

It's Witchcraft



"Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing,--
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble."

They're famous words from Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' but the list of grizzly ingredients is said to be a real witches brew, but does that really mean that ingredients such as eye of newt, toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog were actually used in witchcraft?

The witches certainly were angry at the inclusion of the list of ingredients in the Scottish play, in fact they were so enraged that they placed a curse on the play, but not just the play, they also cursed the Bard himself and anyone who ever utters the word "Macbeth." Even to this day there are actors, producers, directors and stage hands who won't dare use the word in a theatre and certainly not on stage. So it seems like the witches wanted to hide something.

Witches were proud of their connection with nature, they were herbalists and many of their potions were in fact natural remedies which used herbs and botanicals, so was it really likely that they would take a dead newt and cut out its eyes to drop into their bubbling concoction? Well, no. Ingredients like eye of newt were a real thing, but not literally. Witches used different names for ingredients, basically codenames designed to keep magic within the magic circle. These disturbing names stopped muggles from replicating their brews. Calling the ingredients things like bat's wings and cat's foot, rather than holly and ivy, would certainly deter the no-maj community from drinking any of these disgusting sounding recipes.

So when the three witches in Macbeth add eye of newt to their cauldron, they're actually just using nothing more than mustard seeds, something you can pick up in Walmart. The rest of the ingredients mentioned in the play are pretty innocuous too. Toe of frog is just a buttercup, wool of bat is holly leaves, and tongue of dog is hounds tongue which is an herbaceous plant of the Boraginaceae family. That just leaves adder's fork and blind-worm's sting, well it seems there's always an exception to the rule, as these represent an adder's tongue and a blindworm is actually a slow worm.

If you're thinking of taking up magic and the art of brewing any time soon, then here are a few more ingredients and their translations as used by witches...

Absinthe - wormwood
African ginger - ginger
Aftator pear - avocado
American dittany - basil

Elf leaf - lavender
Fairy fingers - foxglove
Gallows grass - hemp
Gin plant - juniper

Aneton - dill
Bairnwort - daisy
Bee balm - lemon balm
Bird's foot - feunugreek
Blind buff - poppy
Blue eyes - potatoes
Blood of Hestia - chamomile
Calf's snout - snapdragon
Chinese parsley - coriander
Chocolate flower - geranium
Devil's dung - asafoetida
Eagle - wild garlic

Giver of life - corn
Goat's leaf - honeysuckle
Golden bough - mistletoe
Honey stalks - clove
Kronos' blood - cedar sap
Lamb mint - spearmint
Rabbits - toadflax
Ring-o-bells - bluebells
Scaldhead - blackberry
Semen of Hermes - dill
Titan's blood - wild lettuce
White wood - cinnamon

So what does eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog make? Blind newts, lame frogs, cold bats, and a cocker spaniel who makes a god-awful sucking sound when he's trying to drink from his dish.