

A Shared Sufficiency:

The Foodways of Colonial London Town



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A Shared Sufficiency

Introduction

The history of London Town, though relatively short, still covers a span of over a century. On the banks of the South River and home to as many as 300-400 people in its heyday, London Town was a center for trade and travel, luring many people to its 100 acres, whether they became permanent residents or just passed through.

One important and interesting aspect of London Town's history is that of the foods that were eaten here. Foodways is defined by folklorist Jay Anderson as "the whole interrelated system of food conceptualization, procurement, distribution, preservation, and consumption shared by all members of a particular group."¹ Colonists living in London Town wanted to maintain the traditional diets from their home countries, yet they needed to adapt to the types of foods available in the local area. This led them to consume a diet composed chiefly of corn and meat, as well as fruits, vegetables, and dairy. The variety in their diets may be surprising, and, just as today, they were interested not only in preparing and consuming food for sustenance, but for enjoyment as well.



London Town residents used a variety of ways to acquire, prepare, and serve food. The following pages contain an exploration of foodways in the colonial Chesapeake Bay area, with special attention focused on discoveries specific to London Town. Sources are both primary and secondary, many of which are based on archaeological findings in the Tidewater area, including Williamsburg, Virginia; Historic St. Mary's City, Maryland; Annapolis, Maryland; and London Town. Some generalizations have been made in cases where information specific to London Town is not available; it is likely that information found at other sites can be applied, with discretion, to London Town's history.

Also important to note is the fact that London Town's history covers more than a century, from 1683 through the end of the American Revolution. Many changes in food preparation, preferences, and even technology occurred during this time. In addition, while London Town was chiefly composed of lower- to middling-class colonists, some residents and merchants, such as guests at the Rumney-West inn site in the late 1600s and early 1700s, and William Brown in the 1760s and 1770s, did exhibit more of a genteel standard of living. It is important to keep these in mind when studying the foodways history and to remember that a century is a long time for any one aspect of social history to remain static. Therefore, while early settlers may have taken advantage of the plentiful wild game in the forests surrounding their settlements, by the time London Town was established and began to thrive, colonists could rely more on a supply of beef, a taste for which they brought with them from England and other European countries of origin. Likewise, while a tin reflecting oven may have been a prominent cooking implement in the basement kitchen of the William Brown House and tavern, lower-sort townspeople would

¹ Quoted in HLTG Education & Interpretation Manual, 2007, Foodways section compiled by Lisa Robbins, 9 May 2007.

have used a more traditional spit to roast their meat. A brief discussion of London Town foodways cannot possibly cover every detail but is meant to provide a general overview of how food was procured, prepared, and served in this Lost Town during the colonial period.

Public Markets: Bringing in Food from Outside the Town

In several Chesapeake cities, including Williamsburg and Annapolis, part of the urban setting included a formal marketplace. In these designated areas or buildings, owners of outlying plantations could bring their livestock and produce into urban areas to sell to consumers. This system of interdependence accomplished two purposes. First, it provided a way for urban settlers to obtain the foods that they could not produce on their own, small lots. Second, it afforded planters the opportunity either to earn extra income or to receive services from townspeople in a sort of bartering system.



No archaeological evidence has been found for a formal market structure in London Town. Possibly, the town was not in existence long enough to build a marketplace. For example, in Williamsburg, there was a span of 52 years between the town's plan for a market and its actual construction (1705-1757).² Though London Town existed for over a century, its period of booming population and trade activity was only about 30-40 years. In place of a formal market area, the town may have had its share of fish sellers and other independent merchants, who would sell their goods from stationary carts or roam through the town huckstering their products. On the other hand, the marketplace in Annapolis began "at a flag staff on the state house hill." Farmers and planters with items to sell were instructed to meet there until a more permanent place could be established.³ It is also possible that London Town could have had an informal area such as the one in Annapolis where buyers and sellers could congregate to make their transactions.

Though there was no structure built specifically for the purpose of a marketplace, the ability for urban colonists to procure these items would have been crucial to their subsistence. Town lots were one acre in size, giving colonists limited room to maintain a garden or livestock, though some were able to do so. However, even in a small kitchen garden, colonists could not have grown the amount of corn necessary to feed their household,⁴ thus making it necessary for outlying planters to bring their crops into town for sale. Town regulations took effect in the early 1700s that limited the amount of livestock that could be kept in urban areas, further restricting townspeople's ability to raise their own food supply. One reason for this restriction was the fact

² Lorena S. Walsh, Project Director, *Provisioning Early American Towns. The Chesapeake: A Multidisciplinary Case Study*, Final Performance Report (National Endowment for the Humanities: Grant RO-22643-93, 1997), 85.

³ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴ Lois Green Carr, "Emigration and the Standard of Living: The Seventeenth Century Chesapeake," *Journal of Economic History* 52, no. 2 (June 1992): 276.

that free-roaming livestock caused damage to surrounding plantations. A law passed in Delaware, Virginia, in 1714 stated that,

“Whereas the Inhabitants of the Town...do keep great Numbers of Cattle, Horses, Sheep, and Hogs which feed and root upon the adjacent Lands and Marshes belonging to William West, Gentleman, depriving him of many advantages he might otherwise make of his pasturage in supporting greater stocks of his own...Be it enacted...That from and after...no House keeper residing in said Town, without the Consent of the said William West or other Owner of the said adjacent Lands, shall keep in the said Town above Two Cows and Two Horses.”⁵

In addition, in Annapolis, a Town Common was created, where town residents who owned livestock could keep their horses, cattle, sheep and pigs.⁶ However, even though residents of towns such as London Town may have had some space in order to keep livestock and cultivate kitchen gardens, they did not grow or raise enough to provide all of their food needs; instead, they depended upon outlying farmers and plantation owners to supplement these needs.

Whether or not there was a marketplace in London Town, an important group of customers for producers would have been inn keepers, such as Edward Rumney, Stephen West, and later, William Brown. In order to be able to provide their lodgers with sufficient and even tasty meals, inn keepers would need to maintain good working relationships with farmers and planters. Their purchases were also on a larger scale than those of individual families, providing these planters with a reliable market for their produce.⁷

Besides produce, merchants in London Town also stocked imported items to sell, such as tea, coffee, sugar, and exotic spices (pepper, ginger, cloves). Samuel Peele, a London Town merchant who died in 1733, left behind a great deal of merchandise. Included on the shelves of his store were allspice, pepper, mace, nutmegs, cloves, cinnamon, raw and roasted coffee, tea, and brown and white sugar.⁸ Colonists would have used these commodities to enhance the flavor of their meals, as evidenced in many recipes in Elizabeth Moxon’s 1764 cookbook that call for such spices. Another item that had to be imported was salt, as the settlers near the Chesapeake had a difficult time creating their own salt due to low levels of salinity in the Bay. Lisbon salt was the most popular, and large quantities were needed in order to salt meats. The probate inventory of Henry Denton of Annapolis, taken in 1698, shows that he had in his possession 80 bushels of Bay salt worth £8, likely to be used in salting meat for preservation over the winter.⁹



⁵Walsh, *Provisioning*, 42.

⁶ Anthony D. Lindauer, *From Paths to Plats: The Development of Annapolis, 1651-1718* (Annapolis: Maryland State Archives, 1997), 14-15.

⁷ Walsh, *Provisioning*, 126-127.

⁸ Joseph Cowman, appraiser. Probate Inventory for Samuel Peele, London Town, Maryland. 8 October 1733.

⁹ Orlando Greensleeve and James Cullen, appraisers. Probate Inventory for Henry Denton, Annapolis, Maryland. 5 May 1698.

Corn

Originally, corn in the colonies was referred to as maize or Indian corn, which can be seen in probate inventory listings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁰ Maize was the name that Native Americans used to describe corn, and “Indian corn” alludes to the fact that Native Americans introduced colonists to the grain and helped them to learn how to grow it.¹¹ Rather than using corn as a vegetable-like side dish, like corn-on-the-cob, colonists used corn as a grain. The corn would be dried, removed from the cob, ground into cornmeal, and used in cereals (such as porridge) and breads (such as corn cakes).



However, colonists coming to Maryland from England had an initial cultural prejudice against corn. They considered it food for animals rather than food for humans, and they much preferred wheat. However, corn was much more readily available in the colonies, as settlers learned from Native Americans. It was also easier to plant and care for, and it yielded more product per acre than wheat. Some historians believe that, had it not been for the colonists’ acceptance of corn in their diets, or the widespread availability of the grain, colonization would not have taken such a strong hold in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹²

Archaeological evidence shows that colonists in Maryland consumed significant amounts of corn.¹³ Because corn was such a consistent part of the colonists’ diet, they used different ways to prepare it, many of which were methods learned from Native Americans. One dish, called Hasty Pudding, was traditionally made in England using wheat, but colonists substituted corn.¹⁴ They would mix cornmeal and water, place the mixture inside of a cloth sack, tie it, and boil it for several hours. If amenities like butter, eggs, milk, maple sugar or syrup were available, the colonists might add these as well to enhance the flavor. Other items made from corn and cornmeal were porridge, corn bread, corn pone, and grits, each of which had its own unique set of ingredients and instructions for preparation.

One disadvantage to a continuous diet of corn is the threat of a disease called pellagra.¹⁵ According to Webster’s Dictionary, pellagra is a disease marked by dermatitis (skin sores), gastrointestinal disorders, and mental disturbances and associated with a diet deficient in niacin. Though some colonists did contract this disease, the sores were apparently treatable, and

¹⁰ Thomas Stockett and James Monuatt, appraisers. Probate Inventory for Captain Richard Jones, London Town, Maryland. 15 July 1714.

¹¹ James E. McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 92.

¹² Alice Ross, “Corn: The Food of a Nation,” *Journal of Antiques & Collectibles* (September 2000), <http://www.alicross.com/journal/articles.html>, accessed 28 June 2007.

¹³ Douglas Ubelaker and Douglas Owsley, “Isotopic Evidence for Diet in the Seventeenth Century Colonial Chesapeake,” *American Antiquity* 68, no. 1 (January 2003): 129-139.

¹⁴ Loretta Frances Ichord, *Hasty Pudding, Johnnycakes, and Other Good Stuff: Cooking in Colonial America* (Minneapolis, Millbrook Press, 1998), 34.

¹⁵ David Freeman Hawke, *Everyday Life in Early America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 76.

introducing more variety into one's diet was sufficient cure.¹⁶ Because of this threat of disease, colonists had to rely on other food sources besides abundant corn.

Meat

Besides corn, meat was the other staple element of colonists' diet. Based on archaeological findings of faunal remains on London Town sites, and on other sites around the Chesapeake, the most important meats to colonists were beef, pork, and seafood. Beef was an especially common dish in England, and colonists brought with them their desire to continue including it in their cuisine. The Chesapeake Bay and waterways provided a great variety of seafood, especially for early settlers; they consumed oysters, crabs, striped bass, shad, herring, smelt, eels, trout, bass, and pickerel. However, by 1700, domestic meats such as beef and pork eclipsed the importance of seafood in the colonists' diet.¹⁷ The same is true for wild game, which was a more important part of the diet of seventeenth-century colonists but had become less crucial by the time London Town was established. One reason that colonists may not have embraced the hunting of wild game is because, in England, hunting was chiefly a sport and a recreational activity for the gentry rather than a legitimate way for yeomen to procure food.¹⁸ It is also possible that colonists did not have sufficient time to hunt for game, as they were busy managing their plantations and, in urban areas, much engaged in trade and other occupations.¹⁹

According to archaeological evidence, it appears that beef was the most prominent meat in the diets of Chesapeake colonists, followed by pork. Even in lower class households, where pork was consumed more often than in genteel households, beef remained the principal meat source. Pork did not become more prominent until the nineteenth century, especially in the deep South rather than the Chesapeake Bay area.²⁰



When it came to using meat for food, colonists of all classes and social standings used almost every part of the animal and rarely, if ever, wasted anything that could be used. The brain, stomach, and esophagus, considered undesirable animal parts today, were delicacies to English colonists in the

¹⁶ Carr, "Emigration," 279 (note 21).

¹⁷ Robert S. Grumet, writer, *Bay, Plain, and Piedmont: A Landscape History of the Chesapeake Heartland from 1.3 Billion Years Ago to 2000*, The Chesapeake Bay Heritage Context Project (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2000), 65.

¹⁸ McWilliams, *Revolution*, 8.

¹⁹ Henry M. Miller, "An Archaeological Perspective on the Evolution of diet in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1620-1745," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, edited by Lois Green Carr, Philip D. Morgan, and Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 186.

²⁰ Walsh, *Provisioning*; Sam B. Hilliard, "Hog Meat and Corn Pone: Foodways in the Antebellum South," in *Material Life in America, 1600-1860*, edited by Robert Blair St. George (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988): 314.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²¹ Even calves' hooves could be boiled to extract a form of gelatin, which could then be used to make a sort of pudding dish called flummery.²² Colonists also tried to get the most use out of their animals, using them first for labor and milk and then slaughtering them for food.²³

There is also evidence that, in a town like London Town, livestock was most likely brought into town live, where it was then butchered and sold. Though animals were brought from surrounding farms and plantations, Mary Randolph, famed American hostess and author of the 1824 cookbook, "The Virginia Housewife," advised that the shorter the distance the animal had been driven to the market (or the town), the better the meat would be.²⁴ Families could purchase as much meat as they could afford, often obtaining large amounts in the late fall and early winter, which was the optimum time for salting and smoking the meat for preservation.²⁵ However, not all of the meat was preserved. If the family expected to consume it within in one week, the meat would not be salted, and the family could enjoy fresh beef or pork during this time of year.



Salting and smoking, however, allowed the colonists to have meat, and therefore protein, throughout the year. Salted meat could be shaved, sliced, cooked in a soup or stew, or added to corn dishes. When salted meat was brought out to be used, it was often soaked in water overnight both to remove the salt and enhance the flavor. Some housewives claimed that adding some vinegar to the water would cause the meat to taste fresh.²⁶

Produce

Like their initial aversion to corn, colonists did not consider vegetables to be a potential side dish, the way that we do today. Instead, colonists used vegetables in soups and stews and often cooked them so long that they lost much of their nutritional value.²⁷ Colonists' distaste for vegetables was reflected in the 1764 English cookbook, *English Housewifry*, which includes very few receipts with instructions for cooking vegetables as a side dish; rather, most meals consisted of several different types of meat, meat pies, heavy grain puddings, and sweets such as preserved fruit.²⁸ In addition, colonists did not eat vegetables raw, as they feared this would not be good for their health. However, colonists became increasingly more accustomed to consuming vegetables, as they could easily be grown in the soil and climate of the Chesapeake Bay area. They even adopted the Native American practice of planting beans and squash together with the corn; the three plants worked together, both to help the others grow and to add more nutrition

²¹ Ibid., 277.

²² Ichord, *Hasty Pudding*, 53; McWilliams, *Revolution*, 89.

²³ Anne Elizabeth Yentcsh, *A Chesapeake Family and Their Slaves: A Study in Historical Archaeology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 223.

²⁴ Mary Randolph, *The Virginia Housewife Or, Methodical Cook: A Facsimile of an Authentic Early American Cookbook*, with a new introduction by Janice Bluestein Longone (New York: Dover, 1993), 49.

²⁵ Walsh, *Provisioning*, 78.

²⁶ Randolph, *Housewife*, 62.

²⁷ Hawke, *Early America*, 75.

²⁸ Elizabeth Moxon, *English Housewifry*, 9th Edition (London: Griffith Wright, 1764); <http://www.bib.ub.es/grewe/showbook.pl?gw58>. Accessed 11 January 2007.

and diversity to colonial diets.²⁹ Cabbage, leeks, onions, radishes, and beets are all examples of vegetables that grow well in the area and are demonstrated in the Lord Mayor's Tenement kitchen garden.

Colonists were more willing to include fruits in their diet, and they incorporated both fruits native to the area, such as strawberries, as well as fruits that they planted and cultivated



themselves, such as apples. Apples were especially important, as they were the key ingredient for cider. Most colonists, and especially those of lower- to middling-class urban settlers in places like London Town, consumed cider as their chief beverage.³⁰ Several varieties of apples were also reputed to store well over the winter without being dried or preserved, such as the Golden Russet apple; this type of tree has been planted at Historic London Town outside of the Lord Mayor's Tenement kitchen garden. Other native and cultivated fruits that the colonists included in their diets were mulberries, pears, peaches, apricots, grapes, and cherries.³¹

Stews and Soups

A very common meal for colonists of the lower- to middling-classes was stew or other varieties of one-pot meals. Even families who could not afford large cuts of quality meat for roasting could purchase smaller cuts and add them to soups and stews. Using meat in such one-pot meals also made the meat stretch farther, since the entire stew could be flavored with one piece of meat, rather than serving a large cut. Dried meats were also used in stews, which were also called pottages. These meals usually contained items that varied with the seasons, based on availability, and they were especially convenient because they “required only a single pot and little tending, and thus imposed slight demands on the housewife.”³² The stew could be put together in the morning and left to cook without supervision for the entire day. Many stews were cooked in earthenware pots, and the pots either sat directly on the hot coals or were raised up on footed bottoms.



Food Preservation

“‘Tis at this period [winter] that the functions of a great farmer become more extended and more difficult. ‘Tis from his stores that all must draw their subsistence. He must know whether they will be sufficient to reach the other end of the wintry career.”
*J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Late-Eighteenth-Century American Farmer*³³

²⁹ “The Three Sisters: Corn, Beans, and Squash,” *Key Ingredients: America by Food*, online exhibit presented by the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street, http://www.keyingredients.org/001_timeline/001_timeline_04.asp, accessed 30 June 2007.

³⁰ Carr, “Emigration,” 279.

³¹ Maryellen Spencer, “Food in Seventeenth-Century Tidewater Virginia: A Method for Studying Historical Cuisines,” Ph.D. dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1982 (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microforms International, 1983), Microform, 120-121.

³² Hawke, *Early America*, 75.

³³ J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*, edited with an introduction by Albert E. Stone (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986), 232.

The need to preserve food, whether meats or fruits and vegetables, was universal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to lack of efficient refrigeration and freezing methods. Colonists depended on this source of food for survival through the winter.

Meat had to be salted, dried, and smoked if it was to last more than one week. Slaughtering usually took place in late November or early December, after the weather had turned cold, in order to keep the meat from spoiling too quickly. Any type of meat could have been salted, as well as seafood items that would have been available to London Town colonists from the South River.

For more information about food preservation, please refer to the Foodways section of the Historic London Town and Gardens Education and Interpretation Manual.

Smokehouses and Meat Houses

Smokehouses became an increasingly important feature of the human landscape as the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries progressed. While evidence for smokehouses (also known as smoak houses) does not exist for London Town, smoking meats would have been absolutely necessary if the colonists wanted to have meat throughout the year. If London Town did not have structures built specifically for the purpose of smoking and drying meats, then the smoking could have been done, as it was in Jamestown, Virginia, in temporary sheds or inside of chimneys.³⁴ After the meat was packed in salt for approximately six weeks, it was hung in a smokehouse or chimney so that the smoke could both flavor the meat and drive out any remaining moisture, which caused spoilage.

Dairy

Dairy products were also an important part of the settlers' diet. As chickens and cows became more available, colonists added milk and eggs to the simple corn recipes they had created, such as hasty pudding.³⁵ In England, lower- to middling-class people had to depend on "white meats" like cheese and other dairy products to supplement their protein intake. However, in the colonies, settlers had more access to animal meats to provide protein. Some outlying plantations surrounding London Town may have had separate structures for dairying, and those planters could then bring their dairy products, such as milk, eggs, and cheese, to London Town to sell.³⁶ If any dairying activities were done within the town, they likely would have taken place in the yard.

Quenching Their Thirst: Colonial Beverages

Colonists living in London Town in the 1700s often had beverages on hand such as wine, brandy, and cider, which can be seen in the probate inventories of residents. As mentioned in the previous section regarding fruits, cider made from apples was one of the colonists' main drinks. Cider was likely made without a press, as cider presses were a very costly commodity. The fruit "either was ground or was beaten in a wooden trough and then put in the press in cider bags

³⁴ Michael Olmert, "Smokehouses: Foursquare and Solid, These Buildings Were a Hard Working Adornment to the Colonial Backyard," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Winter 2004-2005), <http://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Winter04-05/smoke.cfm>; Accessed 29 June 2007.

³⁵ Ichord, *Hasty Pudding*, 37.

³⁶ Walsh, *Provisioning*, 89, 93.

made of hair, which let the juices through.” Colonists then pressed the juice out and let the cider stand for twenty-four hours, after which the remaining sediments would be removed by a careful and sometimes time-consuming process. Some colonists noted that the art of making cider was very precise, as it was not always easy to make sure that the cider was fermented enough but not too fermented.³⁷ Cider was also made from pears, peaches, and quince.

Other fermented drinks, such as wine, were imported from England and other countries. An advertisement in the 15 July –22 July, 1729, issue of the *Maryland Gazette* reads: “Very Good Madera-Wine, to be sold, for Twelve Pounds Sterling, or Three Thousand Pounds of Tobacco per Pipe, by Peter Hume, at London Town.”³⁸ A large quantity of wine such as this would most likely have been purchased by an inn keeper and then sold to the public in individual amounts. The wholesale price of a quart of this wine in 1729 would have been approximately 2 shillings 4 pence. Although an ordinary’s price list is not available for 1729, in 1768, a quart of Madeira wine sold in Anne Arundel County taverns and ordinaries for 5 shillings, which shows that inn keepers were able to make a profit on selling individual amounts of wine at their establishments. While Madeira wine was generally sold to the more genteel class of colonists, it could have been an occasional treat in lower to middling households. More common for these families would have been less expensive wine. Alcoholic beverages were widely available at the ordinaries in London Town and likely included such imports, and wine was a common household item.

An alcoholic drink made for special occasions was called syllabub. Many English cookbooks from the seventeenth and eighteenth century contain receipts for this beverage, which was usually made with cream, wine, some type of citrus (such as lemon rind), and eggs. The ingredients were all whipped together and served either with or without the froth, in either individual glasses or a pot.³⁹ London Town resident William Nicholson owned a syllabub pot when his probate inventory was recorded in 1719⁴⁰, showing that while syllabub was served as a drink in London Town, it may have been only for wealthier residents.

Rum and rum punch became popular in the first half of the eighteenth century as more imports arrived in the colonies from the West Indies. “Barbados Rum” was advertised in the 1 July 1756 edition of the *Maryland Gazette*, to be sold at James Dick’s store in London Town.⁴¹ Rum punch typically consisted of a mix of rum, brandy, citrus juice, and sugar, and it was served at ordinaries in community punch bowls, from which everyone at the table would drink with a ladle.

Hot beverages such as coffee and tea were also common in London Town. In the first half of the eighteenth century, it was more likely that a household would contain items related to the making

³⁷ Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard, and Lorena S. Walsh, *Robert Cole’s World: Agriculture & Society in Early Maryland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 72-73.

³⁸ Archives of Maryland, Early State Records Online, *Maryland Gazette*, 15 July-22 July, 1729, Advertisements. <http://www.msa.md.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001007/html/m1007-0134.html>.

³⁹ Moxon, *Housewifry*, 123; Miller-Cory House Museum and the New Jersey Historical Society, *Pleasures of Colonial Cooking* (Orange, NJ: Harvard Printing Co., 1982), 75, 138.

⁴⁰ Thomas Worthington and Richard Warfield, appraisers. Probate inventory for William Nicholson, Ann Arundel County. 28 January 1719/20. (total estate value: £914.9.8 ½)

⁴¹ *Maryland Gazette*, 1 July 1756. Accessed through Maryland State Archives online. <http://www.msa.md.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001279/html/m1279-0960.html>

of coffee than the making of tea, such as the coffeepot owned by Samuel Galloway in 1721 and the coffeepot and coffee mill owned by William Nicholson in 1719. This shows that coffee was the more popular hot beverage during this time. However, by the 1750s, more and more households were serving tea, a foreign commodity and a symbol of Englishness. Because drinking tea was an elaborate social ritual that required more paraphernalia to be served, and because it could be expensive, tea was more prevalent in genteel households.⁴² Still, the drinking of tea spread across all classes in the second half of the eighteenth century, with poorer families serving tea by using whatever equipage they could afford.⁴³ Hot chocolate, which was similar to melted chocolate, was also served in the 18th century in London Town.



Additional drinks common for colonists in London Town would have been beer, milk, and even occasionally water. Many freshwater springs in and surrounding London Town's one-hundred acres could have provided water for washing and drinking.⁴⁴ However, colonists did not adopt the consumption of water readily because they feared it was not good for drinking and could harm their health. In addition, much of the water was, in fact, contaminated, and the brackish water of the South River was too salty to drink.

Cookbooks and Receipts (Recipes)

Published cookbooks were not a commonplace item in colonial kitchens. More likely was the possibility that women would bring with them their own collection of handwritten receipts (recipes) that had been passed down from friends and previous generations.⁴⁵ Food traditions



were also passed down orally. Even if cookbooks or receipts were available, the recipes were more general and often did not include specific instructions or measurements; thus, the cook had to use her intuition and experience in order to create culinary dishes.⁴⁶

Eliza Smith's English cookbook, "The Compleat Housewife," was published in Williamsburg in 1742 and is recognized to be the first cookbook published in the colonies. Williamsburg printer William Parks took the liberty of omitting certain ingredients and even entire recipes based on foods that were available in the colonies, making this edition of Smith's cookbook the first attempt at creating a collection of recipes for American colonial cuisine.⁴⁷ This cookbook enjoyed popularity in the colonies and may have been present in many homes, including those in London Town.

In 1796, Amelia Simmons published, "American Cookery," which was the first true American cookbook. In it, she included several corn recipes; overall, her cookbook, though it exhibited strong English influences, reflected the almost two-hundred years of changes and adaptations that colonists had made to their native cuisines, adapting it to the foods available and preferred in

⁴² Gunston Hall Room Use Study – <http://www.gunstonhall.org/architecture/roomuse/beverage.html>. 18 July 2007.

⁴³ T.H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25, no. 4 (October 1986): 488.

⁴⁴ Conversation with Lost Town Project archaeologists, July 2007.

⁴⁵ Mary Tolford Wilson, "The First American Cookbook," in Amelia Simmons, *The First American Cookbook: A Facsimile of "American Cookery," 1796* (New York: Dover, 1958), viii.

⁴⁶ Schenone, *A Thousand Years*, 64.

⁴⁷ Wilson, "First American Cookbook," x.

the New World. In addition, in order to make the cookbook accessible to a vast number of people, it was published inexpensively and was written in the colonial vernacular language.⁴⁸

Food Preparation: The Hearth and its Companions

Colonial cooking in places like London Town took place in and around large, open hearths. Because the hearths were so large, sometimes up to twelve feet in length, colonial women could maintain several different fires if necessary in order to cook different foods at different temperatures.⁴⁹ Food was cooked using many methods, including roasting, boiling, frying, stewing, toasting, and broiling.

As the eighteenth century progressed, colonists' kitchens became better stocked with kitchen utensils. Historian James E. McWilliams attributes this to the idea that, as more people were born in the colonies, fewer had first-hand memories of England; therefore, they wanted to display their Englishness by preparing better cuisine, and one way they could do this was by owning more and better cooking implements.⁵⁰



A survey of probate inventories from London Town in the early eighteenth century reveals this increasing variety of cooking implements. Some standard items in households were andirons, mortar & pestle, skillets, earthenware or pewter dishes, kettles, pots, and pothooks; more wealthy households had greater quantities of these items, as well as other commodities such as pepper and spice boxes, glass drinkware, and individual utensils.⁵¹

For more information on colonial kitchen implements, including definitions and images, please refer to the *Hearth Cooking Glossary* (attached).

The Art of Eating: Serving Food in Colonial America

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century estate inventories in the Chesapeake Bay area reveal much about the types of serving and eating implements used in colonial America. For example, individual forks were not common until the 1700s; before then, only large meat forks were common household items. Very early colonists generally ate with their hands and used cloth napkins to wipe their hands, and wooden trenchers were used as plates. Often a single household did not have enough of these hollowed-out, square-shaped dishes for each individual to have his own, so family and household members would have shared trenchers. Similarly, beverages would have been consumed from a community cup.⁵²



⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Schenone, *A Thousand Years*, 64.

⁵⁰ McWilliams, *Revolution*, 213.

⁵¹ Probate Inventory manuscripts, Historic London Town Foundation, October 1687-February 1757.

However, according to probate inventories, households contained an increasing number of specialized serving ware as the eighteenth century progressed. Earthenware and ceramics replaced wooden trenchers, and individual eating dishes called porringers and individual eating utensils became more common.⁵³ Inventories also indicate the increasing presence of individual beverage containers. This change is associated with the Georgian revolution that took place in the American colonies, which placed a higher emphasis on individuals. Beverage glasses were made of pewter, earthenware, tin, or even glass in some better-sort households. Many pieces and fragments of earthenware have been excavated during archaeological digs in Historic London Town, indicating that they were used both in private residences and in the taverns or ordinaries.

Colonists living in London Town could have purchased such kitchen items from stores in town. For example, James Dick owned stores in both Annapolis and London Town and advertised the following items in the 1 July 1756 edition of the *Maryland Gazette*: "...Sifters, Variety of China, Glass, Earthen and Stone Ware."⁵⁴ All of the items had arrived on a ship from London, England, and were being sold to London Town and Annapolis residents, allowing them to



have all the luxuries and commodities that their British counterparts would have had. This was another way in which colonists could assert their Englishness, by purchasing both English goods and foreign goods that had been imported to England from other areas of the empire.

Conclusion

Reconstructing the food history of any area or town, no matter how well documented, is a great and rewarding challenge. Because food remains such an integral part of the lives of Americans, it is important to know about our food heritage. As the colonial era progressed, food habits changed, and the colonists left behind clues to tell us what they ate. Understanding what they ate gives us a deeper glimpse into their everyday lives, lives that can seem so familiar, and yet so foreign to us.

⁵² Ichord, *Hasty Pudding*, 57.

⁵³ Gloria L. Main, "Consumers Anonymous," Review of *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* by Carole Shammas, *Reviews in American History* 20, no. 2 (June 1992): 154.

⁵⁴ *Maryland Gazette*, 1 July 1756. Accessed through Maryland State Archives online. <http://www.msa.md.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001279/html/m1279-0960.html>

**COMMON FOODS OF THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE,
BEGINNING IN 1492**

This is not a complete list of indigenous foods, but rather a guide to changing Native American cuisines. The foods brought to America are identified according to those who brought them, not necessarily where they originated.

Foods Native to America	Taken To	Foods Brought to America	From
Staple Grains			
Corn	Universal	Wheat	Europe
Wild rice	Europe	Oats	Europe
		Rye	Europe
		Barley	Europe
		Millet	North Africa
		Rice	Africa, Europe
Staple Starches			
Assorted beans, e.g., navy, cranberry, black, kidney, and lima	Universal	Soybeans	Asia
		Adzuki beans	Asia
		Mung beans	Asia
		Fava beans	Europe
		Cowpeas	Africa
Peanuts (South America)	Africa	Peanuts return	Africa (slaves)
Vegetables			
White Potatoes (Peru)	Europe	White Potatoes	North America
Sweet Potatoes	Europe	Yams	Africa
Pumpkins	Europe, Africa	Cucumbers	Europe
Winter squash	Europe	Tomatoes (Mexico)	Spain
Summer squash	Europe	Lettuce	Europe
		Cabbage	Europe
		Turnips	Europe
		Onions	Europe
		Carrots	Europe
		Parsnips	Europe
		Broccoli	Europe
		Collards	Africa
		Okra	Africa
Fruits			
Blueberries, huckleberries	Europe	Apples	Europe
Cranberries	Europe	Pears	Europe
Persimmons		Peaches	Europe
Paw-paws		Citrus fruits	Europe

Foods Native to America	Taken to	Foods Brought to America	From
		Figs	Europe
		Olives	Europe
Strawberries*	Europe	Strawberries	Europe
		Melons	Europe
		Watermelons	Europe, Africa
Cherries*		Cherries	Europe
Grapes		Grapes	Europe
Raspberries*, blackberries		Raspberries, blackberries	Europe
Currants, red and black		Currants	Europe
Mulberries		Mulberries	Europe
Nuts			
Black walnuts		Almonds	Europe
Hickory nuts		English walnuts	Europe
Beechnuts		Pistachios	Europe
Hazelnuts	Europe		
Pecans			
Chestnuts	Europe		
Chinquapins			
Pine nuts			
Meat			
Turkey	Universal	Dairy cattle (milk, butter, cheese, cream)	Europe
		Beef cattle	Europe
		Lamb	Europe
		Pig	Europe
		Goat	Europe
		Barnyard poultry (chickens, geese, and ducks and their eggs)	Europe
		Horse (meat, work)	Europe
Beverages			
		Tea and coffee	Europe
		Wine and spirits	Europe
		Beer and ale	England
		Cider	Europe
Seasonings			
Allspice	Universal	Cinnamon	Europe (colonies)
Juniper	Europe	Cloves	Europe (colonies)
Sassafras	Europe	Nutmeg	Europe (colonies)
Chilies	Universal	Ginger	Europe (colonies)

Foods Native to America	Taken to	Foods Brought to America	From
		Pepper	Europe (colonies)
		Sesame	Africa
		Coconut	Europe
Sweets			
Chocolate (Mexico)	Universal	Sugar	Europe
Vanilla (Mexico)	Universal	Honey	Europe
Maple and hickory sugars		Sorghum	Africa
Honey, locust			

*Some considered better quality than European equivalents.

Taken from *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*. Andrew F. Smith, Editor in Chief. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 146-147.

Hearth Cooking Glossary

Andirons: a utensil consisting of an iron bar sustained horizontally at one end by an upright pillar or support at the other by a short foot. A pair of andirons or firedogs are placed at each side of the hearth or fireplace to support burning wood. Sometimes in a kitchen fireplace, the upright support carried a rack in front for the spit to turn in (Kersey 1969[1702]; OED 1972)



Chafing Dish: a vessel for holding hot embers to heat something placed on top of it; a portable fire-grate (OED 1972)



Charger: a large plate or flat dish used for carrying a large joint of meat; a platter (OED 1972)



Coffeepot: a covered dish with a spout, in which coffee is made or brought on the table (OED 1999)



Colander: a vessel perforated at the bottom and used as a sieve or strainer in cookery (OED 1972)



Dripping Pan: a pan used to catch the “drippings” or juices from roasting meat (OED 1972)



Dutch Oven: a large, footed cooking pot, usually made of iron, which could be placed over hot coals; also containing a lipped lid on which hot coals to be placed as well, allowing the contents inside to be cooked from both top and bottom.



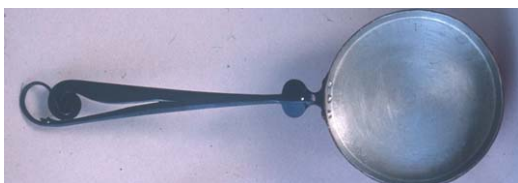
Earthenware: vessels or other objects made of baked clay (OED 1972)



Flesh Fork: a fork for removing meat from a pot (OED 1972)



Frying Pan: a shallow pan with a long handle in which food is fried (OED 1972)



Funnel: a cone-shaped vessel fitted with a short tube for conducting liquid or powder through a small opening (OED1972)

Grid Iron: a cooking utensil formed of parallel bars on short legs to support it over a fire; a grill. Used for broiling (OED 1972)



Kettle: a vessel for boiling water or other liquids over a fire; a pot or cauldron (OED 1972)



Ladle: a large spoon with a long handle and a cup shaped bowl (OED1972)



Mortar: a vessel in which ingredients are pounded and ground with a pestle (OED 1972)



Pepper/Spice Box: a box, usually having several compartments, to keep spices in; a small decorated box, usually of Oriental workmanship (OED 1999)



Pestle: an instrument for pounding or grinding materials in a mortar (OED 1972)



Pewter: any of numerous silver-gray alloys of tin with various amounts of antimony, copper, and sometimes lead, used widely for fine kitchen utensils and tableware (AHD online)



Pipkin: a small earthenware pot or pan, used chiefly in cookery (OED 1972)



Flat-bottomed pipkin



Footed pipkin

Porringer: a small bowl or vessel with one or two flat (and often pierced) handles from which soup, broth, porridge, etc. is eaten (OED 1972)



Earthenware porringer

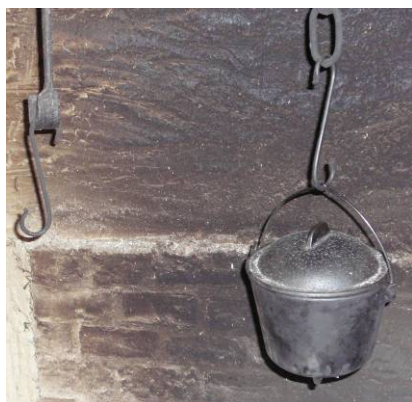


Pewter porringer

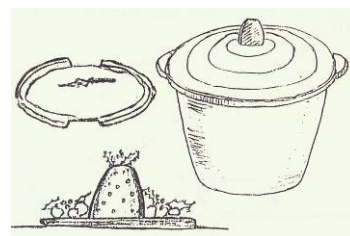
Pot: a cylindrical or rounded, metal or earthen vessel usually deeper than it is broad for a) storing substances (medicinal, foodstuffs, etc), b) cooking or boiling, c) containing beer, wine, or other liquids for drinking out of or pouring (OED 1972)



Pot Hook: a hook suspended over a fireplace for hanging a pot or kettle on; a crook; an iron rod with a hook at the end for lifting a heated pot, stove lid, etc. (OED 1972)



Pudding Pan: a metal pan or pot with pour spouts, designed to cook puddings (Hooks, Rings, and Other Things, p. 93)



Punch Bowl: a bowl for mixing and serving punch, a drunk composed of wine or spirits, mixed with hot water or milk, flavored with sugar, lemons, spice, or cordial; but varying greatly in composition (OED 1972)



Reflecting Oven: a cylindrical tin in which meat could be placed on a spit. The oven was placed before a fire and the heat from the fire reflected from the metal, cooking the meat from both sides. Also included a door on the back of the oven to open for basting.



Sauce Pan: a small skillet with a long handle, in which sauce or small things are boiled (OED 1999)

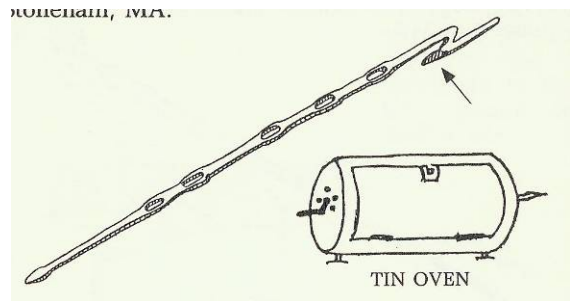
Skillet: a cooking utensil of brass, copper, or other metal, usually having three or four feet and a long handle, used for boiling liquids, stewing meat, etc. (OED 1999)



Skimmer: a shallow (perforated) ladle or utensil for skimming liquids (OED 1972)



Spit: a cooking implement consisting of a slender sharp-pointed rod of metal or wood, used for thrusting into or through meat which is to be roasted at a fire (OED 1999)



Spit for a tin or reflecting oven



Roasting on a spit

Syllabub Pot: usually a metal pan in which the ingredients (cream, wine, citrus, and spices) could be mixed together in order to form



of syllabub (cream, wine, citrus, and



Syllabub serving dish and glasses



A serving of syllabub



A syllabub mixer (to create froth)

Tankard: a drinking vessel (OED 1999)



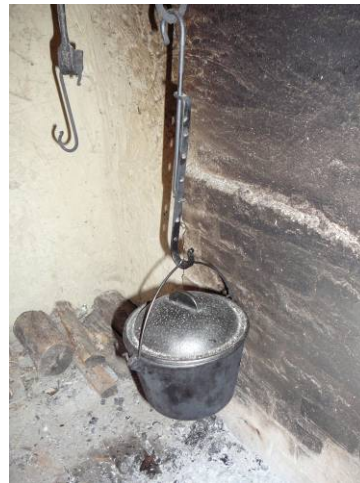
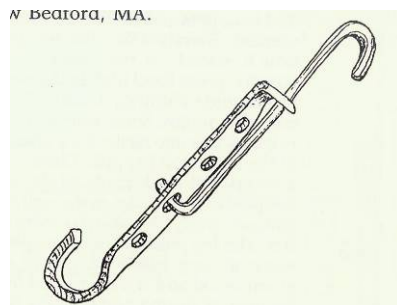
Toaster: a cooking implement of iron containing a swiveling rack on the end of a long handle, used for toasting bread before a fire. Rests on three feet.



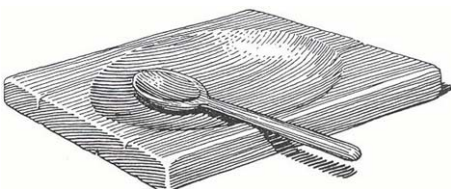
Tongs: an implement consisting of two limbs or “legs” connected by a hinge, pivot, or springs, by means of which their lower ends are brought together so as to grasp and take up objects which it is impossible or inconvenient to lift with the hand (OED 1999)



Trammel: an adjustable iron or metal hook used on the fireplace crane to raise or lower a kettle (*Hooks, Rings, and Other Things: An illustrated Index of New England Iron, 1660-1860*, Frank T. Barnes, p. 74)



Trencher: a flat piece of wood, metal, or earthenware, square or circular, on which food is served and cut up; a plate. Usually shared between two or more people in the seventeenth century (OED 1972)



Trivet: a stand for a pot, kettle, or other vessel placed over a fire for cooking or heating something, originally and properly standing on three feet (OED 1999)



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