

Pilgrims Provendre;



being a fhort HISTORY of the *food-stuffs* th^t an ordinarie man or woman w^d make & take on theyr travells; with emphafis placed upon food whych can be re-created for TOURNEYS & long-term travelling.

By
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Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote
 The droghte of March hath perced to the roote
 And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
 Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
 Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
 Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,
 And smale foweles maken melodye,
 That slepen al the nyght with open eye-
 (So priketh hem Nature in hir corages);
 Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
 And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes
 To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes[...]

– Canterbury Tales, Chaucer

THE HEAT OF SUMMER IS upon us, and with it the excess of fresh food and drink. We meander far from our homes and meet up in large encampments and extol the virtue of the season. With our renewed friendships, we celebrate with the foods and drinks of the season. It is now that we seek foods that are easily portable, readily made, and safe to eat. In our Current Middle Ages, we rely on iced and cold storage of modern additions to our diet. A healthful way to go, but if one seeks to truly feel medieval, is the food of the period not an important thing to experience as well? Can one give up their ice chest and *still* eat well? Yes! With advance preparation and a love for recreation, you can eat well and not be a slave to the stove on site. Take-away foods are mediæval, easy, and satisfying.

Now, one cannot write about take-away foods with out mentioning the need to make sure the foods are eaten safely and unspoiled. Sure, there were many fresh foods available, especially in the summer, for the taking. Ripe berries, greenery, and an occasional snared rabbit or bird were a welcome treat, but most relied on foods that were “put up” during the feasting months.

“I haven’t a penny left,” said Piers, “so I can’t buy you pullets or geese or pigs. All I’ve got is a couple of fresh cheeses, a little curds and cream, an oatcake, and two loaves of beans and bran which I baked for my children. Upon my soul, I haven’t a scrap of bacon, and I haven’t a cook to fry you steak and onions. But I’ve some parsley and shallots and plenty of cabbages, and a cow and a calf. And a mare to cart my dung, till the drought is over. And with these few things we must live till Lammas time, when I hope to reap a harvest in my fields. Then I can spread you a feast, as I’d really like to.” Then all the poor folk came with peasecods, and brought bens and baked apples by the lapful, and spring onions and chervils and hundreds of ripe cherries, and offered these gifts to Piers, to satisfy Hunger.

– Langland, 1390

These foods that were created often made the difference of whether or not you survived the famine months. Contrary to popular belief, this was not the winter months, but the early spring...when your crops were being planted and nothing was growing yet. March, April, and May were lean months indeed. You lived on whatever could be gleaned from the field, the lake or ocean, and the apple barrel. Even your cheese, grain, and meat supply was dwindling. June, July, and August brought fresh fruit and vegetables, early lamb, and small animals; September, October, and November brought grains, tree fruit, and root vegetables; and December, January, and February were the high meat, dried fish and dairy months, with occasionally a root vegetable to spare. You ate well from the butchering and potting, and drying done all during the harvest months.

Medieval preservation methods included drying (dehydration), fermenting, salting, pickling, smoking (a good way to preserve meats), and candying with honey or sugar (drying or via potting).

The objective of all forms of food preservation is either to slow down the activity of disease-causing bacteria or to kill the bacteria altogether.

SALTING, especially of meat, is an ancient preservation technique. The salt draws out moisture and creates an environment inhospitable to bacteria. If salted in cold weather (so that the meat does not spoil while the salt takes effect), salted meat can last for years.

PICKLING was widely used to preserve meats, fruits and vegetables in the past, but today is used almost exclusively to produce "pickles," or pickled cucumbers. Pickling uses the preservative qualities of salt combined with those of acid, such as acetic acid (vinegar). Acid environments inhibit bacteria.

Many foods are preserved by **DEHYDRATION**. Since most bacteria die or become completely inactive when dried, such foods kept in airtight containers can last quite a long time. **SMOKING** is a similar process in which something is cooked over an aromatic wood fire over a long period of time. The drying results in a longer shelf life.

FERMENTATION uses yeast to produce alcohol. Alcohol is a good preservative because it kills bacteria. When you ferment grape juice you create wine, which will last quite a long time (decades if necessary) without refrigeration. Normal grape juice would mold in days.

CHEESE MAKING is way of preserving milk for long periods of time. In the process, the milk in cheese becomes something completely unlike milk, but cheese has its own interesting and delicious properties. Cheese making is a long process that makes use of bacteria, enzymes and naturally formed acids to solidify milk proteins and fat and preserve them. Once turned into cheese, milk can be stored for months or years.

So how did this affect the everyday man? Alcohol, cheese, and bread are staples of the fermentation process. Bread is a staple of the every man's diet. Bread made with no salt goes bad in just a few days. However, if you add salt, bread can be kept twice as long.

De Pane. ¶ Qui igitur pistoritiam exercet farinum quamquam a farre dictam, et tritico bene olitam sumat. Ab eademque cribro farinaceo pertenui furfures et pollinem secernat; quam quidem in mensam panificiam circumquaque a lateribus clausam imposito aqua calida et quidem salsa, ut Ferrarienses in Italia solent. Si in locis humectis habitas inditaque ex fermento offa, bene adiuvantibus sociis usque ad eam crassitudinem su-

bigat qua non incommode panis confici potest. Caveat piator ne plus minusve quam decet imponat; ex illo enim acorem panis concipit, ex hoc gravior sit in concoctione et insalubrior cum alvum astrigat. Panis in clibano bene coctus et non eiusdem diei neque ex tritico apprime novo commode nutrit. Etsi tarde concoquitur.

Regarding Bread. ☞ Anyone, therefore, who does baking should use flour which is well-ground from wheat, although farina is so-called from far, ground grain, from this, he should separate the bran and the inferior flour with a very fine flour sieve, and then put the flour, with warm water and some salt, on a baker's table closed in at the sides, as the people at Ferrara in Italy are accustomed to do. If you live in damp places and a little bit of leaven is used, (the baker), with the help from his associates, kneads to that consistency at which bread can be made fairly easily. Let the baker be careful not to put in too much or too little leaven, for, from the former, bread can acquire a sour taste, and from the latter, it can be too heavy to digest and unhealthy since it binds the bowels. Bread should be well baked in an oven and not used the same day, nor is it especially nourishing when made from very fresh wheat and if it is digested slowly.

— Platina (1421-1481)

Cheese making is a relatively simple technique that requires an addition of a RENNET to curdle the milk. While it is an easy task to start, it requires vigilance in turning and in the aging processes.

PASTA is period and, dried, keeps indefinitely. Combined with dried fruits and cheese, it makes a tasty traveling meal.

Offelle. ☞ Piglia bono caso spongoso cum pocho sale he fallo gratare; poi habi ova, uva passa sana, canella, zenzro he zaffrano, he tute queste cose falle miscolare insieme, he fa che questo ditto pieno sia alquanno stretto; poi piglia una pasta sottile como le lassagne he liga la pasta in questa pasta como lassagne, facendole grande ho piccole como a te piace, facendole sopra ghialde; poi falle cocere al forno che non sia topop caldo; et non volano esser troppo cotte.

Offele. ☞ Get a good, soft cheese with little salt, and have it grated; get eggs, whole raisins, cinnamon, ginger, and saffron, mix all this together and make this filling rather thick; get a thin pastry dough as for lasagne and bind the filling in the dough like lasagne, making them large or small as you wish, yellowing the top; bake in an oven that is not too hot; they should not be overcooked.

— Cuoco Napoletano, 15th century

The use of preservatives like vinegar and alcohol were common. Vinegar's acetic acid is the active substance that preserves the food. Alcohol (from which vinegar is made) also lends its properties to the preservative process.

Rote Ruben. ☞ Red beets preserved with small cut horseradish / anise / coriander / and a little caraway / special if the beets are cut/marinated in half wine and half vinegar.

— *Marx Rumpolt, Ein New Kochbuch, 1581*

Compost. ☞ Take rote of parsel, of pasternak, rafens, scrape hem and waische hem clene. Take rapes & caboche, ypared and icorue. Take an erthen panne with clene water & set it on the fire; cast all (th)ise (th)erinne. When (th)ey both boiled cast (th)erto peeres, & perboile hem wel. Take alle (th)ise thynges vp & lat it kele on a faire cloth. Do (th)erto salt; whan it is colde, do hit in a vessel; take vinegar & powdour & saffroun & and do (th)erto, & lat alle (th)ise thynges lye (th)erin al ny(gh)t, o(th)er al day. Take wyne greke & honey, clarified togider; take lumbarde mustard & raisouns coraunce, al hoole, & gynde powdour of canel, powdour douce, anys hole, & fenell seed. Take alle (th)ise thynges & castt togyder in a pot of erthe, & take (th)erof whan (th)ouí wilt & serue forth.

— *forme of Cury, 103*

To preserve cowcubmers all the yeere. ☞ You may take a gallon of faire water, and a pottle of veriuycce, and a pinte of bay salt, and a handfull of greene fennell or Dill: boile it a little, and when it is cold put it into a barrell, and then put your Cowcubmers into that pickle, and you shall keepe them all the yeere.

— *Delightes for ladies, Sir Hugh Plat, 1609*

Dehydration techniques were most helpful, for things that were dried could last for extended periods of time. An addition of a liquid source brought the food back to an edible substance.

Two types of natural drying – SUN DRYING and “ADIABATIC” (SHADE) DRYING – occur in open air. Adiabatic drying occurs without heat. Solar drying sometimes takes place in a special container that catches and captures the sun’s heat. These types of drying are used mainly for fruits such as apricots, tomatoes, and grapes (to make raisins).

Placing food in a warm oven does drying from an artificial heat source.

Fava beans, peas, and lentils can be traced into the medieval age and keep (dried) without refrigeration. Vegetables and fruits did well in the drying process, as did meats. Jerky (from the Spanish word *charque*) is nutrient-dense meat that has been made lightweight by drying.

A Muzawwara (Vegetarian Dish), Beneficial for Tertian fevers and Acute fevers. ☞ Take boiled peeled lentils and wash in hot water several times; put in the pot and add water without covering them; cook and then throw in pieces of gourd, or the stems (ribs) of Swiss chard, or of lettuce and its tender sprigs, or the flesh of cucumber or melon, and vinegar, coriander seed, a little cumín, Chinese cinnamon, saffron and two qiyas of fresh oil; balance with a little salt and cook. Taste, and if its flavor is pleas-

ingly balanced between sweet and sour, [good;] and if not, reinforce until it is equalized, according to taste, and leave it to lose its heat until it is cold and then serve.

— Andalusian, p. A-52, 13th century

BEEF JERKY. Beef can be oven dried if you put it on a rack, rather than in a pan. However, there should be a pan under the rack in order to catch drips before they splatter the oven. The oven should be set at about 150°F, and the meat tested about every hour. When it cracks instead of bends, its done. Of course, the thinner the stuff is sliced, the quicker it dries. (While there is no medieval recipe here, jerky was a staple for the hungry traveler.)

Another way to maintain your food supply was **POTTING**. This was the medieval equivalent of canning with liquid. These liquids could be grease, honey, salt water, and wine. Apicius was exceptionally fond of preserving in honey.

The method of preserving meats under a layer of fat is called potting in English, and **CONFIT** in French. It is still used today.

Bridah of Abu Ja'far al-Barmaki. ☞ A fowl is taken, roasted, jointed and thrown in a jar into which are put coriander, pepper, cumin and cinnamon. Derjus is added, and mint, tarragon and fresh thyme are cut over it, and good oil is poured over it. Fresh spices are minced onto it, and it is decorated with chopped cucumber.

— Translated by Charles Perry from a 9th-10th c. Islamic collection

To keep cooked sides of pork or beef or tenderloins, place them in a pickle of mustard, vinegar, salt and honey, covering meat entirely. And when ready to use, you'll be surprised.

— Apicius

To preserve fresh figs, apples, plums, pears, and cherries (*Ficum recentem, mala, pruna, pira, cerasia ut diu serves*). ☞ Select them all very carefully with the stems on and place them in honey so that they do not touch each other.

— Apicius

All of these recipes travel well, can be made well in advance, and offer a varied selection to the diet. These can be used in addition to the fresh foods one can find available, or eaten alone.

Yes, you can cook medievally and still have time for that Pennsic class. Prepare now, and you won't have to visit the Cooper Store for that daily ice run.

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