

The Diet of the Rich

The Diet of the Poor

Food in Tudor
Times

Drinks and Treats

New Foods

Tudor Food

Bread

Bread was served with every meal in Tudor times and there were lots of different types of bread. The wealthy Tudors had a white bread called manchet bread. Poorer Tudors had a dark bread called Carter's bread made from a mixture of rye, wheat and sometimes beans and oats. Most meals were served on a thick slab of bread called a trencher.

Meats eaten by rich Tudors:

beef	badger	blackbird
pork	hedgehog	goat
venison	pheasant	mutton
chicken	woodcock	lamb
boar	partridge	duck
rabbit	sparrow	swan
quail	dove	pigeon

Pottage

Pottage was the staple meal of the lower classes. This was a soup made from vegetables and meat (if they had it) which was then thickened with oats.

Dairy foods

Like vegetables, the Tudors had dairy food, such as milk, cheese, cream and eggs, but they were thought to be a food suitable more for the poor than the rich.

Sugar and spice

The Tudors loved sweet things. Sugar was rare and so it was expensive. Poorer Tudors sweetened their food with honey but the rich used sugar to crystallise fruit, make marchpane (a marzipan cake), and create animals, flowers, baskets and fruits entirely from sugar. Spices were popular too, especially cinnamon, ginger and cloves. They put these in stews and soups so everything tasted sweet.

Drink

No one dared to drink water in Tudor times as it was so polluted and dirty. Instead, they mostly drank ale. Rich Tudors could afford wine. An alcoholic drink called mead was made from honey.

Meat

Meat was the main part of the Tudor diet, although there was more available for the rich than the poor. Ordinary people would rear chickens to eat and could buy beef or pork from the market if they could afford it. They also ate what they could catch, such as rabbits and birds. Wealthy Tudors ate practically every animal they could see! They ate all of the animal too so as not to waste anything, including the tongue, kidneys, liver, heart, feet and even the head.

Vegetables

Tudors did eat vegetables but it was thought to be 'peasant' food so poorer people ate more vegetables than the rich. They grew vegetables such as onions, leeks, turnips, beans, carrots and parsnips. They were not cooked and eaten on the side of other dishes as they are today, but put into stews and soups.

Fruits

The Tudors didn't trust raw food. They thought it was bad for you. They had plenty of apples, cherries, pears, strawberries and other fruits but they would usually cook them before eating them, or grind them into a paste. The very richest Tudors could afford oranges and lemons brought to England from abroad.

New foods

The Tudor period was a time of exploration and new foods were being discovered from around the world. Potatoes, tomatoes, pumpkins, corn and peppers were brought to England, although it was only the very rich who could afford such luxury items. Having these foods was a great way to show off at a party!