



Ending a meal with a cup of Ypocras (spicy medieval wine) – ? - (Bibliothèque nationale de France , Ms fr 938 fol 69).

Wine in the Medieval Egypt

A Jewish Egyptian wine recipe

During the Middle Ages in Egypt, although wine is prohibited by Islam, it was widely consumed by middle-class Jews, and probably in big quantities on Shabbat and other life celebrations (marriage, circumcision, etc). Below is one of the wine recipes found in the Cairo Geniza.

A recipe for good wine (Honey and spiced wine)

"Take two and a half dirhem's weight of each of the following: lichen, ginger, pepper and barley flour and half a dirhem of saffron. Mix all these together, pound them and bind the mixture, with the same quantity (weight) of Egyptian bee honey and put it aside. Put two and a half dirhem's weight of this, together with one dirhem of colophony, into each jar and plast it over. Leave it in the sun for seven days, after which it can be used. If you wish to have vinegar, put only one and a quarter of this stuff into each jar and leave it in the sun for eleven days".

This recipe underlines the proliferation of wine substitutes made with fruits, spices and flowers in the Medieval Egypt. They appear in the Geniza as a daily diet, proving that wine was sometimes replaced by other beverages, not only in Islam, but also minority groups, like Jews living in its midst.