



# Historically Speaking

Volume 4, Number 11 November 2025

## Cooking

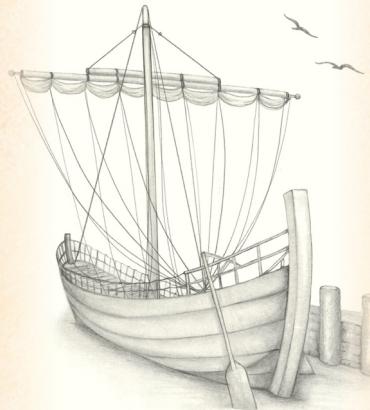
In ancient Greece, the basic foods were cereals, legumes, fruit, fish, game, oil, and wine. The most common cooking methods were done over an open fire, such as boiling, frying, simmering, stewing, grilling, and roasting on a spit where meat like goat or lamb was tied to a stick and rotated by hand over the fire. The earliest cooking pots were made of clay, and similar pots (glazed and fired) are still used today in many parts of the world. The Greeks would place ingredients like lamb and vegetables in a clay pot, seal it tightly, and either cook in a clay oven for several hours or bury in the ground underneath hot coals. Out of necessity (because refrigeration was nonexistent), in addition to cooking, ancient Greeks preserved foods by smoking, drying, salting, and storing in syrups and fat. Foods were often stored with a topping of oil to keep air out. The men were typically in control when roasting the meats on spits or over coals; the women were responsible for boiling foods and baking them in the oven. (Adapted from Ancient Greek Cooking Methods by Nancy Gaifyllia)

A wood oven (or fourno in Greek) was an essential tool in homemade bread baking, in preparing rusks and drying fruit and nuts. Cyclades islands faced acute fuel shortage, thus the oven was traditionally heated with dried brushwood meticulously picked from the countryside. Sheep manure was also used as fuel. On the other hand, the ovens in Crete and Peloponese are heated with olive wood since olive cultivation is widespread across these regions. Ovens in central Greece are heated with oak wood and wood of the beech tree.

Traditionally, food demanding the higher temperature, such as bread, was baked after the ashes and embers are pushed aside or swept out of the oven. The remaining heat was not wasted: food (continued on next page)



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## What's happening?

We are ready for the craft fairs. The University High School craft fair will be over by the time this newsletter goes out, but we will also be at the Ridgeline High School craft fair December 6 & 7.

Audrey will have her quilts and sewing items, my sister, Roseanne, will have knitted items, and I will have my woodworking items and my books. These craft fairs are the only other marketing I do for my books other than FaceBook.

However, I am planning to run a Kickstarter campaign to offer the Sinon series with new covers. I have no idea if it will work, but I intend to give it a try.



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baked in lesser temperatures followed, and after that it could be used for preparing rusks and drying fruit and nuts.

If people didn't have an oven they used to take the dough to large, community owned ovens, specially built for baking bread and rusks. The public ovens were also a place for women to socialize and share stories and news. (adapted from 1historyofgreekfood.wordpress.com)

**E**gyptian cooking goes back to the third milenium BCE. In ordinary families cooking was done by the housewife, but larger households employed servants to work in the kitchen and a chef - usually a man - to do the cooking. Food was cooked in simple clay pots, using wooden utensils and stored in jars. The Egyptians had ovens, and knew how to boil roast, and fry food. There were few kitchen tools: pestles, mortars, and sieves.

The first traces of baking ovens date back to the time of ancient Egyptians. Some characteristic conical structures built with Nile clay bricks have been found where the upper part designed to contain the food, was separated from the lower one where the fire was supposed to be placed.



THE FIRE WAS LIT BY USING A STONE LAB, WHICH ABSORBED THE HEAT THEN RELAYED TO THE TOP.

In the earliest times in Egypt a wood fired oven was a luxury reserved to few people. A simple but efficient system that allowed the cooking of any kind of food like bread, meat, and fish. The Egyptians laid the foundations of these incredible pieces, the wood fired ovens then used and perfected by many other civilizations. The wood fired ovens were considered a source of heat and healthy food.

Archaeologists have unearthed early mortars with rubbing stones that would probably have been use to separate the chaff from the grain. Only rich people ate meat regularly, while ordinary people didn't eat much, but many workers kept pigs and ate fish, even though they were told by the priests that pork and fish were unclean. Meat was either stewed or roasted. An uncommon type of model found only during the Old Kingdom is of a man squatting next to a brazier over which is a large cooking pot full of meat cuts. Many birds were eaten like ducks, geese and even pelicans, were kept for their meat and their eggs, and also they ate pigeons and quails at banquets, but we know that poor people lived mainly on bread and vegetables, such as onions, radishes, cucumber and garlic. Fruits such as melons, dates, figs and pomegranates were also grown, but oranges, lemons, bananas, cherries, pears and peaches were unknown. The bread was rough and gritty, as the corn was ground by hand using rough stones.

(Adapted from [www.egyptjoy.com/eg/habits-of-cooking-eating-in-ancient-egypt/464351626](http://www.egyptjoy.com/eg/habits-of-cooking-eating-in-ancient-egypt/464351626), written by Mohamed Heragi)

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