

# Aspic

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**Aspic** is a dish in which ingredients are set into a gelatin made from a meat stock or consommé. Non-savory dishes, often made with commercial gelatin mixes without stock or consommé, are usually called gelatin salads.

When cooled, stock that is made from meat congeals because of the natural gelatin found in the meat. The stock can be clarified with egg whites, and then filled and flavored just before the aspic sets. Almost any type of food can be set into aspics. Most common are meat pieces, fruits, or vegetables. Aspics are usually served on cold plates so that the gel will not melt before being eaten. A meat jelly that includes cream is called a *chaud-froid*.

Nearly any type of meat can be used to make the gelatin: pork, beef, veal, chicken, turkey, or fish. The aspic may need additional gelatin in order to set properly. Veal stock provides a great deal of gelatin; in making stock, veal is often included with other meat for that reason. Fish consommés usually have too little natural gelatin, so the fish stock may be double-cooked or supplemented. Since fish gelatin melts at a lower temperature than gelatins of other meats, fish aspic is more delicate and melts more readily in the mouth.

Vegetables and fish stocks need gelatin to maintain a molded shape.<sup>[1]</sup>



An aspic with chicken and eggs.



Fish in aspic. Vegetables and fish stocks need gelatin to create a mold.

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## History

Historically, meat aspics were made before fruit- and vegetable-flavored aspics or 'jellies' (UK) and 'gelatins/jellos' (North America). By the Middle Ages at the latest, cooks had discovered that a thickened meat broth could be made into a jelly. A detailed recipe for aspic is found in *Le Viandier*, written in or around 1375.<sup>[2]</sup>

In the early 19th century, Marie-Antoine Carême created *chaud froid* in France. *Chaud froid* means "hot cold" in French, referring to foods that were prepared hot and served cold. Aspic was used as a *chaud froid* sauce in many cold fish and poultry meals. The sauce added moisture and flavor to the food.<sup>[3]</sup> Carême invented various types of aspic and ways of preparing it.<sup>[4]</sup> Aspic, when used to hold meats, prevents them from becoming spoiled. The gelatin keeps out air and bacteria, keeping the cooked meat fresh.<sup>[5]</sup>

Aspic came into prominence in America in the early 20th century.<sup>[6]:514</sup> By the 1950s, meat aspic was a popular dinner staple throughout the United States<sup>[7]</sup> as were other gelatin-based dishes such as tomato aspic.<sup>[6]:292</sup> Cooks used to show off aesthetic skills by creating inventive aspics.<sup>[8]</sup>

## Uses

Aspic can also be referred as *aspic gelée* or *aspic jelly*. Aspic jelly may be colorless (white aspic) or contain various shades of amber. Aspic can be used to protect food from the air, to give food more flavor, or as a decoration.<sup>[9]</sup>

There are three types of aspic textures: delicate, sliceable, and inedible.<sup>[10]</sup> The delicate aspic is soft. The sliceable aspic must be made in a terrine or in an aspic mold. It is firmer than the delicate aspic. The inedible aspic is never for consumption. It is usually for decoration. Aspic is often used to glaze food pieces in food competitions to make the food glisten and make it more appealing to the eye. Foods dipped in aspic have a lacquered finish for a fancy presentation.<sup>[1]</sup> Aspic can be cut into various shapes and be used as a garnish for deli meats or pâtés.<sup>[11]</sup>



A speciality of northern Thailand, *kaeng kradang* is a Thai curry aspic

## Pork jelly

**Pork jelly** is an aspic made from low-grade cuts of pig meat, such as trotters, containing a significant proportion of connective tissue.<sup>[12]</sup> Pork jelly is a popular appetizer and, nowadays, is sometimes

### Pork jelly

prepared in a more modern version using lean meat, with or without pig leftovers which are substituted with store-bought gelatin. It is very popular in Croatia (especially in the northwest where it's called "hladetina" or "hladnetina"), Poland (where it is called *galareta*), in Romania (*piftie*, *racitura*), in Slovakia (*huspenina*, *studeno*), in Hungary (*kocsonya*; can also refer to aspic of other meats), in Greece (where it is called *pichti*), in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine (*kholodets*, *kholodne*) during Christmas or Easter. The meat in pork pies is preserved using pork jelly.

## Preparation

The preparation of pork jelly includes placing lean pork meat, trotters, rind, ears and snout in a pot of cold water, and letting it cook over a slow fire for three hours. The broth is allowed to cool, while also removing any undesirable fat. Subsequently, white vinegar and the juice of half an orange or lemon can be added to the meat so that it is covered. The entire mixture is then allowed to cool and jell. Bay leaves or chili can be added to the broth for added taste (the Romanian variety is based on garlic and includes no vinegar, orange, lemon, chili, bay leaves, etc.). However, there are many alternate ways of preparing pork jelly, such as the usage of celery, beef and even pig bones. Poultry jellies are made the same way as making pork jelly, but less water is added to compensate for lower natural gelatin content.

## Pihtije

**Pihtije** (Serbian Cyrillic: пихтије), **pivtija** (Macedonian: пивтија), **pača** (Bulgarian, Macedonian: пача), **piftie** or **răcitura** in Romanian is an aspic-like dish, generally made from low grade pork meat, such as the head, shank and/or hock made into a semi-consistent gelatinous cake-like form. In some varieties, chicken is used instead of pork. Some recipes also include smoked meat.

Pihtije is commonly just one component of the traditional meal (or an appetizer), although it can be served as a main dish. It is usually accompanied by cold *rakija* (strong *šljivovica* or apricot brandy is common, but quince brandy is sometimes used) and *turšija* (cold pickled vegetables, usually horse-radish, bell peppers, hot peppers, green tomatoes and cabbage/sauerkraut).

The recipe calls for the meat to be cleaned, washed and then boiled for a short time, no longer than 5–10 minutes. Then the water is changed, and vegetables and spices are added (usually pepper, bay leaves, onion, carrots, celery). This is cooked until the meat begins to separate from the bones by itself; then, the bones are removed, the meat stock is filtered and the meat and stock are poured into shallow bowls.



<b>Type</b>	Aspic
<b>Course</b>	Hors d'oeuvre
<b>Main ingredients</b>	Low-grade cuts of pig meat (trotters)

 Cookbook: Pork jelly  Media: Pork jelly



Pihtije on lettuce with eggs

Garlic is added, as well as thin slices of carrots or green peppers, or something similar for decoration. It is left to sit in a cold spot, such as a fridge or outside if the weather is cold enough (this is a traditional winter dish). It congeals into jelly and can be cut into cubes (it is often said that good pihtijas are "cut like glass"). These cubes can be sprinkled with dried ground red paprika ( *aleva paprika* ), as desired, before serving.

Pihtijs are usually cut and served in equal sized cubes.

Pihtijs are frequently used in slavas and other celebratory occasions with Serbs.

## Romanian and Moldovan piftie

Romanian and Moldovan piftie (*răcitura*) is usually made with pork offal, boiled with garlic and bay leaves. Piftie has a different method of preparation. Usually the pig's trotters are boiled to make a soup; the trotters are used because they contain a lot more gelatin than any other part of the pig. The mixture is then cooled to become a jelly. Usually garlic is added. Piftie is traditionally served for Epiphany.

## Worldwide variants

### Asia

Among the Newars of Kathmandu Valley in Nepal, buffalo meat jelly is a major component of the winter festivity gourmet. It is eaten in combination with fish aspic, which is made from dried fish and buffalo meat stock, soured, and contains a heavy mix of spices and condiments.

### Europe

In Russian, a meat aspic dish is called *kholodets* (Russian: *Холодец*) derived from the word *kholod* meaning cold. The dish is part of winter holiday festive meals. In central, eastern, and northern Europe, aspic often takes the form of pork jelly, and it is popular around the Christmas and Easter Holidays. A Georgian version is called *Mujuji* (მუჯუჯი). In Poland certain meats, fish and vegetables are set in aspic, creating a dish called "galareta".

Croatian version of this dish is called *hladetina* (*hladno* meaning cold). Variants range from one served in a dish with lot or rather delicate gelatin, to *tlačénica* more resembling German *Sülze*, a kind of head cheese.



Pihtijs cubes



Moldovan chicken *răcitura*.



Russian aspic - kholodets with chopped horseradish (chren).



## See also

- Jell-O
- Tinned ham
- Garde manger
- Galantine
- Head cheese - "brawn"
- Terrine
- Pâté
- P'tcha (Jewish)
- Pig's trotters
- Meat-jelly Festival

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## External links

- Encyclopedia of Food and Culture: Gelatin (<http://www.enotes.com/food-encyclopedia/gelatin>)
- Latvian pork aspic (<http://latvians.com/en/Reading/LatviskaVirtuve/virtuve-01-sivena-galerts.php>)
- Russian Meat Aspic (<http://www.recipestudio.com/2010/11/meat-jelly-kholodets.html>)

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