



METHOD

The Underbelly of Culinary Curiosity: Fries, *Criadillas*, Gonads, White Kidneys and Other Little 'Things'

Can you offer a woman anything more succulent?

Marie Rouanet, Petit traité romanesque de cuisine



A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE

A lexicon of anatomical, culinary and fantastic terms to describe edible testicals

Âmes / Souls

I have never heard the word *âmes* used in this sense anywhere else than in the Brasserie Thoumieux in Paris, run by Jean Bassalert and his wife Françoise, but this might be the moment to give them a pat on the back for regularly offering cock's stones and lamb's fry on their *à la carte* menu and even occasionally on the daily *table d'hôte*. They inform me that they have always used the epithet *âmes* for cock's and lamb's testicles in their family, which comes from the Limousin, where they have been restaurateurs, man and boy, for four generations. I am convinced that the derivation is similar to that of *animelles* (see below).

Amourette(s) / Passing fancies

In the singular, the term means the spinal cord of bovines (or more rarely of ovines) when it is used in cooking. Some authors only give it this name when it is cooked. Veal marrow is more refined than ox. Used in the plural, the word describes a mix of different delicate garnishes (marrow, *animelles*, cock's combs and cock's stones) served in a savoury pie or a vol-au-vent. Some authors are confused between the two usages and wrongly use *amourettes* to mean *animelles* (see below). *Amourettes* is sometimes used in the Middle East (the Lebanon in particular) to mean lamb's fry in books on oriental cookery.

Amoureuses / Lovers

In her book *L'Agneau, des mots et des saveurs* (Lamb, Words and Flavours), Sophie Denis uses this word as a synonym for *animelles*. I have been unable to find it in any other cookery manual.

Animelles* / Testicle as butcher's meat

The name of the 'disbursed'[†] glands (testicles) of a male animal destined to be sold as butcher's meat. The best loved in France, North Africa and the Middle

* *Animelle* (n.f. plur.) means sweetbreads in Italian. *Translator*.

[†] i.e. removed from the scrotum. *Translator*.

East are taken from rams, while in Spain they prefer those from bulls. The word is always used in the plural. It is particularly interesting to note that the word *animelles* comes from the Latin for breath, *anima*, which gives us our own animal (because it is animated or alive), as well as the French word *âme* (i.e. soul) because the soul is the breath of the spirit that animated man. [The English word soul is of Germanic origin, ultimately perhaps derived from Greek rather than Latin.] As regards *animelles*, they naturally contain the seed of life, therefore the breath.*

Banes / Bull's testicles

A rare anatomical term used for bull's testicles. In French conversation the word *gonades* is preferred, while in cooking the Spanish *criadillas* is usual.

Argomuche was a picturesque language stuffed with words drawn from street slang (*argot*) known to everyone, and jargon specific to the slaughterhouses of La Villette. A virile man, for example, was called a *banard* from *banes*, a bull's testicles, and they said that a man had marrowbone, when they meant courage.

Guy Shemla, *Les Ventres de Paris, les Halles, la Villette, Rungis, l'histoire du plus grand marché du monde (The Bellies of Paris ... the History of the World's Biggest Market, 1994)*

Béatilles

Béatilles is the French for the cocktail of different delicate garnishes (veal or lamb's sweetbreads, *amourettes*, *animelles*, cock's combs and cock's stones) that are used to decorate a pie or a vol-au-vent. [There is no precise English equivalent, although see Batalia pie, described by the author Robert May in 1660, below.] As a general usage, *amourettes* may be preferable because *béatilles* usually includes sweetbreads. Some authors use *béatilles* as a synonym for *animelles*, which is false. Etymologically, the word derives from *béat* (in the Greek sense of contented) and was used first to mean 'objects created by beatific nuns; and, by extension, in around 1500 it was used for the ornaments in ladies' hair, and then for sweetmeats (1585), specially used in cooking for delicate morsels used to garnish *pâtés* or which are served on the side (1680)' (*Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, Le Robert).

Do you know what *béatilles* are? By jove, it's a pretty old word. Our fathers called *béatilles* those delicate little meats such as sweetbreads, cock's combs and testes. They were served separately, sautéed, or put into *pâtés*. In some regions, they were also cooked in restorative

* The stuff of life to knit me
 Blew hither: here am I.
 Now – for a breath I tarry...
 A.E. Houseman, *A Shropshire Lad. Translator.*



broths for young married couples on the day after their wedding. Our forefathers knew what they were doing.

Curnonsky and André Saint-Georges, La Table et l'amour, nouveau traité des excitants modernes

By this name in the past were designated a collection of little bits like cock's combs and testes, lamb's sweetbreads and mushrooms that were used as garnishes to vol-au-vents, *bouchées* and pies. These little things were usually bound by a *sauce velouté* or a *sauce supreme*.

Prosper Montagné, Larousse gastronomique, 1938

The family jewels

An expression that refers to male genital organs (see the lexicon), but which is also used by the Belgian star chef Pierre Wynants at his restaurant Comme Chez Soi in Brussels to designate bull's testicles (young bull's gonads) which are indispensable for the making of *choesels* (see below).

Bourses / Purses

Used in the plural, the word *bourses* is used both to denote the skin covering the testes, the scrotum, and, metonymically, the glands contained therein. The verb *déboursier* (disburse) is therefore used when the contents are separated from the container and the glands removed from their outside envelope.

Caillettes / Cauls*

In the sixteenth century the word was used for the sack that contained a ram's balls, its scrotum.

Caprices de femmes / Women's caprices

A fantasy name for rams' purses, it was a favourite Iranian euphemism when the Pahlavis were shahs (before the Islamic revolution), a moment perhaps when Persian gastronomy reached a high-water mark.

Choesels

A word that means bull's testicles in Belgian slang. See also '*chosettes*' and the more wide-ranging description in the recipe section.

* Caul or omentum is the thin fatty membrane that wraps itself round the greater intestine and internal organs of mammals. Often taken from a pig, it is used to bind faggots and other meat confections that require wrapping. Faggots are often called *caillettes* in French. *Translator.*





Chosettes

This word (*choesels* in Belgium) is a prudish expression to denote a bull's 'things' [*choses* is French for things]. Some disagree. For a more detailed explanation see the recipe on p. 113.

Criadillas

See below, in foreign words.

Daintiers*

Nowadays a technical word denoting a stag's testicles. They look like big black eggs and are highly sought-after in Chinese medicine (often served with the animal's penis as well) to heighten sexuality. They are thought effective in combating male impotence. Stags are endangered in the wild in China and they are being farmed in ever-greater numbers, notably because of the popularity of this dish.

Désirs / Desires

A fantasy name used by the great chef Escoffier for cock's stones.

Faux ris / False sweetbreads

A name that used to be used a lot instead of *animelles* as their fine, appetizing texture, and even their appearance, was reminiscent of veal sweetbreads.

Friture de veau / Calf's fry

A prudish name by which Canadian cowboys [Well, actually American, but Canadians speak French, Americans don't. *Translator.*] refer to the testicles of a young bull, understood by everyone because they are always eaten fried. (See also 'Rocky mountain oysters' and 'Prairie oysters'.)

Frivolités / Frivolities

A fantasy name by which butchers, offal merchants and other industry professionals used to refer to lamb's testicles (in particular at the abattoirs at La

* In English, *OED* has dowset or doucet (evidently from the French *doux*) for the testicles of a deer. A more familiar word for all the entrails of a deer is umbles, which gives us humble pie: the lords ate a magnificent venison pasty, and the plebs ate the offal. The French *daintiers* is an old hunter's word and doubtless related to *dainteau*, a young fallow deer (Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*, 1611). *Translator.*





Villette in Paris). Another favoured word was *joyeuses* (see below) often used by cookery writers of the same period.

***Frivolités de la reine* / The queen's frivolities**

In her book *L'Agneau, des mots et des saveurs*, Sophie Denis tells us, 'Lamb's fries were also referred to as the queen's frivolities, in memory of the dish with which – it seems – Louis XV treated Madame de Pompadour in order to stimulate her amorous appetites.' It is certainly true that the court of Louis XV (1710–1774, he reigned from 1715) was very partial to offal, notably lamb's fry and cock's stones, and it is also claimed that he made his mistress eat them to kindle her ardour (see Mythology). Madame de Pompadour, however, was his mistress, not his queen. She indeed was Marie Leszczyńska (1703–1768), who married Louis in 1725 and was very fond of her food, inspiring a great many recipes which are styled *à la reine*: chicken, consommé, minced chicken, and above all the celebrated *bouchées à la reine* (the queen's morsels). The authentic form of this last is made from a garnish *à la financière*, based on cock's combs and cock's stones. It seems to me the 'frivolities' are more likely to have been a tribute to the queen than the mistress, an opinion shared by Prosper Montagné in the original edition of *Larousse Gastronomique* of 1938 (see also *Morceau de la reine* below).

***Gonade(s)* / Gonad(s)**

From the Greek *gône* meaning seed, the word gonad denotes the sexual glands that produce gametes and secrete hormones. The male gonad is the testicle and the female is the ovary. In the language of the French butcher, particularly in the north of France, the term is applied specifically to bull's or bullock's testicles. It is also used to designate the coral tongues that are found inside sea urchins and which are no less than the sexual organs of this mollusc (they are yellow for males and pink or red for females). The latter can represent up to twelve per cent of the adult animal. It is a proportion that would make a mammal's eyes boggle.

***Honneurs* / Honours**

A fantasy term for rams' purses, not used much now.

***Huîtres de montagne* / Mountain oysters**

One of the homely sobriquets applied by cowboys to bullock's gonads castrated on the ranches of North America – the United States (especially Virginia) and Canada. After castration, the bullock's testicles are generally fried with herbs and served with marinated cloves of wild garlic. It is a seasonal dish, consumed above





all in the spring when the beasts are being branded (see Mountain oysters in the lexicon of foreign terms, below).

Huîtres des montagnes Rocheuses / Rocky mountain oysters

Another name American cowboys give to bullock's testicles.

Huîtres des prairies / Prairie oysters

Yet another name conferred on bullock's testicles by American cowboys.*

Joyeuses (or joyeusetés) / Joys

A saucy euphemism, *joyeuses* was used for a long time by butchers, offal dealers and meat professionals (particularly in abattoirs) to mean rams' purses, and they were happy to eat them for their morning snack [*casse-croûte matinal*]. In popular speech the term is also used to describe a man's testicles and was common between the wars and even into the 1970s, that is, until the closing of Les Halles and the transfer of the market to Rungis.† The celebrated chef, the late Alain Chapel, went so far as to create a 'Confrérie des joyeuses' (see recipe for *Les joyeuses de l'ami Roger*). Some Middle Eastern cookbooks use the word *joyeuseté* to describe lamb's fry.

Morceau de la reine / The queen's morsel

This is the name Marie Rouannet gives cock's stones in her *Petit traité romanesque de la cuisine* of 1997. She reminds us that 'these used to garnish the celebrated *bouchée à la reine*.'

Oeufs de mouton / Rams' eggs

Arabs call testicles in general and sheep's in particular 'eggs' or *baïdh*. In literary Arabic the word has essentially these two meanings (see the lexicon below). The epithet is used in other countries too: for example Spain (*huevos*) and Germany (*Eier*).

And this one looked at me, and that one smiled at me, and one drove me mad with her eyes, and another recited verse, and that one there

* For males of the roughest hue, cowboys are strangely attracted by euphemisms for bollocks. Rocky mountain oysters are but half of them. A brief trawl of the Internet will yield 'cowboy caviar', 'Montana tendergroins', 'dusted nuts', 'bull fries' or 'swinging beef' among others. *Translator*.

† Paris's magnificent central market at was pulled down and new buildings were created close to Orly Airport in the southern suburbs. With the demolition of Les Halles, an entire popular culture went too. *Translator*.





opened her arms to me, and that one said ‘Oh you my eye!’ and the other ‘Oh you my soul!’ and another ‘Oh flame of heart!’ And then they all came towards me and began to caress me... Once the meal was over, after we had feasted on the finest foods – birds’ tongues, brains, rams’ balls (*oeufs de mouton*) – and we had all had our share of the honey cake; after the dances and the songs, they said to me:

Oh my darling, now is the time for solid pleasure and in bed; choose between us the one who attracts you the most, and without fear that you will offend us, for each of us will have our turn during the night, we forty sisters, and afterwards the turn of every one of us will come again to play with you in the bed, every night.

The Thousand and One Nights (Story of the Third Saâlouk, Fifteenth Night)

Rognons blancs / Lamb’s fries

These are ovine testicles, removed from their natural packaging. Sheep don’t generally have them, for it is indeed theirs that one eats, once lambs have been castrated [in the process, when fully grown, becoming wethers]. Ram lambs (non-castrated males) or rams (breeding males) [sometimes called bucks or tups] still have them. *Rognons blancs* (white kidneys) is the French term for fries most commonly used today, and the accepted usage within the butchery trade, for what were once called *animelles*, a word that has fallen from use. The euphemism stems from their similarity in shape to kidneys, which paradoxically butchers now call *rognons de chair* (flesh kidneys) to distinguish them from fries. Fry is included in the fifth ‘quarter’, what the French call *triperie* (tripe) and we call offal – the other four quarters being the two front legs and the two hind legs of a beast. The Arabs are particularly fond of them, as are the inhabitants of Iceland. While once the common coin of restaurant menus in France, they are now the stuff of legend.

Rognons (blancs) de coq / Cock’s stones

The French term is euphemistic: these are cock’s testicles, and they are found inside the bird. Chickens are castrated before they become cockerels; the result being a capon. At the time of the Renaissance in Rome, they said that the operation turned the vulgar chicken into two exceptional dishes. Gastronomy makes no mention of the testes of any other birds, despite the fact that ducks, turkey cocks, ostriches (to name but three) must have them too. In one of his songs, *Le Coq et la Pendule* (The Cock and the Clock), the French singer–songwriter Claude Nougaro dubs his amorous cockerel a ‘cock’s comb with testicles.’





Oh, Aziz, come with me, I will cook cock's combs and testes and other delicious things. Be aware that I have been overcome with desire for you, night and day.

The Thousand and One Nights

Rognons blancs de mouton / Sheep's balls or lamb's fry

An expression used to denote ovine testicles when, paradoxically, the sheep is no longer in possession of his prowess! It can mean the those of sheep following castration (practised at different ages according to custom), or they might have belonged to a young buck or tup following slaughter. As regards rams, they hang on to theirs as they have business to do! (See *rognons blancs*.)

Ronds / Lamb's fry

In his *200 recettes secrètes de la cuisine française* (200 Secret Recipes of French Cooking, 1965), the pseudonymous author Bifrons gives two recipes for *frivolités* (frivolities or lamb's fry) which he calls *ronds* (see the recipe below for frivolities in tomato sauce). I have seen this word nowhere else.

Sac(s) / Bags

Name given to the testicles of a living bullock.

'And you, when she asked the castrator for the bullock's bags for you to scoff in a salad!'

And later:

'Without forgetting the balls,' Lebrac said in conclusion, 'we are going to see if you have any!'

'You'll need to tie up the bag before cutting them, like they do with bullocks,' Gambette threw in; he had obviously witnessed this sort of thing.

Louis Pergaud, La Guerre des boutons (War of the Buttons, 1912)

Suites

A French anatomical term for wild boar's testicles.* I should point out that several dictionaries of synonyms put out by different publishers incorrectly give the word as *luites* rather than *suites*. We need to know now who copied whom!

* The word was included in Randle Cotgrave's *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*, 1611, where he translated it as 'the cods of a wild bore'. *Translator*.



Testicules / Testicles

Anatomically speaking, these are male genital glands (gonads) situated inside the scrotum, which is still called a *bourse* (purse) in French, which constitutes their external cutaneous envelope. Ignoring these details, the word testicle is generally used metonymically to denote both content and container. It is the testicles that produce spermatozoa and secrete the male hormone testosterone. The testicles of all male animals that we butcher are edible and eaten, as are those taken from cockerels. Also consumed, but in tiny quantities, are the testicles of foals and boar pigs or indeed those of a semi-mature male pig that has been castrated. These last used to be much appreciated in country districts in the old days. It is not beyond the stretch of the imagination to think that other in other latitudes they eat the testicles of different animals: donkeys, camels (the meat of the ‘ship of the desert’ – above all the young camel – is prized south of the Sahara, a region where it was first introduced at the beginning of the first millennium), gazelles, buffalos, bison, red deer, stags, reindeer, caribous, bears, lions (see Mythology) and kangaroos (they must pack something in their pouch!) – without even mentioning dogs in China, etc. In a word, every animal that we eat or the meat of which we consume. On the other hand, despite the proud reputation of the ‘jack rabbit’ as a prolific breeder, no one has ever found anywhere any trace of the rodent’s balls.

Truffes / Truffles

A name given in France to bull’s testicles, above all when the skin is black.

In other languages

Animelle

The Italian word *animelle* is a false friend that means ‘sweetbreads’, but there is often confusion between lamb’s fry, bone marrow and sweetbreads, probably because they are often sold together in Italy. Proper fry are sold under the name of *granelli* (see below).

Baidh

Name for eggs and testicles in literary Arabic, where the word means both. Other words used in speech are *soualah* and *hab echbab* (see below).



Balas

Testicles and fry in Provençal.

Batalia or Battalia pie

This was a dish described by the English author Robert May in his *Accomplisht Cook* of 1660. Its name derives from the French *béatilles* (see above). There were later English recipes, such as by John Nott (1726), Charles Carter (1730) and Eliza Smith (1730) and they all incorporate the juicy morsels implied by the word *béatilles* (the Spanish is *beatilla*). However, there is a further layer of allusion to the name inasmuch as some of these pies were dressed up in the manner of fortifications, giving the dish, and the word, a military connotation. *Translator*.

Criadillas

The word applies to all animal testicles sold by Spanish butchers.* It is not, as often thought, restricted to bull's balls. The Spaniards are very fond of this sort of food and bull's slabs (*criadillas de toro*), bullock's or calf's testicles (*criadillas de beccero*) and pig's or boar's testicles (*criadillas de cerdo*) are traditionally eaten all over Spain. My friend Isabel Calvache Gisbert tells me that the meat of the *toro de lidia* (fighting bull) is not eaten immediately away after the *corrida*, but left to rest for a few days after it has been butchered in order to rid it of both blood and toxins. The word *criadillas* comes from the verb *criar*, meaning 'create, produce, engender, feed, and breed.' The verb also gives the words *cria* (breeding farm, hatchery, litter or babe in arms), *criada* (maidservant), *criadero* (nursery, oyster-bed, stock farm, seam, deposit; and 'fertile' when employed as an adjective), and finally *criador* (creator, producer, breeder, wet-nurse). The term *criadillas* is also used for a wild mushroom typically found in the Estramadura in summer – the *jarera* or *jariega* – which is popularly called *criadilla de tierra* or *criadilla del campo* (that is, truffle or field truffle). The botanical name is *Choiromyces gangliiformis* (plant in the form of a gland) and has clearly no connection with the black truffle (*Tuber melanosporum*) or indeed with the *criadillas* of a bull. The word *criadillas* is also used in French, where it has superseded old terms like *banes* and even the more usual word gonads, which has always been popular in the north of the country. It should be noted that the meat of fighting bulls has now been banned from sale in France.

Frivolity

A culinary name for lamb's fry in English [a sense not recorded in the *OED*, *Translator*].

* The word also means potato in Spanish, as well as truffle – see later in the paragraph. *Translator*.



Fry

Culinary name for a testicle in English, testicle being strictly anatomical. The plural is fries.

Granelli

Culinary epithet conferred on cock's stones in Italy, as well as the testicles of rams, lambs, bulls and calves. *Granelli* means little grains, and is therefore a metaphor. They are mostly eaten in the north of Italy, but in the southern Mezzogiorno lamb's fries are used in the preparation of lamb faggots. Sicilians are also fond of them.

Hab echbab

Name for lamb's fries or ram's purses in Arabic (particularly in Algeria). The word *soualab* is also used.

Huevos

A word that means eggs in Spanish, and is a synonym of *criadillas* (see above). This metaphorical usage is found extensively through the Mediterranean region (Italy, Spain and North Africa) as well as in other countries such as Germany.

Lamb's fry

Culinary term for lamb's testicles in English.

Mountain oysters

The name given by Virginian farmers in the United States to fried calf's testicles. This was confirmed for me by Valérie de Lescure, a friend of Jean Coyner, whose parents own a large ranch in Virginia. Virginia is a scattered with beef farms and crossed by a chain of mountains. They are eaten by the cowboys after the castration of the calves.

Ovette di pollo

An Italian metaphorical term for cock's stones (*ovette* means eggs), especially in Piedmont where they are often sold together with cock's combs and wattles (*creste, ovette e babigli di pollo*). In fact it would be more appropriate to say *ovette di gallo*, the testes being culled from a cock (*gallo*), not a chicken (*pollo*).





Prairie oyster

A calf's testicle in the United States. It is the preferred Canadian usage. In parts of Texas and Oklahoma, they may be called calf fries. [The *OED* records its first use as 1941. *Translator*.]

Rocky mountain oyster

As prairie oyster, above, but used more in the United States than Canada. [The *OED* records its first use as 1889. *Translator*.]

Soualah

The name given by Arabs to designate lamb's fry, particularly in Algeria. (See also *hab echbab*, above.)

Testicoli di gallo

The more usual name for cock's stones in Italian.

A little supplementary vocabulary for a better understanding of... those things!

Albuginea

The tunica albuginea is one of the two cutaneous envelopes around the testicles, more precisely the subcutaneous envelope which covers each testicle inside the scrotum, which is the external envelope, dermis or skin (cf. dermatitis). It is in fact a whitish double skin (a thick tunic reinforced by a fine membrane). In the first instance, this adjective described colour (from the Latin *albus* or white) but was recorded as an anatomical term in 1751.

Belin / Tup

A male sheep that has not yet been castrated but is not going to be used as a ram for reproductive purposes. The American word is 'buck'.

Castration / Castration

An operation which removes the testicles of a young animal in order that it will fatten more readily in consequence of his loss of virility and, therefore,





his aggressive drive. In this way, its meat becomes both more tender and more abundant. In the case of mankind, the castration of a youth tends to make him obese, but was done in past centuries to inhibit his voice from breaking. This was the reason it was practised among opera singers who then became *castrati*. (See also the word ‘eunuch’, and the box at the end of this section.)

Chapon / Capon

A chicken that has been intentionally castrated at around four months-old to prevent him from becoming a cock and to make him fatten more readily.

Chaponner / Caponize

To emasculate a male. Generally used for chickens (see above) but can be extended to other beasts, even men.

Châtrer / Castrate, geld, neuter

In English, the verb to neuter is generally used for domestic pets such as cats and dogs. The French *châtrer* refers, as do our castrate and geld, to any animal, even a man. An exception to the rule: *châtrer* is also used to refer to the removal of the black vein in crayfish, this being the digestive tract, not its sexual organs.

Couillard / Tup

Another French epithet for an intact male sheep (see tup, above). Rabelais uses the word ‘couillard’ to describe a donkey:

... voyant un âne couillard qui mangeait des chardons...

(Seeing a big-bollocked donkey which was eating thistles...)

Gargantua (Chapter XX) 5th ed., 1542

Dessous (les)

The mass of fat that fills ox scrotums after castration is called the *dessous* [in French]. The *dessous* are examined as part of those tests which allow us to evaluate the living beast. Butchers pronounce the word *d’sous* (‘*cet animal a des d’sous!*’ There’s some fat on this beast).

Georges Chaudieu, Pour le boucher, nouveau manuel de la boucherie (For the Butcher. A New Manual of Butchery, 1963)





Emasculate

A synonym for castrate, and generally used for men rather than beasts. In French literature there are two verbs that owe their existence to the fate of Abelard – *abailardiser* and *abélardiser*: a reference to the state in which Canon Fulbert left Abelard:

D'un colonel vous courtisez la femme,
S'il vous prend, il vous abailardisera.

(You court the colonel's wife, If he catches you, he'll have your balls.)

Pommereul, Poésies, quoted in Louis de Lande

Epididymis

From the Greek *epi*, meaning 'on' and *didumos* or testicle: a long, narrow structure that runs along the side of the testicle that contains a serpentine canal through which spermatozoa pass. It looks like a great big vein which sticks out and runs along the testicle, but it is not a vein.

Eunuch

In the old days, there were among the Arabs and certain peoples in the Middle East and in China, men who had been willingly castrated so that they might grow up without risk of their committing adultery with women, in particular women in harems. The removal may be partial or total. There are three sorts of eunuchs: complete eunuchs (castrated in infancy), partial eunuchs (castrated after the onset of puberty) and false eunuchs (who have had their testicles removed but may still copulate). Muslims never carry out the act of castration, and the eunuchs are never Muslims themselves as Islamic law forbids castration. It is for this reason that in Islamic literature such as the *Thousand and One Nights* – we might add, the second most read Islamic book after the Koran – they speak of eunuchs having dark or black skin – not Muslims, but rather Egyptians, Somalis from Barbary, or Abyssinians.

Gamete

From the Greek *gamos*, meaning marriage, it is a reproductive cell, either male or female, at the core of which is a single chromosome of each sort and which can unite with the gamete of the opposite sex to form a zygote, but cannot do anything by itself.





Gland

An organ, the function of which is to create certain substances and secrete them either on the surface of the organism (exocrine glands) or directly into the bloodstream (endocrine glands). Testicles are male genital glands, they produce spermatozoa and secrete the male hormone called testosterone.

Neuter

In zoology or butchery, an animal that has no sex or which has lost it as a result of castration, such as an ox or a sheep.

Opothotherapy or organotherapy

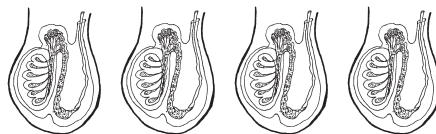
Is the therapeutic use of glands and animal organs in the form of pharmaceutical extracts. When this discipline first emerged, the butcher's trade furnished many opotherapeutic products, in particular, kidneys and testicles.

Raphe

The dictionary definition of the word is, 'A groove, ridge, or seam in an organ or tissue, esp. one marking a line of fusion between two halves' (*NSOED*). In the case of the scrotum, it is the narrow fold which runs vertically up the middle of the outer skin.

Scrotum

The cutaneous envelope (of exterior skin or dermis) that contains the male genital organs. Each one of the glands contained within is itself covered with a subcutaneous envelope called tunica albuginea (see above).



CASTRATION

He bawled like a bull that a vet was preparing to turn into an ox.

*San-Antonio (Frédéric Dard), Réflexions jubilatoires sur l'existence
(Happy Thoughts on Life, 2000)*

*C'est Noël au harem; les eunuques rassemblés,
Écotent les demoiselles si belles, qui gazouillent,
Le sultan entre alors et lance à l'assemblée:*

Qu'elle cadeau pour Noël? Et les eunuques: Des couilles!

*(It's Yuletide in the harem, the eunuchs are so glum,
Listening to the odalisques who lisp in pillared halls.*

*The sultan enters then and shouts to all and one
'What d'you want for Christmas?' The eunuchs say 'some balls'.)*

Traditional, quoted in Maggie Paley, Le Pénis dans tous ses états (2000)

OF THE CASTRATION OF RAMS

Beasts are castrated to make them fatten more readily and to remove the wild and obnoxious taste of the ram; to make the flesh more tender, and finally to obtain a wool that is at once thicker and finer.

Rams are castrated at any age, but it is better to do it when they are lambs as early as the second week because the earlier you perform the operation the smaller the risk of the animal dying. It is simply a question of cutting open the purses and removing the testicles one after the other by twisting the spermatic cord which is easily done. Some people then rub the purses with lard, others simply bind the wound. It heals quite quickly. This method is not suitable for rams of three or four years of age. They would not survive. These you castrate by twisting the cord or by tying with a ligature.

The method of castration called bistournage which is achieved by rupturing the spermatic cord is performed by seizing the testicles and twisting them inside the scrotum two or three times, and with some force, in such a way as to bring the bottom part of the testicle up to the top and the top part down to the bottom. The purses are then tied up beneath the testicles to prevent them from dropping and reassuming their natural position. This method, which is very painful, is not without danger for the beast.

Using a ligature (fouetter) is an easy method which has none of the drawbacks of bistournage. Monsieur Bourgeois, the director of the sheep farm at Rambouillet, recommends it highly to farmers. He has produced the following description:

"Rams are always treated in the morning, before feeding; it is also

better if they are not damp. The procedure is best performed in March or October.

“Having captured the ram you want to operate on, you bind his four legs in such a way that the hind legs are as close as possible to the forelegs, but without causing the beast too much pain. The ram is then laid on his back on his straw in the pen; then, with the fingers, you pull out the wool above the testicles which would otherwise obstruct the knot of the ligature. The string you use should be tough and be roughly twice as thick as an ordinary whipcord. If you have a lot of rams to castrate, it is wise to prepare the ligatures in advance. You take about two feet of cord and attach a piece of wood measuring five or six inches by two-thirds of an inch diameter to each end. Using the cord as a loop, the operator makes a tourniquet around the purse, the knot being tied one or two inches above the testes. Now, two men are placed on each side of the ram while a third holds it down. The two then pull simultaneously on each end of the ligature, holding the piece of wood in their hands and placing their feet against each other to give themselves more force; you must tighten the knot firmly and gradually, but not so hard that you sever anything but merely cut off the circulation above the ligature. After this, to make sure of the first knot, a second is tied, simply done and equally well, and the cord is cut an inch and a half from the knot; after which the beast is untied, its penis is pulled out from its sheath and the ram is made to stand on its feet. Sometimes the ligature breaks; in this case you will need to have another one ready, and apply it without removing the first. When you see rams shake themselves after this operation, it is an indication that it has been well performed. Three days later you may cut off the testicles an inch below the knot.”

*The flesh of sheep which have had their testicles removed when still young is a lot more pleasant than that of tups that have been castrated or corded.**

Jules Troussset, Un million de recettes, Grande encyclopédie nationale et illustrée d'économie domestique et rurale (A Million Recipes. Complete National and Illustrated Encyclopedia of Domestic and Rural Economy), vol. II, end of the 19th century.

** Nowadays, most male lambs are ringed not long after birth. The rings impede the blood flow to the testes, which atrophy. The modern version of the ligature is the Burdizzo clamp, an ingenious device which crushes the spermatic cord by external pressure, meaning no breaking of the skin, no blood loss and no infection. Again, deprived of their blood supply, the testes atrophy. In England, it is not permitted that the Burdizzo clamp be used on sheep more than four months old.*

CASTRATING COCKS*

We owe the art of caponizing cocks to the Romans, here is how: the inhabitants of the island of Cos had shown the Romans how to fatten fowl in dark, enclosed places, and when the repute of these fattened chickens reached Rome, everyone had to have one, which forced the Consul Caius Fanius to issue a decree (as a public health measure) obliging people to rear their chickens in the streets and not inside their houses. The hens left out in the open air did not fatten up. To satisfy gourmands, a Roman veterinarian dreamt up the idea of caponizing them, which worked a treat. It is done at the age of four months, at the end of spring or the beginning of summer, and you need to choose a cool spell that is more damp than dry to castrate the chickens. The operation always takes place in the morning before the chickens have been fed. You need to equip yourself with a lancet, or some well-sharpened scissors and a needle threaded with waxed cotton. Everything should be in good condition. An assistant places the chicken on the castrator's lap on its back, with its head nearest the ground. The wings are clamped between the knees and the assistant holds it firmly with its right leg aligned along the body and the left thrown backwards, in order to expose the left side in which the incision is to be made. Then you pull out the feathers at the end of the wishbone or sternum and, using the needle as assistance, you lift the skin that runs along the inside of the thigh. Here you make a transverse incision of about four centimetres. As soon as the cut has been made, you uncover the muscle and, with a little metal hook called a surgeon's tenaculum, you lift it to separate it from the intestines. Cutting with the lancet, you can then see the peritoneum, a thin, slack, transparent membrane which covers the intestine and you make a cut big enough for you to put your finger into the belly.

If part of the intestine pops out, you need to carefully push it back into the belly, then, put your greased right-hand index finger under the intestines in the region of the kidneys, a little to the right above the croup, at the site of the final vertebra. There the finger will come across two glands the size of haricot beans. They are smooth and moveable, even if sticky. These are carefully torn off and rolled back towards the incision. It is this action that requires the greatest skill and experience, as the gland occasionally gets lost before it can be brought out and it is very difficult to find it again. If they have been taken off properly, they can stay inside the animal without too much inconvenience, but it is better to get them out.

Having sewn up the edges with a few deft stitches of waxed thread, the scar is washed with some alcohol or it can be gently rubbed with some camphor. Every time that you attempt a stitch, you need to pull out the skin with the tip of the needle in such a way as to avoid pricking the intestine,

which can lead to mortal accidents. At the same time as depriving the cock of his organs, it is the practice to rid him of his other attributes, that is to say, cut off his cock's comb and his wattles.

The cock is then placed in a big open cage in a quiet spot and for the next few hours he will be given no other food than a little white bread soaked in wine. For the first few days these young capons should sleep on clean straw: if he tries to find a perch he will delay the wound's healing. The birds are kept apart for three or four days while they are being looked after, then they can be returned to their normal existence...

Farmers in Le Mans, the Maine, Bresse, Périgord and Normandy have been able to provide the best capons in Europe for many years. The breeds which should be best suited to caponization are the black chicken of Crèvecoeur, the high-legged chicken of La Flèche, the small-headed chicken of Campine, the Bresse chicken, the Spanish chicken, the Darking [Dorking] chicken and finally the red crested chicken of Houdan.

Joseph Favre, *Dictionnaire universel de la cuisine, encyclopédie illustrée d'hygiène alimentaire (Universal Dictionary of Cookery, an Illustrated Encyclopedia of Dietary Hygiene, 1884)*

Do you want to know how they remove them? In the Lauragais it is work they give the women. They split the skin with a razor-blade, above the anus, between the croup and the cloaca. They stick in two fingers – the index and the ring finger – which are first of all dipped in brandy. The fingers follow the spinal column until they reach the kidneys, then they seize the testicles with the finger-tips and pull. The operation is very painful and the cock, in the hands of the woman, seems to be quite dead at the end of it: its eyes half-closed, hardly breathing. This is what birds do when things are going very badly.

The cock is sewn up again with a big needle using strong thread. They apply a pommade made from charcoal to the scar.

Then they cut off the cock's comb and the wattles and cauterize the scars with a hot iron. You might ask why they do this, as the cock's comb withers away naturally with the disappearance of the sexual organs? The truth is that it is good to eat, but on the other hand, isn't it right to make a further sign that marks out those cocks that are no longer male?

Marie Rouanet, 'Le morceau de la reine' (The Queen's Morsel) in *Petit traité romanesque de cuisine (1997)*

* Surgical castration of chickens is no longer legal in Britain; nor is the chemical alternative (an oestrogen implant). Translator.