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**Drum Barracks
Civil War Museum
September/October 2019**

Reveille

Director's Chair

Tara Fansler

In my family the fall and winter holidays are all about eating. October, November and December seem like a marathon of candies, baked goods and savory side dishes. No doubt one of the things Civil War soldiers missed most about the holidays was the food.

This issue of the *Reveille* provides you great sources of information about soldiers' food, or lack thereof, along with recipes you can make and try at home. If you are brave enough to experiment with these recipes, and are social media savvy, share your success with us on Facebook© or Instagram© by using #drumbarrackscivilwarmuseum.

Before I go dive into a pile of Halloween candy, let me share some wonderful news with you. We are delighted to welcome Kristen Anderson to the Board of Directors of the Drum Barracks Garrison & Society. Kristen became a docent at Drum Barracks in 2016 and is a shining example of service and dedication. In five short years Kristen has been instrumental in helping us launch our Living History School program, has acted as a new volunteer mentor, and assumed the challenging task of Volunteer Coordinator.

Mr. Anderson retired as a Sergeant from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in 2010, after 33 years of service. For the past ten years he has been active with the First Pennsylvania Light Artillery, Battery B (a member of the Union Army of the West) reenactment unit, and holds the title of Corporal.

Civil War scholarship and historic preservation are also near and dear to Kristen. For more than a decade he has supported the work of the American Battlefield Trust. He is a member of the Color Bearer Society with the title of Regimental Color Bearer. He is also a First Corps Aide-De-Camp in The Friends of Gettysburg (Gettysburg Foundation) and a member of the Seminary Ridge Foundation (Seminary Ridge Museum).



Kristen Anderson, left, mentoring new volunteer, Julian Della Puppa, right

Since joining the Board, Kristen has accepted responsibilities assisting the Society's Treasurer, and he is also spearheading efforts to maintain our 1863 cannon. Kristen's wife Julie has also become active as a volunteer and the couple is always available to help at every event, unless they are off spending time with their grandchildren or traveling across the country to visit Civil War conferences and battlefields.

Kristen is very humble and would probably not like me telling you all these wonderful things about him, but I can't help it. We are extremely lucky and grateful to have Kristen Anderson as a volunteer and Board Member. He will serve you well.

Civil War Food

<https://www.civilwaracademy.com/civil-war-food>

Civil War food came in many shapes and sizes. Suppose you're a Civil War soldier and you've marched all day in the grueling heat. You're exhausted, but you have one more duty before you can retire to your tent to dream of better days; you have to cook your dinner. Civil War soldiers never had the luxury of standing in a mess line waiting for army cooks to dish out the chow.

Civil War food for both Union and Confederate soldiers was provided by their respective Commissary Departments, but the daily rations were given to the soldiers uncooked. Of course, generals and other officers had the luxury of a cook, but the vast majority of soldiers gathered in small groups each evening to prepare their food.

Union Officers Eating Food



They called these groups "messes" and referred to others in the group as "messmates". Messmates took turns watching the meals they cooked. Food in the Civil War was cooked over an open campfire in a cast iron skillet or kettle or occasionally on a spit. If they had the time, soldiers tried to devise ways of making their dull diet a little more varied, occasionally catching wild game or picking wild berries.

Food during the Civil War was not high quality and did not taste good. Confederate soldiers usually didn't receive much food at all especially as the war dragged on. Union troops were well fed but the food was not that much better than what the Confederates were eating. Soldier life was not pleasant on either side during the Civil War. The old saying that an army marches on it's stomach is very true.

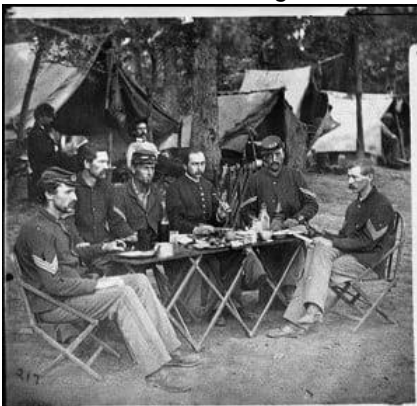
Cooking Civil War Food



Without Civil War food and water an army soon disintegrates into nothing more than a lot of starving people with no energy or will to fight. If a general has no food he has no army. If you are interested in reading about or trying some authentic Civil War food recipes the Civil War Recipes: Receipts from the Pages of Godey's Lady's Book has the original recipes for a wide variety of food that people actually ate during the time of the Civil War. Of course you might need something to cook all this wonderful food you create. The Lodge Deep Camp Dutch Oven, 10 Qt will do that job perfectly.

So What Kind of Civil War Food Was Available To the Average Civil War Soldier?

Civil War Soldiers Eating Food



The Civil War food supplied to the soldiers of both sides was plain and monotonous. Since rations had to be transported long distances, the commissary departments relied on foods that could be preserved, so the primary ingredients available to soldiers were salted meat and canned goods.

Union soldiers also received a hard, unsavory cracker-like biscuit that the soldiers dubbed hardtack while Confederate soldiers were lucky if they received a good supply of cornmeal. During battles and when food was scarce a Union soldier's primary source of substance often came from hardtack. Hardtack is basically bread, it's three inches long and half an inch thick. Soldiers would often soften hardtack up by soaking it in water or coffee in order to make it easier to bite into. Hardtack is probably the most well known Civil War food. Anybody who knows even a little about the Civil War has most likely heard of hardtack.

Civil War Camp Kitchen

There were plenty of other Civil War food options a soldier typically had. Salt pork was given to soldiers during the war. It was a stinky kind of blue extra salty meat, with hair, skin, dirt, and other junk left on it. It was however, a soldier's main supply of protein. Letters from Civil War soldiers contain numerous references to bacon, but historians believe that the term bacon was used for all salt and smoked pork, not just the strips of meat that we now call "bacon". Salted beef and jerky were also given to the soldiers. Many ate salt beef only out of necessity. This was especially true for the Confederates. Salt beef was basically all of the very worst parts of a cow that you could think of. Parts included organs, neck and shanks, but the basic meat was pork. Naturally soldiers grew tired of this monotony. In Union camps, sutlers (civilian merchants) sold items like canned fruit, sugar, tobacco, and coffee, but Confederate soldiers did not usually have sutlers stores, and relied on the

generosity of local farmers for occasional treats such as fruit.

*Civil War Food: Foraging**Civil War Sutlers Tent*

Civil War soldiers did occasionally have fresh meat to eat. They did this by taking cattle, pigs, and sheep. Armies would have entire herds following them while they were on campaign. When in enemy territory, soldiers frequently helped themselves to chickens, fruit, vegetables, and other items from local farms and households, considering these the spoils of war. Commanders might reprimand soldiers for such acts, but this seldom stopped a hungry man from seeking extra food. During Sherman's march from Atlanta to the sea, Union soldiers feasted on cattle, hogs, vegetables and fruit and destroyed what they could not carry.

Civil War Meat Hanging in Tent

When times were thin soldiers sometimes resorted to eating their horses and mules. In extreme desperation, rats were consumed. In the Confederacy things became so bad for civilians that it led to food riots throughout many southern cities. Civil War soldiers were also given rice, potatoes, onions, molasses, and other non-perishable or slow to perish items, but hardtack (or cornmeal) and salt meat were favored because they were both easy to ship and easy to carry on a march or into battle. Soldiers were given rations in three-day allotments; before a march or battle, they cooked their raw food so that they could carry it with them. A canvas haversack with a removal lining was used to carry Civil War food on the move. Although soldiers removed the lining and washed it when they had a chance, the haversacks soon smelled of old meat. Sometimes the salted meat given to the soldiers was past its prime, so they nicknamed it "salt horse".

Civil War Food: Fruits and Vegetables

Corn was really only available when things were going well for a particular side. The same goes for beans, as they could not be consumed uncooked or improperly cooked. This would result in very bad stomach situations. Peas were plentiful in supply and could be eaten as a meal in times of desperation. When there were no peas around, potatoes and rice would

suffice. Fresh fruits were really important to have in good supply. Lack of fresh fruits could cause sickness and disease. One example is Scurvy which is a horrible disease that resulted in tooth loss, receding gums, night blindness, rotting lips, jaws, and cheeks, and even internal hemorrhaging.

Civil War medicine was not very advanced during the Civil War, however Scurvy was easily prevented by simply eating oranges. Volunteer nurses and the volunteers who collected supplies back home for the soldiers tried to alleviate their monotonous diet by collecting fresh fruits and vegetables for them; although these items were not easy to send into the field, they were supplied in abundance to sick and wounded soldiers in northern hospitals and southern hospital workers also did their best to get fresh food for their patients, despite wartime food shortages. Fruit was a favorite treat for ill soldiers; Abraham Lincoln often brought gifts of fresh fruit to the soldiers at the Washington army hospital, as did poet Walt Whitman who volunteered at the hospital. Baked goods were another treat for sick soldiers. It was not uncommon for volunteer nurses to stay up late at night baking for their charges. Gingerbread was considered nourishing and easy to digest; it was often given as a comfort Civil War food to hospital patients.

Civil War Food: Coffee

The men in the war also loved their coffee, and drank it whenever possible. Coffee was a treasured beverage during the war, for soldiers soon recognized its properties to keep them awake after many hours of weary duty.

Civil War Soldiers Drinking Beverages



Raw, green coffee beans were given to Union soldiers, who roasted them in a pan over the open fire and then crushed them, often with the butts of their rifles. Confederates frequently had to use coffee substitutes, such as chicory or roasted acorns.

Confederate and Union soldiers would often trade items with each other. The Confederates usually traded tobacco with Union soldiers who give them coffee beans in return. Of course these trade deals had to be made in secret since fraternizing with the enemy was punishable on both sides. Civil war food was far from a balanced diet. Not surprisingly, a poor diet along with unsanitary conditions contributed to a high disease rate among soldiers on both sides. If we went back in time to the Civil War, we would enjoy some of the still familiar foods, like gingerbread, that the soldiers enjoyed, but we would also find some of the food, like hardtack, rather unappetizing.

Cook Like a Soldier

Now that you've read about soldier's rations and cooking, we thought you might like to try some recipes yourself. Two great resources for further education and experimentation are *Hardtack and Coffee* (1887), by Union soldier John Billings, and *Camp Fires and Camp Cooking; or Culinary Hints for the Soldier* (1862), by Captain James M. Sanderson. We are including three recipes from various sources, but if these don't tempt your palate the internet is full of recipes, instructional videos, and helpful hints. Happy cooking!

Civil War Cooking: What the Union Soldiers Ate

<https://www.pbs.org/food/the-history-kitchen/civil-war-cooking-what-the-union-soldiers-ate/#:~:text=Typical%20fare%20during%20the%20Civil,if%20they%20were%20in%20season.>

Tori Avey | September 21, 2012 (<https://toriavey.com/>)

The following Union army recipe comes from *Camp Fires and Camp Cooking; or Culinary Hints for the Soldier* by Captain Sanderson. It's a basic recipe (in those days known as a receipt) for Commissary Beef Stew. This easy meat stew is thickened with flour and filled out with potatoes and vegetables. The flour and added vegetables allowed Union cooks to stretch small amounts of meat into a substantial, filling meal. While many wartime stews were made from salted preserved meat, this recipe appears to be written for fresh beef.

Here is the original recipe, as transcribed in *A Taste for War: The Culinary History of the Blue and Gray*. Note that grammar and measurements have been clarified from the original source:

Cut 2 pounds of beef roast into cubes 2 inches square and 1 inch thick, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and put in frying pan with a little pork fat or lard. Put them over a fire until well browned but not fully cooked, and then empty the pan into a kettle and add enough water to cover the meat. Add a handful of flour, two quartered onions, and four peeled and quartered potatoes. Cover and simmer slowly over a moderate heat for 3 ½ hours, skimming any fat that rises to the top. Then stir in 1 tablespoon of vinegar and serve. Other vegetables available, such as leeks, turnips, carrots, parsnips, and salsify, will make excellent additions. (More modern day recipe also available on website)

Civil War Recipe: Hardtack (1861)

<http://www.americantable.org/2013/06/civil-war-recipe-hardtack-1861/>

Thanks to John Billings' memoir of his life as a Union soldier, [Hardtack and Coffee](#) (1887), we have a very accurate description of what Civil War hardtack rations were like:

"What was hardtack? It was a plain flour-and-water biscuit. Two which I have in my possession as mementos measure three and one-eighth by two and seven-eighths inches, and are nearly half an inch thick. Although these biscuits were furnished to organizations by weight, they were dealt out to the men by number, nine constituting a ration in some regiments, and ten in others; but there were usually enough for those who wanted more, as some men would not draw them. While hardtack was nutritious, yet a hungry man could eat his ten in a short time and still be hungry. When they were poor and fit objects for the soldiers' wrath, it was due to one of three conditions: first, they may have been so hard that they could not be bitten; it then required a very strong blow of the fist to break them; the second condition was when they were moldy or wet, as sometimes happened, and should not have been given to the soldiers: the third condition was when from storage they had become infested with maggots."

The Recipe

2 cups flour

1/2 tablespoon salt (optional)

1/2 to 3/4 cup water

Preheat oven to 250 degrees F. Combine flour with salt in a mixing bowl. Add water and mix with hands until the dough comes together. Roll out on a table to about 1/3 inch thickness. Use a knife to cut 3x3 squares from the dough. Place on baking sheet, and use a dowel (see note above) to make 16 evenly-spaced holes in each square. Bake for at least four hours, turning over once half-way through baking. Cool on a rack in a dry room.

(Full instructions and pictures for each step given on website)

Make Your Own Confederate Johnny Cakes

<https://www.gettysburgbattlefieldtours.com/make-your-own-confederate-johnny-cakes/>

What You'll Need:

- 2 cups cornmeal
- 2/3 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Bowl
- Cookie sheet

What To Do:

Mix all ingredients until the batter is quite stiff. Form about eight biscuits and place on lightly greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for about 20 minutes or until light brown. Allow to cool. Spread with butter or molasses (a treat Confederates didn't often get!).

Taken from "*Great Civil War Projects You Can Build Yourself*" by Maxine Anderson.

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