

Bloody Mary

Time for a change in topic - a spirited one!

Many know *Bloody Mary* as a familiar cocktail, containing vodka, tomato juice, and spicy flavours served on the rocks with slice of lemon and salt sprinkled on the glass rim. But how did the popular drink get its name? There hangs an interesting and intricate royal tale which associates the name amusingly with the Queen Mary I of England.

Queen Mary I was the first queen to rule England. Born on 18 February 1516 and the only surviving child of Henry VIII and Catherine, she had a distressing childhood and adolescence. Her life, however, was radically altered when Henry divorced Catherine to marry Anne Boleyn. Henry claimed that the marriage was incestuous and illegal, as Catherine had been married to his dead brother, Arthur. The pope disagreed, resulting in Henry's break with Rome and the establishment of the Church of England.

After Anne Boleyn bore Henry another daughter, Elizabeth, Mary was forbidden access to her parents and stripped of her title of princess. Mary never saw her mother again. The father and daughter never reconciled and Mary refused to recognise her father as head of the church.

In 1537, Edward VI, Mary's younger brother, was born who succeeded his father in 1547 and zealously promoted Protestantism. Mary, however, remained a devout Catholic. On Edward's death in 1553, the secluded Mary who had widespread popular support made a triumphal entry into London within a short time. Once queen, she was determined to re-impose Catholicism and married Philip II of Spain. Neither policy was popular. Philip was Spanish and therefore distrusted, and many in England now had a vested interest in the prosperity of the Protestant church, having received church lands and money after Henry dissolved the monasteries. So there was a rebellion in 1554 which Mary crushed and making most of her advantage pressed on with the restoration of Catholicism and revived the laws against heresy. Over the next three years, she persecuted hundreds of Protestants in a vain attempt to restore Catholicism in England and earned the moniker 'Bloody Mary'.

Mary's disillusion deepened by an unsuccessful war against France which led to the loss of Calais, England's last possession in France, in January 1558. Childless, sick and deserted by Philip, Mary died on 17 November 1558 and her hopes for a Catholic England died with her.