events, and love meeting new people and making new friends, so please don't be afraid to just come up to me and ask questions!

Finally, I was told that I should "pull back the curtain a bit" on who I am and why I do what I do. My motivation for making things is simple: I'm cheap, and I like nice things. When it became clear that I was going to go through three or four dozen arrows a year, I bought tools and learned to make them. When I wanted a nice belt knife, I bought blanks and learned to make knives. When I wanted more silver bling, I got my hands on some silver and learned to make it. When I wanted to do more Roman garb, I bought linen and wool and learned to sew it. Heck, 25 years ago I learned to do leatherwork because I

didn't want to pay the prices the vendors at Sterling Ren Faire wanted for their belts and pouches. But I'm also fortunate in that I have a number of excellent teachers, as well—that's one thing the SCA excels at.

My motivation for teaching the things I know is similarly selfish: I have no greater pleasure in life than to teach someone how to do a thing I know, then watching them do it. A close second for me is seeing people using and wearing things I have made and given them.

A few years ago at Gulf Wars, in the beginning of the week, Count Bjarki and I were on the range, and he noticed someone using a Hedeby quiver (<https://snorri.blog/2017/06/27/viking-age-quiver/>) that looked very similar to the ones we were using. He asked the archer where he got his quiver, and the man replied, "I made it! I found some guy's blog article on how to make them, with patterns and everything, and just went for it."

Bjarki said, "Was it on Snorri's blog?"

"YES!" the archer replied.

Bjarki pointed at me and said, "That's Snorri."

Gulf Wars could have ended right then and I would have counted it a successful trip. I was on cloud nine the rest of the week, just knowing that someone had found what I posted useful, and followed my instructions to make a thing and was using it.

The heart of the SCA beats strongest when we learn, teach, and give. Each new skill we study opens a door to the past—and sharing that skill turns your single spark of knowledge into a great hall full of light. We can lift each other up with patient hands, passing hard-won techniques, patterns, and songs so they never fade. And when we craft for others—whether largesse for the Crown or a favor for a friend—we turn knowledge into service and fellowship. In that cycle of curiosity, mentorship, and generosity, our dream not only survives—it shines.

## lærifaðir jorundr hinn rotinn



Photo by Brendan Crane

This is lærifaðir jorundr hinn rotinn, O.D, O.P, Æthelmearc from the Barony-Marche of the DebatableLands. He presented “Sauce Makes the Meat”, which explored six period cookbooks and their preparation of roasted meat and sauces. Sauces accompanying roast meat from Apicius, *The Book of Sent Sovi*, *Forme of Cury*, *Du fait de cuisine*, and *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi*.

## The Research: “Sauce Makes the Meat”

By jorundr hinn rotinn – Æthelmearc

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i6gAyWryF9I9LIQU7uwR\\_eQV65rev0ik-xxrUBZoczQ/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i6gAyWryF9I9LIQU7uwR_eQV65rev0ik-xxrUBZoczQ/edit?pli=1&tab=t.0)

Specific references to cooking large pieces of meat are rare in period cookbooks. It is my general opinion from reading those books that it is already understood that you know how to cook already, thus you don't need to be taught how to roast meat. These cookbooks tend to be mostly showcases of the cook's unique take on sides and sauces that you would use to accompany the meat and create the meal.

I will be comparing five cookbooks in this demonstration. Some of them have advice for how to roast meat; others just tell you that it is an option that you have. I will list below the summary from each of these cookbooks on their advisement on roasting meat.

In *The Roman Cookery Book*, from the first century, the author, Apicius, recommends to roast salted meat in an oven (*Book VII The Gourmet, Chapter V Roasts*, Recipe 1 page 161). The book then goes over a variety of sauces to accompany meat.

*The Book of Sent Sovi*, a Catalonian cookbook from the first half of the 14th century, gives multiple instructions on roasting meat from whole animals such as whole kid (LIII, page 149) to parts of the animal when it goes over roasting a mutton shoulder (XLVI page 135). Sent Sovi generally advises roasting on a spit for all the roast meat recipes that it contains.

*Forme of Cury*, an English cookbook from 1390, mentions roasting pork in some recipes, Cormarye XX.II. XIII. (page 45) where pork loins are roasted in a flavorful sauce, and in Vyne Grace XX.III. I. (page 48) where pork shoulder is roasted then finished in an onion gravy. He does not give any sort of explicit instruction on how to roast the meat, just that you should do it.

*Du fait de cuisine*, a French feast menu with recipes from 1420, mentions that spits should be used for roasting, Chiquart (the chef and author) mentions later that large sections of meat should be roasted on spits until cooked, but does not otherwise elaborate on the process.

In *The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi*, a cookbook from 1570 Italy, the titular author Scappi goes over roasting many different kinds of meat in quite a lot of detail, Book II from page 133 to 274. He discusses in detail how to roast whole animals and large cuts on spits.

The roasting itself would have generally been performed in a clay or brick oven, on a spit over an open fire, or in a clay or other earthenware vessel next to the fire. The thing that these manners of cooking all have in common is direct contact with a live fire, and the smoke that comes from it. I have been part of roasting four separate whole lambs over a fire on a spit. From side by side comparisons that we performed and the data from those multiple cooks, I can say with certainty that the modern method that gives the result closest to this kind of fire roasting is cooking the meat in a smoker. Any kind of modern smoker will have similar results in this particular instance. For this exhibition I will be roasting the salted beef in a pellet grill, it will then be cooled down for transport to and safe holding during Pennsic and will be warmed for service in a gas grill.

Here is an image of a modern recreation of a German clay oven.



An image of Scapi's spit being used to roast meat over a fire.



The sauces accompanying meat when it was served is what makes the bigger difference between cultures than the cooking method itself. For this exhibition, I will be presenting five sauces from different cultures to show how several different period cooks approached meat and customized it to their local palates and available ingredients.

From *The Roman Cookery Book - Cumin Sauce for Oysters and Shellfish XV* (page 57) While recommended for shellfish, this is a good sauce for red meat. I will not be using lovage as that is inaccessible to me; I will be using parsley as a substitute, especially since parsley is already a part of this recipe. I will be using a modern Thai fish sauce (Red Boat brand for those interested) that is made of just anchovies and salt in place of the liquamen, since as far as I am able to figure out based on the descriptions of making liquamen that can be found in other Roman texts (Apicius does not have a recipe) this is the best modern equivalent as I am not willing to attempt to ferment fish at my residence.

Original recipe: Pepper, lovage, parsley, dry mint, plenty of cumin, honey, vinegar, liquamen.

From *The Book of Sent Sovi - Coriander XXIII* (page 89) The sauce is recommended for roast chickens or partridge, but is great on red meat and is a very interesting sauce that I have not come across in any other cooking tradition. I will be substituting the verjuice for a 2:1 mixture of white wine vinegar and lemon juice. I have made this before and the flavor of the verjuice does not carry through to the final dish. In addition, the substitution of vinegar and lemon juice is much more economical since I have no good way of getting verjuice. I will be performing all the sweet balancing of this with white sugar. I am not using the optional pomegranate wine.

Original Recipe: If you want to make coriander as you make mustard—for a sick person serve it with roasted chicken or partridge—take the grain of the prepared coriander, peeled almonds, cinnamon, ginger, clove, and white sugar; and grind it all well, and mix it with verjuice and with sweetening. It is better with the wine of bittersweet pomegranates.

From *Forme of Curry - Verde Sawse XX. VII.* (page 81), the book makes no reference to what this sauce should be served on; however, an intensely herbed vinegar sauce will pair well with a rich red meat. I am making no change to this recipe other than to remove the bread, as I see no need to add a thickener to this sauce; the natural emulsification of the herbs into the vinegar will make this thick enough, and removing an allergen is always a good idea in my food service opinion.

Original recipe: Take paryl. mynt. garlek. a litul serpell and sawge, a litul canel. gyngur. piper. wyne. brede. vynegur & salt grynde it smal with safroun & messe it forth.

From *Du fait de cuisine - sauce piquant*. The only changes I made here are to eliminate pork since this sauce is not going to be used on pork, and I do not include hidden sources of other meats, so I will be using beef tallow that I rendered myself in place of the pork fat for this. This sauce is called out as a sauce for rabbit, but pairs exceptionally well with beef as well.

Original Recipe: To make sauce piquant to put on conies, according to the quantity of it which one is making take onions and chop them fine, and take fair pork lard and melt it and sauté your onions, and so that they do not burn in sautéing put a little broth in; and then put in a great deal of white wine according to the quantity of sauce piquant which you want to make for the said conies; and take your spices, good ginger, grains of paradise, a little pepper which is not at all too much, and saffron to give it color; and season it with vinegar in such proportion that it is neither too much poignant nor too little; with salt also.

From The *Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi* - An Orange Cinnamon sauce. This sauce, like many from Scappi, does not have its own dedicated entry; it is presented in line with the recipe for the meat with which Scappi recommends serving it, that meat being beef brisket. It is reasonable to just dress the meat with the components as three separate items, but it is easier to serve if the three have been combined into a sauce, which is what I will be doing.

Original Recipe: Serve hot with orange juice, sugar and cinnamon on top.

Ingredients

**Beef:** Beef, salt

**Cumin Sauce:** Pepper, parsley, dry mint, cumin, honey, vinegar, liquamen.

**Coriander:** Coriander seed, peeled almonds, cinnamon, ginger, clove, white sugar, vinegar, lemon juice.

**Verde Sawse:** Parsley, mint, garlic, thyme, sage, cinnamon, ginger, pepper, white wine, vinegar, salt, saffron.

**Sauce Piquant:** Onions, beef tallow, beef broth, white wine, ginger, grains of paradise, pepper, saffron, vinegar, salt.

**Orange Cinnamon Sauce:** Orange juice, sugar, cinnamon.

## Bibliography and References

### The Roman Cookery Book - First Century Roman Cookbook

Specific version referenced: Barbara Flower and Elizabeth Rosembaum 2012  
Martino Publishing

ISBN 978-1-61427-239-7

### The Book of Sent Sovi - first half of the 14th century Catalonian cookbook

Specific version referenced: Joan Santanach and Robin Vogelzang 2014 Barcino  
Tamesis

ISBN 978-185566164-6

### The Forme of Cury - 1390 compilation of recipes for King Richard II of England

Specific version referenced: Samuel Pegge 2008 Forgotten Books

ISBN 978-160620960-8

### Du fait de cuisine - 1420 French feast menu by Maistre Chiquart

Translated by Elizabeth Cook website URL below

[http://www.daviddfriedman.com/Medieval/Cookbooks/Du\\_Fait\\_de\\_Cuisine/Du\\_fait\\_de\\_Cuisine.html](http://www.daviddfriedman.com/Medieval/Cookbooks/Du_Fait_de_Cuisine/Du_fait_de_Cuisine.html)

### The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi - 1570 Italian cookbook

Specific version referenced: Terence Scully 2011 University of Toronto Press

ISBN 978-1-4426-1148-1

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### **Kingdom Arts and Sciences Championships**

Their Majesties are pleased to announce that they will be choosing their Arts & Sciences Champion at the Haunting in the Hollow in the Shire of Sylvan Glen this October 4, 2025. The event information is

here: <https://aethelmearc.org/event/haunting-in-the-hollow-2/>

We encourage entrants to join us in-person at a wonderful site for a day of sharing and celebrating all the wonderful things that our Arts & Sciences community has to offer. However, we do understand that traveling is tough for many, so we will accept virtual entries upon request. Our links are at

<https://aeans.aethelmearc.org/kingdom-arts-sciences-championship-as-lx/>

The in-person competition will be held along the same lines as in the past. Candidates with their entries will be judged face-to-face and the scoring will be based on the Kingdom A&S rubrics. The rubrics can be found

here: <https://aeans.aethelmearc.org/rubrics/>

Although not a requirement, we ask that candidates register their entry online ahead of time to make planning for us a lot easier. The site is discreetly damp; therefore, we are excited and happy to accept alcoholic beverage entries at the event! Judges can sign up online; please provide us with the area(s) you're comfortable with judging so that we can match entrants and judges ahead of time.

Candidates who are not able to join us at the event can submit their entry online. Use our online form to upload some photos, your documentation, and some basic info. The virtual part of the competition will be held much along the lines of last year's competition. Each candidate will meet face-to-face with a panel of judges over Google Meets for one 45-minute judging session during the week leading up to the event and their presentation and entry will be judged with the same rubric used at the event.

Right now, we are planning to spread out the virtual judging between Friday, September 26 and Thursday, October 2. With that in mind, the deadline for virtual entries is midnight, Wednesday, September 24, 2025.

Although we really appreciate pre-registration for the in-person event, candidates can sign up until 9:30am on the morning of October 4.

We want to emphasize that we totally love to see partial projects! It doesn't have to be a completely finished entry to be eligible. As usual, you may also enter up to three related objects as a single entry. Prior entry in another competition or display does not disqualify you from entering; we love to see continued progress on existing projects.

The scores will be tallied once all judging is complete (the combined online and in-person entries) and relayed to Their Majesties, who will choose their champion(s) and announce them at the event during court.

Their Majesties and the Kingdom Office of Arts & Sciences are very much looking forward to seeing what our Kingdom has to offer!

Yours in service,

Rue and Mairin (Kingdom Officers of Arts & Sciences)

Master Robert Ferness (Kingdom Arts and Sciences Webminister)

## **NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:**

If you have an idea for a rabbit hole, please contact the A&S Minister's Office at [ans@aethelmearc.org](mailto:ans@aethelmearc.org). We would love to include your arts and sciences in a future edition of the Sylvan Signal.