

Period Food Suggestions for yourself, or to share in a potluck!

We would like to note before you read this collection of period food, that the potlucks that we enjoy as the shire of Connacht are not period!! We bring everything from Chili's to wrap appies! It can be difficult, and time consuming to prepare "period" food, however if you are up for the challenge, or are just looking for some additional side dishes for your meals these are some great ideas!

A good rule of thumb is to bring whatever you would eat for lunch. That way if someone fails to show up with their contribution you still have enough to make for a filling lunch and you're not stuck with three loaves of bread and nothing else to eat, or the need for a last minute store run.

Fruit: Apples; small pinkish, yellow or green apples. Try to avoid dark red and overly large apples. Pears - apricots . cooked, dried or fresh. A favorite in the Empire is lemons or oranges sliced very thin and sprinkled with light raw sugar. Access to the citrus fruits would be limited to travelers and their families, the rich, and those in southern regions especially Spain, the northern Italian states or the Mediterranean-Africa-Middle eastern areas. Remember for much of our period. Jerusalem was within the first sphere of influence.

Berries: Avoid cranberries; otherwise most berries available today were eaten in period. Seamen were exposed to tropical fruit, but it didn't last long enough to be introduced on the continent. The exception is pineapples, which weren't popular until the post-period 17th century. Pomegranates make a nice garnish.

Grapes: pink, red, black, seeded or not... green grapes are period! They were smaller and probably tasted so much better than they do today. When early or unripe, grapes would be sour and used to make verjuice. Grapes most commonly though were used to make wine (watered down of course) as it was the most common beverage in most of Western Europe.

Coffee: especially the dark rich kinds are period.

Tisanes or Herb Teas: These were used but generally as a medicinal beverage.

Pickles: Cucumbers, we think of them most commonly but all kinds of vegetables were pickled to preserve and keep them throughout the year, long past harvest time. This includes but is not limited to: pickled mushrooms, marinated pickled vegetables, and eggs.

Olives: Another version of preserving foods for storage similar to pickling - all kinds are period.

Cheeses: white cheeses - herbed cheeses - goat cheese. Slightly yellow cheese is period but not orange colored. Summer-milks are richer and more yellow than other times of the year but nothing like the bright orange we see today. Other dairy choices would depend on the region, social and economic status of the persona. Yogurt is an old friend as is cottage cheese, cream and butter.

Breads: All shapes are fine; round bread is most common. Include crackers and rolls too.

Baked pastry goods: Honey or even sugar (raw or brown is period) sweetened or fruit filled pastry, as good then as it is now.

Meats: Sausages – brats, ham, salami. Most sliced deli meats are a good choice.

Roasted meats: Chicken, beef, or other fowl

Fish: Hot, cold, pickled, dried; canned fish can be removed from its container and placed on a platter for nibbling with bread or crackers.

Salads: More than you can imagine. European baby greens are a good choice. Vinegar dressings, too.

Potages, soups, stews: These would depend largely on the geographic area and food sources but generally were used to stretch meat resources. Most delicious when mixed with grains like barley, which was enormously popular. Oats and rye were very common as well.