

DIET, LUXURY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY IN ENGLAND, 1540–1640

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

by

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April 2009

ABSTRACT**Diet, Luxury and Social Identity in England, 1540-1640****Paul S. Lloyd**

This thesis investigates social status and the perception of social identity in England between 1540 and 1640 by examining the extent to which individuals and communities identified themselves by what and how they ate. It focuses on determining whether people during the century saw a connection between the consumption of food and perceptions of 'self' and 'otherness', and also looks at whether luxurious and fashionable foods were consumed in order to construct and project images relating to social distinction. The main part of the study is divided into three sections in which the diets of various social groups, special foods and their preparation, and festive events and the gifting of foods are analysed for their social and cultural meaning. The main sources used are sets of household accounts belonging to the nobility and gentry living over a broad area of the country. The method employed is analysing and comparing patterns of food acquisitions, and supplementing this evidence with records of provisions at public institutions, contemporary comment, and other relevant documentary sources. By investigating trends in consumption and what constituted luxury foods it is shown that there was a clear link between ideas relating to social status and the foods that people ate and expected others to eat.

University of Leicester, 2009

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research and subsequent writing of this thesis was made possible thanks to the help, encouragement and support of many people. Special thanks is given to my two supervisors, David Gentilcore and Christopher Dyer, for the clear and constructive advice offered to me throughout the duration of the project. At all times, from the concept stage right up until the completion of the work, they responded to my requests for guidance with helpful advice that was given promptly and efficiently. I would also like to thank other scholars for taking the time to answer queries and clarify points where their expertise was relevant to my research. They include Bernard Capp, Mark Dawson, Steve Hindle, Vivienne Larminie, Roger Manning and Richard Thomas. Helpful advice and encouragement was also gratefully received from Rebecca Earle, Elaine Leong and Marijke van der Veen.

In addition, I would like to thank the very helpful staff at the following establishments: the Bodleian Library, the Kenilworth Library, the university libraries of Leicester, Nottingham and Warwick; the Dorset Museum in Dorchester and the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Kensington; and the record offices in Coventry, Maidstone, Northampton, Stratford upon Avon and Warwick. Gratitude is also extended to my wife Pamela Anne Lloyd for supporting and encouraging my endeavours; her patience and selfless attitude when I was spending an excessive amount of time researching and writing enabled me to complete this work on time. Finally, the support extended to me by my now departed mother, Barbara Hazel Wellstood, is greatly appreciated. Both her faith in my ability and her support strengthened my motivation to undertake this project.

It is my hope that this work goes some way towards justifying the efforts of the aforementioned people on my behalf.

NOTES

Referencing of households

As long runs from household accounts are referred to frequently throughout the thesis, the details relating to them are listed here in order to avoid repetition in footnote referencing. However, where specific examples from the accounts are referred to, abbreviations appear in footnotes followed by dates (in the case of manuscript accounts), or by page numbers (in the case of printed accounts). See 'Abbreviations' below.

CECIL:

'William Cecil's Household Accounts', in Munby, L. M. (ed.), *Early Stuart Household Accounts* (Hertfordshire Record Society, 1986).

DUDLEY:

Adams, S. (ed.), *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558-1561, 1584-1586* (Camden Society, 5th series, 6, 1995).

NEWDIGATE:

Warwickshire County Record Office, Warwick, Newdigate Household Accounts, CR136v140 and CR136a37.

PERCY:

Batho, G. R., *The Household Papers of Henry Percy, Ninth Earl of Northumberland, 1564-1632* (Camden Society, 3rd series, 93 1962).

PETRE:

Emmison, F. G., *Tudor Secretary: Sir William Petre at Court and Home* (London, 1961).

RADCLIFFE:

'Edward Radcliffe's Household Accounts', in Munby, L. M. (ed.), *Early Stuart Household Accounts* (Hertfordshire Record Society, 1986).

REYNELL:

Gray, T. (ed.), *Devon Household Accounts 1627-59*, 2 vols. (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1995).

SACKVILLE:

Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone, Sackville Household Accounts, U269/A2/1.

SHUTTLEWORTH:

Harland, J. (ed.), *The house and farm accounts of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe Hall, in the county of Lancashire, at Smithills and Gawthorpe, from September 1582 to October 1621*, part 1 (Chetham Society, old series, 35, 1856).

STANLEY:

Raines, F. R (ed.), *The Stanley Papers, 2: The Derby Household Books* (Chetham Society, original series, 31, 1853).

THROCKMORTON:

Warwickshire County Record Office, Warwick, Throckmorton Kitchen Expenses and miscellaneous papers, CR1998/63/16a, CR1998/63/16b and CR1998/63/30.

VERNON:

Carrington, W. A. (ed.), 'Selections from the Stewards' Accounts Preserved at Haddon Hall for the Years 1549 and 1564', *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* 16 (1894).

Abbreviations

Where particular occurrences from the above sets of accounts are referred to in the footnotes, and in the notes accompanying tables and charts, they are abbreviated to:

Cecil
Dudley
Newdigate
Percy
Petre
Radcliffe
Reynell
Sackville
Shuttleworth
Stanley
Throckmorton
Vernon

Other abbreviations:

Farming book FB
Memorandum book MB

Currency and weights and measures

Currency:

1d = one penny

1s = one shilling (12d)

£1 = one pound (20s or 240d)

Thus, in post-decimalisation values, 1d = 0.4p and 1s (or 12d) = 5p

Weights:

Meat and butter

1oz = one ounce (approx. 28 grams)

1lb = one pound (16 oz, or approx. 0.45 kilograms)

1st = one stone (recently 14lbs or 6.35 kilograms*)

*As a stone varied in weight depending on location, all weights, unless otherwise stated, are expressed in pounds and ounces.

Volumes:

1pt = one pint (approx. 0.57 litres)

1qt = one quart (2 pints)

1 gal = one gallon (8 pints or 4.546 litres)

Dates

In instances where the Julian calendar was still in use (with the year starting on 25 March), any date between 1 January and 24 March has been written with the old year in full, followed by the new year in brackets. Thus, 16 February 1636 appears as 16 February 1635(6).

INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates social status and the perception of cultural identity in England between the Reformation and the Civil Wars. It is a vast subject that can be approached in many ways; one of which is by identifying specific lifestyles and consumption practices relating to food and drink. As the need for food is undeniable and eating is central in social life, the study of consumption can draw out issues of personal identity in which people present themselves in relationship to others. And because any hierarchy of food in which some edibles signify eminence and others denote poverty is subject to movement in fashion, investigating trends in eating can also reveal a society's dynamic character. With special reference to luxury ideas about necessity emerge, and it is through exploring the changing meaning and relationship between the two that cultural dimensions may be further analysed.¹ We consider the consumption of luxury foods from three aspects, and these form the basis of chapters two to four. They are diet, food prices and social status; foods that are in some way special; and those given as gifts and consumed at special occasions.

In the introduction we first look at the ways in which scholars have treated the history of food – from concerns about diet and health to the more recent cultural aspects. We then review literature on food in early modern England and explain how this thesis fits into the modern debate. As the theme of chapter one is 'luxury' and 'identity', scholarly debate related to these topics is discussed at that point in order to avoid repetition. The introduction then considers social status, outlining and defining the main groups whose food consumption habits are discussed in chapters two to four. The agenda of the study is then presented along with the main questions that it is hoped

¹ C. J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge, 1994) pp. 233-35.

will be answered. This is followed by a discussion on the sources used and the methods that have been employed in analysing and interpreting them.

FOOD HISTORY AND THIS PROJECT

As an integral part of economics, consumption has never been far from the centre of debate by economic historians. Food, however, although forming a major part of consumption has, perhaps surprisingly, developed relatively recently as a field of study – even though sporadic but important works emerged half a century ago. Whilst this rich seam of information is now increasingly tapped, the treatment of food by historians has changed as its potential to reveal economic, social and political patterns became more widely acknowledged. The dietary nutritional aspect of writers such as Jack Drummond, whilst still currently being pursued by scholars of history in a more specialist and refined way – like the 2006 work on medieval food edited by Chris Woolgar, Dale Serjeantson and Tony Waldron; or Joan Thirsk's 2007 book on early modern diet – has been joined by other approaches.² In the 1970s and 1980s the growing interest in food history resulted in the publication of general works covering a broad temporal span; these included books written by C. Anne Wilson and Reay Tannahill.³ Then, during the 1980s and 1990s, the continued interest in social history spawned studies such as those by early-modernists John Walter and Andrew Appleby,

² J. C. Drummond, *The Englishman's Food* (London, 1957); C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson and T. Waldron (eds), *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition* (Oxford, 2006); J. Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London, 2007).

³ C. A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to Recent Times* (London, 1973); R. Tannahill, *Food in History* (London, 1988).

and classicist Peter Garnsey, in which famine and its implications for society were investigated.⁴

Economic historians who have been occupied with changes in industrial and agricultural practices and agrarian structures as a means to identify cause and effect in the dynamics of living standards, and other historians looking at consumption patterns more generally, have been joined by anthropologists like Sidney Mintz who recognise that food consumption is an important indicator of the changing characteristics of a society.⁵ The current emphasis of the historical study of food is cultural – the meaning of its consumption to groups or ‘categories’ of people. Although anthropologists like Mary Douglas and Jack Goody utilised this approach in the 1970s and early 1980s, it has increasingly become popular among historians because of the modern trend towards attempting to construct models of past social and cultural relationships.⁶ In addition to the increasing number of books and articles in general periodicals covering, for example, the historical religious significance of eating certain types of food, there are now specialist journals accommodating the expanding discipline of food history.⁷ This project joins the current debate by taking it to a new level. The concept that lies behind the thesis entails engaging with the cultural aspect of food consumption and identifying and interpreting its meaning to people during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The result of this study will be a clearer understanding of the practicalities relating to social status and an insight into the perception of cultural identity during this

⁴ J. Walter, ‘The Social Economy of Dearth in Early Modern England’, in J. Walter and R. Schofield (eds), *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989); A. B. Appleby, ‘Diet in Sixteenth Century England: Sources, Problems, Possibilities’, in C. Webster (ed.), *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979); P. Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁵ S. W. Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past* (Boston, Mass., 1996).

⁶ M. Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London, 1975); J. Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge, 1982).

⁷ For example: *Food and History*; *Food and Foodways*; *Gastronomica*; *Food Culture and History*.

period. In order to undertake this project, we first need to know what the current state of knowledge is; therefore we proceed with a literature review.

FOOD IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

Of the many works referred to in this thesis, those that have been the most influential are reviewed here thematically. The sources and methods used by scholars are analysed to reveal the limitations of the works and, at the end of this section, we will explain how this thesis contributes to the current state of knowledge.

Fifty years ago Jack Drummond wrote about the history of food and nutrition in England. He drew on a variety of sources ranging from contemporary observations (such as those made by the Venetian ambassador) to accounts of institutions like hospitals. His research revealed that bacon was the chief meat of peasants during the sixteenth century, and that their diet also included legumes, bread, dairy products and fowl. Whilst the diet of peasants became worse towards the end of the century, prosperous yeomen, farmers and merchants ate copious quantities of beef and mutton. At the same time wealthy countrymen consumed a wide variety of foods including dried fruit, sugar and pepper.⁸ In the seventeenth century, Drummond continued, the food of labouring people was beef, cheese and wheaten bread; they also ate more butter than before. Dinner for those of middling and upper statuses were ‘typically’ hot shoulder of mutton, pies of baked leg of mutton, a cold chine of beef or roasted chickens. These were eaten with bread, cheese and ale or wine.⁹ The time-span of five centuries that were covered by Drummond’s work did not allow for a variety of determinants that could affect individuals’ diets.¹⁰ Although the broad sweep of his work gave the reader a valuable generic picture, he divided society into clearly defined hierarchical groups

⁸ Drummond, *Englishman’s Food*, pp. 47-54.

⁹ Drummond, *Englishman’s Food*, pp. 106-07

¹⁰ Individual circumstances affecting diet are discussed in chapter two.

assigning each one its own particular type of food. Despite this stereotyping he did not refer to the expression of cultural identity through the medium of food.

In 1973 C. Anne Wilson's book on food and drink in Britain also covered a vast time span. Drawing on a wealth of historical sources she divided her work into sections covering different types of food, discussing the modes and nature of their preparation and consumption. Wilson occasionally engages with the issue of social differentiation, and says, for example, that in early modern times novel and varied foods were consumed by the wealthy. At the same time, servant, labourers and other 'humble folk' who ate foods such as hard cheeses, butter and pottage, were 'hardly affected by the introduction of new foodstuffs or foreign culinary ideas at other levels of society'.¹¹ The author also notes that there was an upsurge of interest in fruit and vegetables in the late 1500s.¹² The time span covered by this work, like that of Drummond, was probably too broad to consider the reasons that lay behind consumption 'choice', or for issues of food and identity, to be discussed.

Another major and influential work on food consumption is the 1983 book by Stephen Mennell.¹³ Covering taste in England and France from medieval times onward, he discusses the similarities and differences between the cuisines of the two countries, and the class influences that underpinned them. Fashion, he writes, was relatively slow to permeate through to the countryside; and even in urban areas the more exotic dishes that were to be found in cookery books – such as puddings and preserves – were not for 'ordinary people'. Although these books facilitated 'the process of social emulation', the sociologist suggests that they may not have been followed even by their owners. It is possible, he argues, that they may have stood for an idealisation of values – to

¹¹ Wilson, *Food and Drink*, pp. 14-15, 182-83, 210.

¹² Wilson, *Food and Drink*, pp. 340-53.

¹³ S. Mennell, *All Manners of Food* (Oxford, 1985).

identify an individual with a specific group.¹⁴ An analysis of household accounts and comments made by professional people would have complimented the information extracted from cookery books, and may have helped to explain more fully the ideas that lay behind the pursuit of fashion.

Household accounts as well as cookery books were utilised in a recent work by Joan Thirsk. Her book, which tracks changes in culinary fashions, gives an in-depth account of the foods consumed in England between 1500 and 1760.¹⁵ Dividing the first half of the book into time periods ranging from 20 to 50 years, and the second half into food categories, the historian acknowledges social differentiation as well as the regional aspect of diet. She shows that whilst the wealthy ate delicacies sourced from abroad and bought in English cities in the late sixteenth century, poorer folk also had opportunity to sample foods more exciting than ‘basic cereal, simple greenstuff and white meats’.¹⁶ Thirsk’s book, however, has more to say on the tastes of the well-to-do and their increasing interest in exotic fare than on the relatively less well-off and their choice in food; and discussion relating consumer choice to marking identity is beyond the scope of her work. As healthy eating was obviously one factor in influencing the dietary habits of some people, amongst the kitchen manuals that figure most prominently in Thirsk’s study are those written by dieticians such as Andrew Boorde and Henry Buttes.

The eating of foods appropriate to sustaining health is a theme of a book written by Ken Albala. He shows that in early modern Europe the types that were associated with healthy living were increasingly influenced by ‘class’ issues. By the late sixteenth century, food, he asserts, ‘was increasingly invested with social meaning’, and criticism of certain types was no longer that they were gross and difficult to digest, but that they

¹⁴ Mennell, *All Manners*, pp. 66-68, 84, 128-29.

¹⁵ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*.

¹⁶ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, pp. 19, 31-32.

were ‘considered edible only to a certain class’.¹⁷ Because the English experience in this respect receives little in the way of sustained attention, we consider his argument in chapter three in the light of our evidence. Both of the above works draw the reader’s attention to the importance of cookery books when considering diet. Cookery books and their values and limitations are also discussed in chapter three; and of the special foods that feature in many of them, one type is spice.

Spices and their consumption is the subject of Paul Freedman’s book *Out of the East*. Freedman challenges the popular explanation for the use of spices – that they were used to mask the odour and taste of substandard foods, and explains that ‘much of the allure had to do with the use of spices to flavour a sophisticated cuisine’. They were, he notes, ‘symbols of noble graciousness and status’, and were ‘luxuries that conferred well-being and social distinction’. Concerned mainly with the medieval period, Freedman asserts that there was a move away from spices by the eighteenth century. Here we consider their status between 1540 and 1640. Many ready-made foods given as gifts, and dishes enjoyed at social functions, contained spices; and in chapter four we turn our attention to gift-foods and foods eaten at special occasions.

The gifting of foods and the extension of hospitality at special events, which have been the themes of studies by Felicity Heal and Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, have also proved to be useful to this thesis. *Hospitality in Early Modern England* has shown that the nature of hospitality underwent a process of remodelling as ideas of ‘community’ changed along with socio-economic policy and the pursuit of individualistic lifestyles – at least with the powerful and wealthy.¹⁸ This, as David Cressy has also noted, impacted upon social inclusion through the sharing of luxury food. Both Heal (highlighting the use of capons and venison) and Ben-Amos have

¹⁷ K. Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 2000), see for examples pp. 193, 196, 204.

¹⁸ F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990).

drawn attention to the reshaping of gift-giving and to the circumstances surrounding its role in patterns of exchange in two other recent works.¹⁹ But many foods were given as gifts; and the negative aspect of both extending hospitality at food-based events and the giving of gift-foods could be explored more fully. In chapter four we offer a few examples of the negativity of giving that could be investigated further.

This thesis contributes to the existing literature – both the works reviewed here and the others considered below – by undertaking a systematic analysis of a range of household accounts belonging to the gentry, and comparing the data extracted from them with information relating to food consumption of other groups. The nature of these groups is considered next.

SOCIAL STATUS IN ENGLAND 1540-1640

As a social stratification was seen by some to promote and stabilise a morally admirable order in which divisions in wealth, patterns of interaction, duties and obligations were important, relative statuses between groups or individuals held significant value. Thus, in 1577, clergyman and moralistic writer William Harrison wrote: ‘We in England divide our people commonly into four sorts, as gentlemen, citizens or burgesses, yeomen, and artificers or labourers’.²⁰ This division of English society was also commented upon by Thomas Smith, a knight of the realm, who was writing from the position a statesman and eminent scholar. Both of these Elizabethan commentators on English life considered stratification to be one of its determining factors. We consider here the hierarchical groups within the secular sector of society, for they are the main

¹⁹ I. K. Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2008), see for example, pp. 156-80, 309-30; F. Heal, ‘Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England’, *Past and Present* 199 (2008), pp. 41-70; D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997).

²⁰ G. Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison: The Description of England (1577)* (Ithaca, 1968), p. 94.

concern of this work. We divide them for convenience into three broad tiers: the upper, the middle, and the lower levels.

The upper levels, stated Harrison and Smith, started with the monarch. Below this, and in order of importance, came princes, dukes, marquises, earls, viscounts and barons.²¹ These titles could be created but could also be hereditary. In the latter case the eldest son of a duke was an earl, an earl's son was a baron or viscount, and the younger sons of the family were 'but esquires'. Although these titles were exclusive to male household members, the wife took the status of her husband or father.²² These people were known as the 'greater sort' of gentlemen, and behind them came knights and esquires.²³ A knighthood, Harrison noted, was not hereditary; it was a title bestowed upon a man 'for some great service done' and could not be passed down from father to son.²⁴ Sir Thomas Smith referred to these people as the minor nobility.²⁵ Apart from their lack of the immense wealth that was associated with dukes such as George Villiers discussed below, and to a lesser extent earls like Sir William Cecil who owned several large properties, another distinguishing feature was that a knighted gentleman could not take a seat in the House of Lords.²⁶ This applied to Sir Richard Newdigate whose accounts figure prominently in this work. He was eventually to receive a baronetcy – a title that was yet to come into existence in Harrison's day. This tier of nobility, introduced in 1611, came between baron and knight; and anyone so bestowed – although wealthy enough to be able to pay for the honour – could pass the title on to his eldest son but could not sit in the Lords.

²¹ M. Dewar (ed.) *De Republica Anglorum*, by Sir Thomas Smith (1583) (Cambridge, 1982), p. 65-66; Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, p. 94.

²² Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, p. 100.

²³ Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, p. 94.

²⁴ Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, pp. 101-02.

²⁵ Dewar (ed.) *De Republica* pp. 66-70.

²⁶ For the wealth of the aristocracy see, for example, J. A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England* (London, 1987), p.152.

In theory the amount of wealth and power that families from the upper level of society enjoyed depended on their position within that layer. The higher the family's social rank was, the more subordinates they were likely to have control over. This can be seen by comparing the number of workers employed by the Earl of Derby and minor noble Sir Richard Reynell, both of whom are discussed later. And with regard to comparative wealth, this was manifest in many ways. The size and number of houses owned, and the grandeur of their furnishings that are evident in accounts and inventories, were commensurate with and were identifying features of social station. Clothing could also be an outward sign of hierarchical position; but conspicuous displays of opulence in attire could be, and was, misleading. The type of clothes and the materials from which they were made were officially intended to mark rank, and an overview of expectations may be seen in a 1559 Royal Proclamation.²⁷ In actuality, however, the monarch's perceived need to repeat over and again sumptuary regulations, and comment by William Harrison on modes of dress in his time, show that dress could sometimes be a dubious indicator of rank.²⁸ As we will see below, manners and demeanour could help a person distinguish between those of different social positions who consumed similarly; but a gentleman was someone who was accepted as such within his community – it was a question of repute, honour and esteem.²⁹ Smith states that gentlemen showed love to their tenants and neighbours, and were well educated.³⁰

²⁷ England and Wales, Elizabeth I, *The briefe content of certayne actes of Parliament agaynst thinordiante vse of apparel* (London, 1559).

²⁸ England and Wales, Elizabeth I, *By the Queene, the Quenes Maiestie calling to her good remembraunce howe well thys realme is furnished with good lawes and orders, for redresse of many enormities ...* (London, 1562); Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, pp. 145-48.

²⁹ For reputation see Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, p.153.

³⁰ Dewar (ed.) *De Republica* pp. 70-72; L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1967), p. 15.

His perceived function, Laurence Stone has noted, was to rule others demonstrating a duty of care in return for obedience and deference.³¹

The middle level consists of those that Harrison described as citizens and burgesses. These include 'those that are free within the city' and who were of sufficient substance to bear office, and merchants. Keith Wrightson places wealthy townsmen in the same bracket as wealthy yeomen, and this is probably a fair comparison.³² Merchants were of a similar standing to gentlemen in the eyes of Harrison. They could 'change estate' with them 'by a mutual conversion of one into the other'. Social and economic mobility was a reality in early modern England; as a successful city merchant could become wealthier than a country gentleman, and could display his wealth through land ownership and attire, clearly defined boundaries separating these groups must have been difficult to discern. Lawyers and medical practitioners were also at this level, but it should be noted that a hierarchical structure existed within these middling groups; indeed some of the nobility and gentry discussed in the chapters ahead were also lawyers. Yeomen, in contrast to many urban merchants, generally made their living in rural England. Harrison located these men in the third tier of society. They did, he said, have a 'pre-eminence' and are of 'more estimation than labourers and the more common sort of artificers'.³³ The size of their holdings, their success, and their wealth, varied considerably; and although some were little better off than husbandmen, others both lived like and described themselves as gentlemen. This self-image of gentility may stem from the fact that the legal definition of 'yeoman' applied to a 40s freeholder (even

³¹ Stone, *Crisis.*, p.15.

³² K. Wrightson, *English Society* (London, 1982), p.27.

³³ Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, pp. 117-18.

though he worked the land and, in practice, could be a tenant).³⁴ There was social and economic mobility between unsuccessful yeomen and husbandmen, and between yeomen and rural gentlemen. Harrison recognised this and stated that they can and do buy land from ‘unthrifty gentlemen’, can ‘live without labour’, and are often able to send their sons to university and leave them enough wealth to become gentlemen.³⁵ Husbandmen, who were small-scale tenant farmers, were located by Harrison in the lowest level of society.

As this writer’s concern was mainly with the gentry, those within the lowest level – the overwhelming majority of the population – are afforded a few (mainly derogatory) lines. In addition to husbandmen this category included some retailers who held no free land, artificers, day labourers, and copyholders who rented smallholdings. They owned little if any land and therefore had no substantial authority; their function within the commonwealth was ‘to be ruled over and not to rule others’. These ‘lower sort’ people were, however, sometimes made churchwardens and constables; positions of limited power.³⁶ Whilst Thomas Smith describes some artificers and retailers by mentioning their trades – shoemakers, tailors, builders and non free-holding traders, Harrison is less specific.³⁷ We will read later, however, that the latter writer thought, on the basis of artificers’ consumption, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish some of them from gentlemen. Their level of income was therefore clearly variable, depending on many factors – including trading conditions and the ability to meet customers’ expectations.

³⁴ For the status of yeomen see: D. Cressy, *Society and Culture in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 29-42; D. M. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth: England under the Late Tudors 1547-1603* (London, 1992), p. 84; M. Campbell, *The English Yeoman under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts* (New York, 1942), pp. 20-63.

³⁵ Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, pp. 117-18.

³⁶ Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, p. 118.

³⁷ Dewar (ed.) *De Republica*, pp. 76-77.

The lowest tier of society was made up of labourers, servants and vagrants. These people, Harrison claimed, included ‘our great swarms of idle servingmen’ who are ‘profitable to none’ being ‘enemies to their masters, their friends and themselves’. The clergyman thought that sort of people, like artisans, could be difficult to identify because they sometimes ‘bear an high sail’. But their ‘manner’, apparently, gave them away.³⁸ Although the wage rates of skilled and unskilled labourers are often recorded, their overall income is difficult to establish. In chapter two we will see that whilst uncertainties with regard to employment made some labourers vulnerable, having two or more jobs and pooling household incomes may have impacted upon diet in a positive way.³⁹ Household servants who received board-wages were perhaps less vulnerable than day labourers economically, but they may have been more dependant on the goodwill of their masters and mistresses. The foods that they ate, depending on their status, were possibly of better quality and more varied than the foods eaten by some labourers; and although household servants were subject to status-marking limitations, they were, for the most part, unaffected by price fluctuations. Wages paid to the servants of the Earls of Derby formed ‘only a negligible fraction of their overall income’. As the Stanleys were typical employers in this respect, clothing, lodging and other allowances need to be considered in order to arrive at standards of living.⁴⁰

The recommended daily wage rates proclaimed for labourers practicing diverse trades in various counties are well documented.⁴¹ But for our reference here, typical rates of pay in the late sixteenth century were around 9d for skilled male workers and 7d

³⁸ Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, pp. 118-20.

³⁹ For multi-faceted nature of labourers’ incomes see for example: A. H. Smith, ‘Labourers in Late Sixteenth Century England: A Case Study From North Norfolk’, part 1, *Continuity and Change* 4:1 (1989), pp. 13-15; D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 236-41.

⁴⁰ B. Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672: The Origins, Wealth and Power of a Landowning Family* (Manchester, 1983), p. 87.

⁴¹ See for example: *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (London, 1969), pp. 210-33, 392; and vol. III (London, 1969), pp. 40, 122, 146, 150; S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 124-29; Woodward, *Men at Work*, pp. 261-74.

for those who were unskilled. Women were supposed to be paid around 1d to 2d less. In 1588 and in 1599 foot soldiers were paid at the rate of 8d per day, and at around the same time horsemen and lieutenants received 12d whilst a captain's pay was 4s.⁴² Also at that time, male and female employees of William Honnywell, a wealthy Devonshire farmer, were paid 12d and 7d per day respectively.⁴³ These wages were similar to those received by the employees of Sir Richard Reynell, Sir Edward Radcliffe and Sir Richard Newdigate in the early to mid 1600s. Typically their pay ranged between 6d and 12d per day plus meals. Although their incomes may have exceeded a single wage, it is intended that this overview of pay rates should be taken into consideration in subsequent discussions about labourers' food consumption. The overview should also be used in conjunction with data on food allowances granted to employees. In chapter two we will consider the type and quantity of food that this money could buy for manual workers.

As we have seen, these people were thought to be the lowest in the hierarchical order. Comments made by Harrison and others show that early modern England was a deeply stratified society. But it was also a society in which people were continuously interacting, changing their chosen identity, and moving vertically from one station to another. It will become clear that the consumption of food, like any other method of expressing oneself, formed a significant part of the process of identity construction that is discussed in chapter one.

⁴² Nottingham, C. Howard, *By the Lord Generall ...* (London, 1599); C. Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish Wars* (London, 1950), pp. 60-61; *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 3, (London, 1969), pp. 19-21.

⁴³ F. J. Snell (ed.), 'A Devonshire Yeoman's Diary', pp. 255-56, 258; H. Stone (ed.), 'A Devonshire Yeoman's Diary', *Antiquary* 31 (1893), pp. 214-15.

AGENDA AND QUESTIONS

It is clear from reading existing literature, that there is a need to address issues of cultural identity in England by investigating diet and establishing what constituted luxury and necessary foods between the mid sixteenth and mid seventeenth centuries. In order to determine the extent to which food consumption and consuming practices represented the structure of society between 1540 and 1640, two essential questions need to be addressed: Did individuals and communities identify themselves by what and how they ate? Did people of the period see a connection between food consumption and perceptions of self and otherness? Attempting to answer these, and the subsidiary questions that have emerged during the investigation (discussed as we move along), has resulted in the enquiry being divided into three main chapters from which the evidences combine to construct a model of order-related consumption. After first defining what we mean by the terms 'luxury' and 'identity' we come to the first approach. This consists of examining the diets of labourers and the poor, of servants, and of yeomen; and then analysing the diets of gentlemen and the aristocracy. Secondly, the acquisition, preparation and consumption of foods that were in some way special are considered. These foods include young and tender produce, game, and high-value spices and fruits. We look at the way they were cooked, and at meals that could be eaten as substitutes for luxuries. This is followed by a consideration of the presentation of luxury foods at special occasions and as gifts. The main source of evidence for this study is household accounts of the nobility and gentry; however, because of the limitations of such financial narratives supplementary evidence is called upon to produce a fuller picture.

SOURCES AND METHODS

Household accounts

Accounts are explanatory records of events or processes that hold the capacity to inform on the dynamics within the spheres of activity to which they relate – usually over a specified period of time. Those concerned with financial matters are generally produced as an aid in identifying relationships between income and expenditure; and household accounts produced during the Tudor and early Stuart eras, although taking many forms, were used – exclusively or partially – in just such a way. Bookkeeping at the estates of the gentry was sometimes undertaken on a departmental basis so that those pertaining to the kitchen were compiled separately from those the rest of the household. When this was the case, the accounts were subsequently compiled by the controller or head steward and sometimes audited professionally. Armed with the information contained in the accounts, the head of the household could then take action to improve the administration of his or her estate. Such records contain a rich source of information with which the historian can analyse consumption patterns. And, as food both makes up a sizable portion of expenditure and is also central to daily routine, records of kitchen acquisitions help in reconstructing dietary patterns and revealing social structures.

For this study, twelve sets of household accounts ranging geographically from Derbyshire to Devon and from Lancashire to Essex, and in time from 1543 to 1640, have been transcribed where necessary and analysed. In terms of social status, the householders to which these accounts pertain range from wealthy earls to middle-ranking gentlemen and their families. The geographical location of the estates and time-spans covered are set out in table 0:1. The earls are represented by William Cecil, 2nd Earl of Salisbury; Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset; Henry Percy, 9th Earl of

Northumberland; Edward and Henry Stanley, 3rd and 4th Earls of Derby; and Edward Radcliffe, 6th Earl of Sussex. The accounts of Robert Dudley, future 1st Earl of Leicester, are also analysed. The main sets of accounts transcribed for this study are those belonging to the Newdigate family. Eventually to receive the title of baronet, Sir Richard was not entitled to take a seat in the Lords; but here the family's kitchen expenses and food purchase patterns are compared with those of the earls. Other food-related accounts belonging to the families of knights and analysed here are those of Sir Richard Reynell of Forde in Devon; Sir William Petre of Ingatestone Hall, Essex – who was also secretary of state; Sir Thomas Throckmorton; and Sir Richard Shuttleworth. As the Shuttleworth accounts continue with Sir Richard's successors – his younger brother Reverend Lawrence and his nephew Colonel Richard – their food acquisitions are contrasted with the others.

Whilst some of the sets of accounts record transactions that extend over a period of months, others deal with proceedings that span years. As such, these records reveal – with varying degrees of detail and relevance – information on the food consumption, lifestyles and relationships of the families to whom they refer. And where pertinent data or comment exists within or accompanying these financial statements, it is possible to deduce, by implication and conjecture, the diet afforded to the household's minor servants, labourers and tradesmen. But because this information is not always extant, and because the influence that the heads of the households enjoyed within society was inherently limited, it is necessary to consult other sources of evidence in order to construct a model of consuming patterns and relate them to cultural identity over a broad area. This additional evidence, as will become clear, helps to fill the voids highlighted by the table below.

	NORTH	MIDLANDS	SOUTHEAST	SOUTHWEST
1540 – 1573	Stanley (1561)	Vernon (1549; 1564)	Petre (1542-43; 1548; 1551-52 Dudley (1558-61)	
1574 – 1607	Stanley (1586-90) Shuttleworth (1582-1607)	Newdigate (1596-99)	Sackville (1603-04) Percy (1585-89; 1597-98; 1603; 1607)	Percy (1591)
1608 - 1640	Shuttleworth (1608-1617)	Newdigate (1612-13; 1636- 40) Throckmorton (1609; 1633)	Cecil (1634-35) Radcliffe (1637-38) Percy (1608)	Reynell (1627-31)

Table 0:1. Time periods and geographical areas to which the accounts relate.

The bracketed dates refer to account entries used in this study. Sources: Manuscript and printed accounts listed on pages viii-ix.

The households

Before explaining the methods used in interpreting the accounts and considering other sources of evidence, the background and statuses of the principal occupants of the main households to which the accounts pertain need to be made clear. The Newdigates, whose accounts cover the periods from 1596 to 1625 and from 1636 to 1640, owned Arbury Hall in north Warwickshire and have been described as an ‘upper middling gentry’ family of that time.⁴⁴ The main set of accounts – that which contains the most detail – was transcribed from a hide-bound book of household expenses that covers the period from 1636 to 1645. It relates mainly, but not exclusively, to purchases made by the clerk of the kitchen at Arbury at a time when the lord of the manor was Sir Richard Newdigate.

Born in 1602 to Sir John Newdigate and his wife Anne (nee Fitton), Richard was educated at Oxford before going on to train as a lawyer at Gray’s Inn. Called to the bar in 1628 Richard was regarded by family members living at Arbury as ‘the gateway to

⁴⁴ V. Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: The 17th Century Newdigates of Arbury and their World* (Woodbridge, 1995), p. 17.

the fashionable world of London', buying for them – sometimes at their request – items regarded as being in vogue.⁴⁵ This fashion-consciousness, acquired or honed in the capital, was, as will be show, manifest in the purchasing of luxury foods.⁴⁶ He and his wife Juliana, a daughter of Sir Francis Leigh, had eleven children; and after the birth of their first child they settled at Leaden Porch Court in Holborn where they spent the 'greater part' of their married life.⁴⁷

Described as an 'active puritan', Sir Richard, who was eventually made a baronet in 1677, appears to have been an articulate scholar and a hard-working and shrewd businessman.⁴⁸ In the late 1630s his net income from the Warwickshire estate alone was around £600 per annum; and whilst his average annual spending was £465, just under £150 was typically spent on food and drink. Thanks to Sir Richard's resourcefulness and financial competence, his son – Richard 2nd Bart – inherited in 1678 'a flourishing farming concern and an estate worth £78000'.⁴⁹ Whichever family members were present at Arbury during the times Sir Richard was staying in London, it seems that Juliana was a frequent visitor and managed the staffing arrangements there. It is also probable that she was one of the women who were prominent in 'oiling the wheels' of the Newdigate family fortunes through the medium of hospitality.⁵⁰ In any event, Richard's gentlemanly influence and his family's taste for fashionable consumption are evident at the Warwickshire estate.

Contemporaries of the Newdigates were Sir Richard and Lady Lucy Reynell of Forde near Newton Abbot in Devon. Covering the period from 1627 to 1640, the Reynell accounts are particularly well detailed for the years up to 1631; it is, therefore,

⁴⁵ E. Gooder, *The Squire of Arbury: Sir Richard Newdigate Second Baronet (1644-1710) and His Family* (Coventry Historical Association, 1990), p. 5.

⁴⁶ Gooder, *The Squire of Arbury*, pp. 1, 5.

⁴⁷ Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship*, pp. 137, 181.

⁴⁸ Gooder, *Squire of Arbury* pp. 1, 4; Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship*, p. 175.

⁴⁹ Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship*, p. 7, 17; F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (London, 1994), p. 133.

⁵⁰ Gooder, *Squire of Arbury*, pp. 6-10; Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship*, p. 6.

the kitchen expenses over these earlier years that have been analysed for comparable trends in consumption. The lifestyles of Reynell and Newdigate share certain characteristics; both were knights and gentlemen, both were lawyers (Reynell was of the Middle Temple), and both had business ties in London.⁵¹ As Reynell had access to fashionable eating houses in the capital, it should not be surprising that the types of food purchased by him – although subject to local peculiarities – may also have been voguish. Despite the similarities, there were important differences between the two families and their estates. Reynell, born in 1558, built Forde House and lived there with his wife Lucy, who was 20 years his junior.⁵² The provisioning costs at Forde were ostensibly less than those at Arbury; the total annual expenditure (including rental payments for their house at Exeter) averaged £290 12s over the four years ending 1631. The average expenditure on food over the same period was £119 7s; but in addition to this cash sum, many oxen and sheep were slaughtered for the table, and other accounting details suggest that bread, dairy produce, vegetables and beer were home-produced. The values of these extras are omitted from the kitchen expenses. Household size seems to have remained fairly constant; the payroll indicates that in addition to the extended family group living on-site, there were around eighteen servants and labourers working for the Reynells. This number, apparently, was not atypical for an average English gentry family.⁵³

Another family whose spending on food is analysed is that of the Throckmortons. Sir Thomas Throckmorton was lord of Great Coughton in south Warwickshire from 1586 to 1614. Coughton Court had been in the hands of the family

⁵¹ T. Gray (ed.), *Devon Household Accounts 1627-59*, vol. 1, (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1995), p. xix.

⁵² Gray, *Devon Accounts*, p. xxiv.

⁵³ Gray, *Devon Accounts*, p. xxi.

since 1472 and was inherited by Thomas from his father Robert.⁵⁴ The total income from Sir Thomas's estates in 1602 was £1640; this compares well with Richard Newdigate's income 30 years later.⁵⁵ Yet he was at this time £8300 in debt; this was due in no small part to him being fined heavily for failing to attend the services of the established church. Sir Thomas remained loyal to his beliefs, and, despite his substantial income, the family's only ennoblement was a baronetcy, granted to Robert, Thomas's grandson and successor in 1642.⁵⁶ Throckmorton's expenditure on food in 1609, if the evidence from two months is typical, would have been more than Newdigate's 30 years later at around £185. The financial outlay of all of these gentlemen, however, was relatively low compared to that of earls like William Cecil and Edward Radcliffe.

Born in 1591, Sir William Cecil was 2nd Earl of Salisbury and Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire. In the mid-1630s he was head of two houses in London and lord of Quickswood near Baldock; it is the latter residence to which the accounts covering six months relate. He employed around 60 servants and his spending on food over the six months between October 1634 and March 1635, if typical of the whole year, would indicate an annual consumption to the value of £2300. This fed Sir William's family, his employees and an average of ten visitors (including gentlemen and their servants) each mealtime; it might also include the fare of casual labourers and any poor people that were shown hospitality. Edward Radcliffe, in contrast to Cecil, was much older. Born in 1559, he had been 6th Earl of Sussex only since 1629. In 1638 – the year to which the accounts relate – he was 79 years old and living at Gorhambury near St Albans with his wife Eleanor Wortley. As this was their only house, the staffing costs

⁵⁴ G. E. Saville, *Aspects of the History of Coughton, Warwickshire* (Alcester and District Local History Society, 1988), pp. 7, 9.

⁵⁵ C. Lines, *Coughton Court and the Throckmorton story* (Leamington Spa: English Counties Periodicals, 195?), pp. 17, 20.

⁵⁶ Saville, *Aspects*, pp. 10-12.

at around £300 per annum were much less than those of the Cecils.⁵⁷ The expenses incurred between Christmas 1637 and the end of the following March would suggest that the household consumed around £1200 worth of food and drink a year; this was more than that consumed by the Newdigate household, but only half of that of the Cecils.

Like Radcliffe's accounts, those of poet, barrister and politician Thomas Sackville relate to costs incurred when he was no longer a young man. Surviving expenses concerned with the purchase of foodstuffs cover four months; three in late 1603 and early 1604, when he was Baron Buckhurst and Lord High Treasurer of England (a position he was appointed to after the death of William Cecil's grandfather), and one month later in 1604 shortly after he was promoted to Earl of Dorset. Born in 1536 Thomas was educated at Cambridge and Oxford, and was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1554.⁵⁸ He had a reputation for good taste and generosity, and demonstrated a caring attitude towards the less fortunate. Whilst at the bar, Sackville once followed Lord Chief Baron Periam's attack on London's idle poor – describing them as 'the very scumme of England, and the sinke of iniquitie' – with a more benevolent speech urging the stepping-up of charitable provision.⁵⁹ The kitchen expenses at Sackville's London residence in 1603, as declared by household steward Michael Heidon, were overwhelmingly for grain, meat and dairy products; but despite this, some delicacies were also purchased. Whether the lord was present at his London home at the time is unclear, but the purchases made in November 1604 – after the lord was granted an earldom – are almost identical to those made earlier.

⁵⁷ L. M. Munby (ed.), *Early Stuart Household Accounts* (Hertfordshire Record Society, 1986), p. xxi.

⁵⁸ M. Axton, 'Robert Dudley and the Inner Temple Revels' *Historical Journal* 13 (1970), pp. 365-78; R. Zim, 'A Poet in Politics: Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst and the first Earl of Dorset (1536-1608)' *Historical Research* 79 (2006), pp. 200-02.

⁵⁹ Zim, 'A Poet', pp. 207; J. Bruce (ed.), *Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple, and of Bradbourne, Kent, barrister-at-Law, 1602-1603* (Camden Society, original series, 99, 1868), p. 73.

Also living for most of his time in London was Sir Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland and Privy Councillor to James I. Born in 1564 he succeeded the eighth Earl in 1585; but from 1605 to 1621 he lost his public office when he was imprisoned in the Tower of London and fined £30000 because of suspicion that he was indirectly involved with Catholics in the gunpowder plot.⁶⁰ Percy owned much land in the south of England from which he obtained an income of over £500 in 1582 alone.⁶¹ In addition to renting accommodation in London he had houses at Petworth in Sussex, and at Isleworth in Middlesex, where, compared to other nobles of his status, he kept a ‘relatively small household’ of around 50 to 60.⁶² Percy’s meticulously kept accounts relate to Syon House, Bath, and The Tower – where he was held in ‘salubrious and capacious’ accommodation with six servants that included at least one gentleman and a master cook. Here some £800 was spent annually on provisions.⁶³

Accounts relating to the Shuttleworths at Smithills and Gawthorpe in Lancashire that cover the same period suggest that such extravagant spending was beyond the means of this household. Heading the Smithills household in the late sixteenth century was Sergeant-at law, Sir Richard Shuttleworth – a lawyer who became wealthy and did much to ‘advance the dignity and opulence’ of his family – and his wife Lady Margaret.⁶⁴ When Richard died in 1599, aged around 58, he was succeeded by his brother Reverend Lawrence, rector of Whichford in Warwickshire. Lawrence lived both at Whichford and at the newly-built Gawthorpe Hall until he died in 1608 at the

⁶⁰ G. R. Batho, ‘The Wizard in the Tower, 1605-21’, *History Today* 6 (1956). pp. 344-45.

⁶¹ G. R. Batho, ‘The Finances of an Elizabethan Nobleman: Henry Percy, Ninth Earl of Northumberland (1564-1632)’ *Economic History Review* 9:3 (1957), p. 435.

⁶² R. Lomas, *A Power in the Land: The Percys* (East Linton, 1999), p. 126; G. R. Batho, *The Household Papers of Henry Percy, Ninth Earl of Northumberland, 1564-1632* (Camden Society, 3rd series, 93, 1962), p. xix-xi.

⁶³ Batho, ‘The Wizard’, pp. 346-47.

⁶⁴ J. Harland (ed.), *The house and farm accounts of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe Hall, in the county of Lancashire, at Smithills and Gawthorpe, from September 1582 to October 1621*, part. 2 (Chetham Society, old series, vol. 41, 1856), p. 271, 282.

age of 62.⁶⁵ Like his predecessor he produced no children; the estate therefore passed to their younger brother's son, Colonel Richard, who was born in 1587 and lived at Gawthorpe Hall with his wife Fleetwood. The colonel, a puritan and Sheriff of Lancashire in 1618, appears to have had a relatively sophisticated taste in food – perhaps acquired during his visits to Islington. He later became MP for Preston and a parliamentarian soldier in the Civil War.⁶⁶

A contemporary of Sir Richard Shuttleworth who also resided in Lancashire was Henry Stanley, 4th Earl of Derby. His accounts from 1586 until 1590 are analysed along with those of 1561 that relate to his father Edward. The Stanleys, as members of the aristocracy, were wealthy and had a larger than usual household. Henry employed 118 people in 1587, a figure that increased to 145 by 1590.⁶⁷ Like other high-ranking aristocrats, many of their household servants were 'youths of Noblemen, Knights and Esquires Sonns' – including gentlemen waiters and yeoman officers.⁶⁸ The earls of Derby, in addition to protecting and caring for their servants also had a reputation for looking after their tenants; this care extended to supplying subsidised food and fuel in order to avert the need for begging during hard times.⁶⁹ They could clearly afford to do so. Despite the fact that only £4 15s 7½d was distributed in alms in 1561, Edward's total household expenditure in that year was £4516; of this amount £1610 was spent on food and drink. In the previous year another aspiring earl, Robert Dudley, was 'a commoner at law and possessed a minimal landed estate', yet over the next 25 years he rose greatly. From 1560 until 1585 when he was 'at the height of his eminence' as Earl of Leicester and Lord Steward, the size of his household increased from 50 to over 100. Leicester's staff, like those of Derby, consisted of gentlemen and yeomen who resided

⁶⁵ Harland, *house and farm*, p. 292-93.

⁶⁶ Harland, *house and farm*, p. 298-99.

⁶⁷ See Batho, *Household Papers*, p. xxiii.

⁶⁸ Coward, *The Stanleys*, p. 85.

⁶⁹ Coward, *The Stanleys*, p. 95.

with him at 'the capital messuage of Kew', then at Durham House, and lastly at Leicester House.⁷⁰ Dudley was clearly a man with the tastes and spending habits that matched his ambitions. In 1558-59, five years before he was ennobled, his total declared spending over fifteen months was more than £2000; this included buying luxury foods frequently.⁷¹

William Petre, who was born into 'a Catholic family' in 1505 and educated at Oxford, was knighted and made Secretary of State by Henry VIII in 1543.⁷² As a Privy Councillor for more than 20 years – spanning the reign of four monarchs – he became an influential and wealthy man. In 1550 Petre employed 21 servants at his Ingatestone Hall residence in Essex, and just four years later the number of staff serving his family and maintaining his three houses had increased to 60. Despite this, Petre's annual household expenditure in 1556 was a mere fraction of that of an earl – standing at around £250.⁷³ Whilst the Ingatestone estate met most of the basic food requirements, exotic foods, along with 'fashionable clothes', came from London. If it can be claimed that Petre was able to maintain close relationships with the Crown, and indeed prosper during the politically and religiously turbulent years of the sixteenth century, the same cannot be said of his contemporary George Vernon.

Sir George, an Oxford-educated gentleman who had been admitted to Gray's Inn to train as a lawyer, was from a long-established family at Haddon in Derbyshire. He owned a considerable amount of land centred on Bakewell and Nether Haddon – some of which his forebears had acquired the exclusive use of through increasing rents to a level that tenants could not afford to pay. Vernon had the reputation of controlling

⁷⁰ S. Adams (ed.), *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558-1561, 1584-1586* (Camden Society, 5th series, 6, 1995), pp. 25, 30; S. Adams, 'At Home and Away: The Earl of Leicester', *History Today* 46 (1996), p. 25.

⁷¹ See Adams (ed.), *Household Accounts*, for details of expenditure.

⁷² F. Heal, *Hospitality*, p. 144.

⁷³ F. G. Emmison, *Tudor Secretary; Sir William Petre at Court and Home* (London, 1961), pp. 151, 154.

rigorously affairs connected to his demesne land, and relationships between himself and his tenants could sometimes be less than cordial. Vernon was a Justice of the Peace for three years, and in 1547 he was knighted by Edward VI after having apparently been listed – and then ultimately rejected – for a barony by Henry VIII. He was renowned for his hospitality towards all ‘good’ men, and was thought to be ‘a great justice in religion as in all other things’ by the zealous protestant Bishop Bentham.⁷⁴ The size of the Haddon household was relatively small. Based on wage payments for the year 1549 he employed around 26 servants.⁷⁵ Vernon’s household accounts, like those of others, relate that whilst many basic foods were home-produced, the more expensive foodstuffs were purchased from markets – in Sir George’s case these were at nearby Chesterfield and Ashbourne.

Methods

The accounting methods employed by household clerks took on many forms and also differed in the levels of detail that they portrayed. Extracts from the disbursements and ‘breving’ books in *The household Papers of Henry Percy* suggest a systematic and meticulous accounting procedure was in place for this earl. In addition to listing the foods purchased on a daily basis with their quantities and prices, the meals at which they were eaten, and by whom, are clearly set out. Actual food consumption was also recorded for Radcliffe; purchases made every week were added to the foodstock brought forward from the previous week and deducted from that which was carried forward. Both for this lord and for Cecil, ‘extraordinaries’ list food items that were

⁷⁴ S. T. Bindoff (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1509-1558*, vol. 3 (London, 1982), p. 525; A. Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: The Peak Country 1520-1770* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 245.

⁷⁵ Based on accounting details in W. A. Carrington (ed.), ‘Selections from the Stewards’ Accounts Preserved at Haddon Hall for the Years 1549 and 1564’, *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* 16 (1894), pp. 62-81.

acquired as 'gifts' or via the huntsman. Another method of recording – one in which consumption was implied rather than stated, was favoured by the Newdigates. Despite this, the accounting was clear and methodical. The clerk at Arbury listed purchases of food separately from other household expenses, and this was done on a daily basis with the financial value entered in the right-hand column and the weekly totals given at the end of each Saturday. Although individual items with their weights and quantities were often recorded, on occasions some low-value foods – such as bread, milk and ale – were bracketed together as one expense. Gratuities for gift-foods, like those given by Radcliffe and Cecil, were listed along with miscellaneous expenses at the back of the book. The steward of Thomas Sackville also separated the purchases of foods from other expenses – although unlike at Arbury every item that was listed was assigned monetary value. The purchases, made twice weekly, were not, however, totalled up until the end of the year.

If these methods could be described as methodical and systematic – particularly the bookkeeping style of the clerk of Sir Henry Percy – the method employed by the Shuttleworths was at the opposite end of accounting spectrum. The approach at Smithills and Gawthorpe was to list all of the expenses from external suppliers together for each month without dividing them into expenditure categories. If monthly totals were calculated for the Shuttleworths, then this is not evident in the transcribed accounts book. A system not dissimilar to this, although slightly more disciplined in its organisation, was also used by the steward of George Vernon. In the light of reviewing the accounting methods used for analysing twelve noble and gentle households, it is apparent that their level of sophistication, and the detail that they provide, reflects to a large extent the varied status of the masters of the households. In consequence of being faced by an assortment of different accounting methods, a system was devised for this

thesis so that the mass of data from each set of accounts is projected onto spreadsheets with a single format. This format is a template from which consumption patterns can be compared and contrasted.

Firstly, when gathering data from accounts in which overall household spending was not compartmentalised, a list was made of all foods bought or otherwise acquired. Then, with food-related acquisitions separated, the unit price of each type of food was established by dividing their aggregate cost by the quantity or weight purchased;⁷⁶ the results were then entered onto a ‘prices’ spreadsheet. Fluctuations in the item’s market value could then be tracked over a period of time and compared to payments made at other geographical locations. Entries expressed as £ s d in the account books were converted to pennies on the spreadsheets – a format that is carried forward into the charts and tables displayed in this study. This method is used for two reasons: preparation and presentation; it facilitates the creation of graphic representation when transferring data from spreadsheets, and it generates a set of figures that are easily understood by readers unfamiliar with pre-decimal currency. The relationship between £4 3s 4d and £2 1s 8d is clearer, and therefore better conveyed, by referring to them as 1000d and 500d. In addition to the ‘prices’ spreadsheet, one more, called ‘spending’ was produced for each of the sets of household accounts; on these sheets the money spent on all items was entered for every week. This enabled the construction of a model of likely consumption, and allowed for a comparison – in percentage terms – between the spending on different foods at different times, and at diverse households. The method used is demonstrated by the example given in the appendix.

When analysing the information from both sets of comparative data together, it is possible to identify changes in the perception of luxuries by combining prices with

⁷⁶ For example: 6lb of raisins bought for 30d on 22 April 1637 and 3lb bought for 15d the following week indicates that the unit price of currants in April was 5d per lb.

frequency of purchase, time of purchase, and quantities bought. The latter is particularly useful in assessing who ate what if we know the size and makeup of the household and its guests; this information can sometimes be gleaned from the household accounts – from wage lists and guest lists. Where a type of food was purchased regularly on a daily or a weekly basis, it is assumed that the item was wholly or partly eaten during that period; but where long-life foods such as spices were bought only occasionally, no such assumption is made. The food allowances afforded to servants who were sent to market on business, and those paid to daily labourers, are occasional entries in some household accounts. Seldom do they list the fare supplied to tradesmen; but even when this aspect of remuneration is expressed in financial terms, it may be used in conjunction with the prices data to suggest a level of expected consumption. But as useful as they are, household accounts are not without their limitations.

Discrepancies in entries are a feature of early modern ledgers that, in modern-day England, would undoubtedly attract the attention of Revenue and Customs. There are occasional errors in arithmetic; but where these mistakes are identified they can be made good. However, purchase prices were occasionally scratched out and replaced by alternative monetary values – often higher than the original amounts; and these in turn, when added to the remainder of the purchases, do not always equate to the weekly expenditure total. In addition, weights of foods purchased were recurrently amended – sometimes downward; but unlike the original entry the new values do not correspond to the items' usual prices. This is an unfortunate but happily rare feature of the manuscript accounts of the Newdigate household. On the odd occasion when this is seen to have occurred, the dubious figures have been (re)adjusted so that they correlate to the weekly totals, thereby corresponding more closely to typical quantitative values. These

discrepancies may be interpreted in many ways, not least of which is the possibility of fraudulent bookkeeping – carried out either by the kitchen clerk or by someone else who was so motivated and had access to the daybook. A reason for this would be either to embezzle money en-route from the household steward to the food supplier, or to pilfer food to consume or sell it. Neither scenario presents an insolvable problem for the vigilant analyst; for, as has been shown, it is possible to see beyond erroneous entries when evaluating the whole. It is also the case that the diligence of some household heads, in their insistence upon careful recording in order to curtail such problems, sometimes provides the historian with additional information that can be cross-checked against other data.⁷⁷ One such meticulous head was the 6th Earl of Sussex. A mysterious disappearance of a quantity of ‘Mallaga’ wine during the third week of January 1638 becomes apparent by the use of a four-column bookkeeping system that lists quantities bought forward, purchased, consumed and carried forward. In this instance 11¼ gallons of the beverage went missing – it was neither recorded as having been consumed nor was it left over for the following week

The problem of constructing a model of consumption using incomplete accounting evidence – when unexplained gaps or sharp divergences in spending sequences go unexplained – is more serious. But as one set of household accounts represents only the financial transactions and supplementary details of the ménage to which it relates, the use of many sets helps to ‘iron out’ apparent irregularities by revealing trends in food consumption over a broader base. The omission of home-produced crops and livestock from some, but by no means all of the household accounts, however, need not be a problem in our quest for relating the consumption of luxury foods to cultural identity. In the case of the Newdigates of Arbury, the kitchen

⁷⁷ Heal, *Hospitality*, pp. 49-50.

expenses, which form the bulk of the account books that cover the periods from 1596 to 1625 and from 1636 to 1645, appear to include purchases made from both external sources and from their own demesne land. By keeping records in this way the clerk enabled the auditor to accurately account for income and expenditure. The Reynells of Forde, as we have seen, did not assign monetary value to home-produced livestock reaching the kitchen. But such acquisitions were noted; and both the payroll and the purchase of specialist equipment (such as a huckmuck for brewing) indicate that the basic consumables bought were possibly subsidiary supplies. Thus, whilst the Forde accounts understate overall consumption, they do not impede our quest for the consumption of luxuries.

There is, however, a problem in determining who within the household ate what. Despite this, the diet of the family and of the households' major servants is evident from purchases made when they were temporarily residing away from their food-producing estates. The purchase records on these occasions allow for an estimate to be made with regard to the food eaten by lower-level servants; this is achieved by comparing foods bought by the head of the household whilst he was away, with those purchased at home during the families' absence. But if the household accounts portray food consumption at the estates of the social elite, they say little about the types of food eaten by others, or of attitudes regarding perceptions of identity; it is for this reason that other sources of evidence are consulted.

Other sources of evidence

Luxuries as defined in chapter one could not, by and large, be produced on the estate. But although the purchases of many highly-esteemed foods appear in the household accounts of the well-to-do, this was not the case with all of them. Venison was not

available as an open-market commodity; but although the consumption of this meat is alluded to in many of the household accounts, other sources of evidence – such as royal proclamations laden with tone and attitude – relate it unambiguously to perceptions of cultural identity.⁷⁸ Although records of public institutions cannot always be categorised in this way, such establishments were sometimes temporary replacements for the domestic sphere; it is for this reason that their provisions hold the potential for a comparison to be made between consumption patterns there and at home.⁷⁹ In addition, some institutional reports are actually informative in respect of attitude regarding food consumption and social status; and communiqués between councillors, as will become clear, can emphasise such views. Minutes of council meetings – the parts of the discussions that were actually recorded – reveal much with regard to food distribution and consumption. Gifts presented to high-ranking dignitaries are listed, and details relating to mayoral banquets disclose the type of luxurious foods that were enjoyed by a diverse range of guests at official occasions. Codes regarding the doling of relief to the ‘deserving’ poor that included supplying food, and attitudes towards the needy who did not qualify for relief but who stole food, are also found in these records.⁸⁰

The attitude of those in authority towards people of lower status is also evident in assize records; and although depositions relating to relevant cases would produce a fuller picture, such court records contain examples of types of food allegedly stolen and the occupations and social status of defendants.⁸¹ Foods gained illicitly and the consequences thereof are compared to the gift-foods and the generous treatment

⁷⁸ For examples see: England and Wales, James I, *a proclamation for the apprehension of Edward Ekins* (London, 1624); *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. I (Oxford, 1973), p. 577 and vol. II (London, 1983), p. 89; *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (London, 1969), pp. 42-43.

⁷⁹ See: S. Mennell, A. Murcott and A. H. van Otterloo, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture* (London, 1992), p. 112.

⁸⁰ Examples include: *York Civic Records*, vol. 4 (ed.), A. Raine (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1946), p. 79; and Vol 8, p. 26, 59; P. Slack (ed.), *Poverty in Early-Stuart Salisbury* (Wiltshire Record Society, 31, 1975), p. 37.

⁸¹ These are found in *Calendar of Assize Records for Sussex, Kent and Surrey* (ed.), J. S. Cockburn (London 1945-95).

afforded to assize judges by the social elite of the towns hosting the trials. This information is obtained from an expense account drawn up by two judges; and the presentation of diary evidence suggests that luxury foods were expected as a matter of course by practitioners in the legal profession.⁸²

Diaries and correspondences can be a rich source of information relating to notable events, and sometimes even to daily consumption practices – providing their limitations are acknowledged. Letters, for example, can be written to portray a desired image – to present oneself in a favourable light, or they can be written to provoke a reaction from the recipient. Diaries and memoranda too were produced for a variety of reasons; there is therefore a need to consider the writers' possible agendas. Who were the intended addressees? Were they intended for eventual publication? Whatever reasons the authors had for committing their experiences to paper, and despite their limitations and their capacity to misinform, these sources of evidence – covering the entire period of this study – have the potential to contribute to the enquiry on many levels.⁸³ Some diaries and letters used in this study gain the perspective of women with regard to their travels and their socialising, and others shed light on local food-supply management and social administration. But whilst much of this communication commented on foods prepared for special occasions or given or received as gifts, they infrequently comment on issues relating to cultural identity. One merchant-diarist of the mid-sixteenth century, although evidently prone to exaggeration, opens a window on special events and the fare enjoyed at them by people of diverse degree.⁸⁴ When one

⁸² The foods that assize judges ate may be found in W. D. Cooper (ed.), *The Expenses of the Judges of Assize Riding the Western and the Oxford Circuits, temp. Elizabeth, 1596-1601, from the MS account book of Thomas Walmsley, one of the justices of the Common Pleas* (Camden Society Miscellany, original series, vol. 73, London, 1858), p. 13. Relevant diaries include E. M. Symonds (ed.), 'The diary of John Greene (1635-57)', *English Historical Review* 43 (1928), pp. 386, 388-89; W. Whiteway, *William Whiteway of Dorchester: His Diary, 1618-1635* (Dorset Record Society, 12, Dorchester, 1991), p. 105.

⁸³ For a discussion on the value of diaries see E. McKay, 'English Diarists: Gender, Geography and Occupation, 1500-1700', *History* 90:298 (2005), pp. 191-92.

⁸⁴ J. G. Nicholas (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Machyn* (Camden Society, original series, 42, 1848).

cuts through the apparent embellishments of his diary, the remaining detail is still revealing from a social history perspective. Another diary of a yeoman farmer who resided in Devon reveals his spending habits and lifestyle; this can be compared to the contents of the oft-quoted memorandum book of Henry Best who lived at the opposite end of the country.⁸⁵ Sometimes banal, often intriguing, these diaries and correspondences reveal the realities of life as the authors chose to record them; but identity was as much about expectation as it was about actuality.

As virtuous living was deemed to be important, and as society was structured by those who had a vested interest in the concept of order, instruction relayed via the pulpit on how one should live one's life was of no small concern to those who held power. Thus, sermons are potentially a rich source of evidence. Knowing one's hierarchical place and the duties and responsibilities that were associated with it was a recurring sermonic theme, especially in times of dearth-related rebelliousness. And although the cardinal sins of gluttony and greed were more of a food-related 'problem' to clerics than qualitative issues related to consumption, the virtues of abstinence and temperance that countered such evils sometimes included advice on refraining from feasting on 'delicacies'.⁸⁶ During times of food shortages legislative orders in the form of proclamations and Acts of Privy Council also have much to say on 'riotous consumption'; their tone and language are clearly indicative of expectations relating to food management and social responsibility.⁸⁷ These orders, and others relating to prices, duty of hospitality and the prevention of the 'inferior sort' from obtaining high-value foods, are analysed for their relevance to diet, luxury and identity.

⁸⁵ Snell and Stone (eds), 'A Devonshire Yeoman's Diary'; D. Woodward (ed.), *The Farming and Memorandum Books of Henry Best of Elmswell, 1642* (London, 1984)

⁸⁶ For one such example see: R. Mavericke, *Saint Peters chaine ...* (London, 1596).

⁸⁷ Examples include: *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, vol. 26 (London, 1902) 8 August 1596 and 25 December 1596; *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 3 (London, 1969), pp. 171-72.

Hierarchical identity was also a theme that occupied the thoughts of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century moralistic writers. William Harrison and Thomas Fuller, for example, gave accounts of the manners and food of ‘sorts’ of people that were, in essence, stereotypical; these and other works of the period are examined, along with the authors’ perspectives and agendas, to test the accuracy of commentaries on distinction through diet.⁸⁸ Although such books tend to generalise without going in to great detail, the impression that they portray is one of continuity rather than movement in values. But in order to corroborate the evidence gathered from analysing household accounts that suggest a dynamic nature to food preferences and consumption patterns, another source of evidence is utilised – that of cookery books.

When used on their own, cookery books are unreliable indicators of consumption. As they are suggestive rather than descriptive texts, we cannot safely infer that the ownership of a kitchen manual means that the instructive text was followed, either wholly or in part, in order to construct meals for the table. Nor can it be certain that the books were even read by their possessors. It is possible that printed works on culinary matters were acquired in many ways or were purchased for a variety of reasons, ranging from reference – perhaps to aid the preparation of a future special occasion – to an attempt at impressing visitors by strategically displaying the latest wisdom in cookery. But if the former justification for purchasing a book could indicate that its contents were in vogue, the latter rationale almost certainly did. Kitchen manuals that typically contained between 50 and 100 pages may have been too expensive for people on a modest income to buy; so at what market were these books directed? Although the social elite were able to attract the most experienced and skilful cooks, these employees may have bought kitchen manuals containing the latest culinary

⁸⁸ Edelen, (ed.), *William Harrison*; T. Fuller, *The holy state ...The profane state* (Cambridge, 1642).

fashions. But they were probably not visualised by publishers as the *primary* buyers of such works. A greater market would have been available to the publishers by pitching their products at the level of those who aspired to, or wished to emulate nobility. This potential market included successful traders, financiers and other professional people whose ranks were swelling and whose wealth was growing. The tapping of this market held the capacity to develop publishers' business, and their cookery books facilitated 'the process of social emulation'.⁸⁹

But did the books offer fashionable instruction? Arguably, it is reasonable to assume that one of the criteria for many publishers was the expectation of an acceptable financial return on their investments. If this is so, then even if the recipes had not been familiar to their 'authors' or publishers (for some were obviously rehashed, modified or plagiarised versions of earlier ones), as a general tendency towards novelty is apparent, we can be reasonably sure that the publishers were satisfied that their books either followed fashion, or that they had the potential to influence trends in consumption. The many recipe books published, especially in the second half of our period, increasingly called for subtle changes to the ingredients that enhanced 'traditional' dishes, and demanded new, sophisticated techniques in their manufacture.⁹⁰ Although these could be moderated or modified in the kitchen to suit personal tastes, such refinement, if followed, could bridge the consumption gap between middling and higher social groups. These trends, reflected by and influencing publishers, are analysed here; not on their own, but alongside household accounts in order to identify product-association and to indicate changes in the perceived value of foods and in their consumption.

⁸⁹ S. Mennell, *All Manners*, p. 64.

⁹⁰ Compare, for example, ingredients and methods required in: Anon., *A Propre new booke of cokery ...* (London, 1545), with those called for a century later in: Anon., *The ladies cabinet opened ...* (London, 1639).

There are possibly many other sources of evidence that could be utilised in a study such as this. Like cookery books, probate inventories have their uses and limitations. One restriction is that they deal with stocks rather than flows. Pots and pans can have many uses, and perishable foods left behind – on occasions when they appear in inventories – provide only a snapshot of a moment in time. But although it is unsafe to deduce that bequests of sugar tongs and a spice box, for example, indicates the consumption of sugar and spices, the analysis of a sequence of inventories may indicate trends, especially when examined alongside other evidence. As consumption is a dynamic process, household accounts have been prioritised during the course of this study; for they are better suited to measuring sequential movements in foodways.⁹¹

Archaeological evidence is another source that can help to determine food consumption practices on many levels. Whether examining human or discarded food remains, or analysing pollen counts or residual material in containers, archaeology can cut through the problem of evaluating literary texts written from within an upper-class social cocoon that masks a willing or unwitting bias. The interpretation of archaeological evidence is not, however, without its problems. An excavated vessel may not ‘belong’ to a community with which it seems to be associated, and although residual traces of edible material preserved in that vessel could be the remains of the last meal it held, they may also be unrelated matter. Collections of animal bones, as useful as they are for determining general flesh consumption trends (providing enough can be found for a meaningful comparison to be made), do not help us to identify to mealtime preferences. Despite such limitations, archaeological interpretation remains immensely important, especially when it is used with historical records; and it is in this role that archaeology aids our study. Whilst acknowledging the undoubted worth of these and

⁹¹ M. Overton, J. Whittle, D. Dean and A. Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (London, 2004), p. 87.

many other sources of evidence – art and drama to name but two – there is neither the time available nor the space on these pages to pursue these supportive sources. Their possibilities as collaborative sources will have to be the subject of future work.

In chapter two we look at diet, prices and status, and start our analysis of household accounts. But before we look at the foods that people were eating and were expected to eat, relating them to contemporary perceptions of cultural identity, we need to consider scholarly debate relating to the terms ‘luxury’ and ‘identity’ and clarify what we mean when we talk about them. These terms, starting with ‘luxury’, are defined next.

CHAPTER ONE

LUXURY AND IDENTITY

Before analysing and interpreting historical evidence, a definition of ‘luxury’ is required. In the first section of this chapter we review literature explaining both the traditional meaning of the word, and how that meaning has changed over time. After this there is a discussion about the current understanding of ‘luxury’, from which we develop a suitable working definition. In the second section we focus on the meaning of cultural identity; an overview of its characteristics as seen by modern writers, and what it meant in early modern England, precedes brief passages on aspects of identity that are relevant to this study. These elements include the consumption of food and table etiquette, exclusive and inclusive events, and fashions, emulation and imitation.

LUXURY

As the significance of the word has changed in recent times, reference to the consumption of ‘luxuries’ between 1540 and 1640 in an inquiry into class distinction and social rank and display based on food consumption, must be qualified by making a distinction between the present understanding of the word and its meaning to writers in the early modern period. An appropriate and consistent definition of the word validates its use so that food consumption and attitudes towards it may be identified and analysed.

The traditional meaning

Traditionally the connotation of ‘luxury’ was negative; it has characterised adverse qualities such as lechery, lustfulness and lewd and wanton behaviour. Associated in many texts, particularly in sermons, with rioting, whoredom and sumptuous living, a common denominator was excess – a thing or process beyond necessity. This continued

generally to be the case throughout the Tudor and Stuart periods. Not only did ‘luxury’ convey the meaning ‘unneeded’, but the damaging nature of luxury beginning with ‘the neglect of necessity and the forgetting of one’s place in the hierarchy’, and the consequences of its pursuit on people and on nations, is emphasised over and again. Although, as John Sekora noted, the ‘social and political meaning of luxury’ developed to signify ‘anything to which one has no right or title’, luxuriousness in the early modern period continued to be perceived as a process of societal erosion.¹ Regarded as a threat to the state, luxury was challenged by government on many occasions through means such as sumptuary laws; but legislators distinguished between ‘lust for false wealth and station’ on the one hand, and ‘natural and admirable expression of position and self-interest’ on the other. This duplicity, Sekora wrote, explains the position that whilst ‘all men were subject to the prohibitions of luxury in theory, in practice those in authority were free to do as they pleased’. Any contradiction, the author wrote, was ‘illusory to the powerful’; the lower orders – as ‘slaves to their passions’ – were subject to laws, whilst those refined by wealth and education were deemed virtuous and ‘subject only to God or their own conscience’.²

But does this view of dual standards, whereby those in authority could do as they pleased, stand up to scrutiny? And was ‘luxury’ used to describe the excesses of the lower orders only? There is no shortage of evidence that the powerful considered the insolence and unacceptable behaviour of their social inferiors to be ‘luxurious’.³ This, however, was also a term used by the Privy Council on at least two occasions in 1596 to describe the ‘excesse in dyett’ and the ‘ryotous consumption’ of the well-to-do

¹ J. Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought* (Baltimore, 1977), pp. 2, 23-28. For the meaning of luxury in the early modern period see also L. L. Peck, *Consuming Splendour: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 6-7; J. Appleby, ‘Consumption in early modern social thought’, in J. Brewer, and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 165-66.

² Sekora, *Luxury*, p. 52.

³ Examples are given by Sekora in *Luxury*, see p. 61.

during times of dearth.⁴ Thus, in theory at least, luxurious behaviour applied to everyone when communal harmony was perceived to be under threat. Notwithstanding its applicability to all as the occasion demanded, and its dismissal by some, John Sekora's definition of 'luxury' for the early modern period is accepted here: 'anything to which one has no right or title'. Although luxuries were not always sought by those who considered themselves godly, always – since The Temptation in Eden – they were gratifying in some way and thus held the potential to corrupt. Luxuriousness was therefore seen as a frailty that the dominant forces of English society thought could undermine the integrity of hierarchical structure.

The changing meaning

The French historian Fernand Braudel describes luxuries as desirable agents for gratification. They can represent not only superfluity, but also social success or 'the dream that one day becomes reality for the poor'. They can serve vanity, conformity, individuality or self-advancement.⁵ Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood have also noted that 'when society is stratified, the luxuries of the common man may become the daily necessities of the upper classes'.⁶ Although the context of luxury was at times fluid between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, as Woodruff Smith has noted, the change in the meaning of a 'luxury' over time related to the acceptability of obtaining it.⁷ This meaning was dependant upon social attitude towards consumption; coinciding, as it appears to have done, with the growth of an economic system that increasingly relied on ever-expanding consumerism. Whilst Linda Levy Peck shows that demand for foreign luxuries grew steadily after 1540, Lorna Weatherill, in writing about luxuries of

⁴ *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, vol. 26 (London, 1902) 8 August 1596 and 25 December 1596.

⁵ F. Braudel *Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800* (London, 1967), p. 122.

⁶ M. Douglas and B. Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (London, 1979), p. 84.

⁷ W. D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability: 1600-1800* (London, 2002), p. 69.

the late seventeenth century, warns that it is ‘deeply misleading’ to make a distinction between expenditure that was essential and expenditure that was not, especially when ‘considering people of middle rank’. For these people, the historian explains, status must be taken account of. A ‘necessity’ did not have to be something that was necessary to maintain life, for their expectations extended beyond basic material things; some items were ‘deeply valued’ and were therefore, ‘in some sense, necessary’. Even for the bulk of early modern society, Weatherill wrote, we need to take account of priorities when discussing necessities.⁸

This exploitation of England’s growing market economy in the seventeenth century may have lacked the ruthless intensity associated with trading in the twenty-first century, but an increase in the consumption of luxuries was clearly evident to some contemporaries.⁹ As early as 1621 there was debate between capitalists who argued that increased trade in luxuries created work and raised living standards of ordinary people, and moralists who advocated restraint in consumption.¹⁰ People with high moral values could be especially vocal in censuring consumption that extended beyond necessity; but despite this, Stephen Mennell believes, to those with puritanical leanings the quality of cooking was ‘not at all a common concern’.¹¹ We do not have the space to tackle how religious commitments affected food consumption, as such an endeavour would require an in-depth discussion; but in chapter three we will consider a few sermons showing that both quantitative gluttony *and* the consumption of delicacies was an issue to some Anglican and puritanical preachers.

⁸ Peck, *Consuming Splendour*, p2; L. L. Peck, ‘Luxury and War: Reconstructing Luxury Consumption in Seventeenth-century England’, *Albion* 34:1 (2002), pp. 2, 5; L. Weatherill, ‘The Meaning of Consumer Behaviour in Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century England’, in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 207.

⁹ For evidence of the expansion of capitalism during the late medieval and early modern period see K. Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, 2000), pp.22-23; C. Dyer, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (London, 1994), pp. 305-28; J. Whittle, *The Development of Agrarian Capitalism: Land and Labour in Norfolk 1440-1580* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 17-27, 305.

¹⁰ See for example T. Mun, *A discourse of trade from England vnto the East-Indies ...* (London, 1621).

¹¹ S. Mennell, *All Manners of Food* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 104-05.

High-value consumables were sought after in the mid sixteenth century – not only by the nobility and the gentry, but also by at least some people from middling social groups. But by the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the production of and trade in novel and fashionable goods had expanded to the extent that even those from lower social groups were buying ‘luxuries’. This was occasioned in some instances by economic forces. Supply-driven expansion which occurred due to a combination of factors (such as technological progress in the form of ‘microinventions’ and more efficient working practices), improved integration of the market and transport, and greater financial input all helped to increase ‘total factor productivity’ in some industries. This expansion on the supply side of the market facilitated the lowering of the retail price of certain imported luxuries such as sugar, pepper, tea and tobacco.¹² But an increase in the consumption of fashionable goods across much of the social spectrum also carries social explanations in the form of demand-driven dynamics. With an expansion of ‘the production of superfluities’, opposition to luxurious lifestyle appears to have diminished (or at least the voice of moralistic values was largely drowned by the clamour of consumerism) as innovations emerged and relatively inexpensive ‘copies’ of luxury goods were manufactured in innovative ways. Such luxurious novelties – including plated sugar tongs, tea trays and coffee pots – could be purchased for a variety of reasons other than simply to convey genteel status; these include (but are not limited to) aesthetics, imitation, emulation or personal preference with which the self could be identified.¹³ At this time ‘the defining characteristics of

¹² See for example: J. Mokyr, *The British Industrial: An Economic Perspective Revolution* (Oxford, 1999), p. 36; N. von Tunzelmann, ‘Technology in the Early Nineteenth Century’, in R. C Floud and D. N. McCloskey (eds), *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 274-75; N. F. R. Crafts, ‘Macroinventions, Economic Growth, and ‘Industrial Revolution’ in Britain and France’, *Economic History Review* 48:3 (1995) p.595; Appleby, ‘Consumption in early modern social thought’, pp. 162-65; S. W. Mintz, ‘The Changing Roles of Food in the Study of Consumption’, in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), p. 265.

¹³ Smith, *Consumption*, p. 69; G. Clark, *Symbols of Excellence: Precious Materials as Expressions of Status* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 82.

‘modern luxury’ were not so much “‘excess’, ‘corruption’, or ‘vice’”, but were seen by those engaged in commerce (and obviously by product end-users) as ‘convenience’, ‘utility’, ‘taste and style’.¹⁴

Whereas formerly the impulse for luxurious indulgence was seen as degenerate – characterised by the biblical Fall, and contrary to the maintenance of an ordered society, and was still thought of as ‘censurable’ by some at the end of the nineteenth century – nowadays it is fed by media advertisements generated by capitalist organisations expecting and requiring consumers to ‘trade up’.¹⁵ So how can a present-day luxury be defined? And is a ‘luxury’ vis-à-vis ‘necessity’ measurable economically? Is it something ‘which the individual will quickly cut down on in response to a drop in income’, as suggested by Douglas and Isherwood?¹⁶ The social theorist Christopher Berry, in discussing ‘luxury’ in general terms, focuses on the interplay between the notions of ‘needs’ and ‘desires’ and the nature of social order. Although it is something that is ‘positively pleasing’, or desirable because it is ‘refined’, he argues that the ‘mainstream economist’ view of a luxury being something that enjoys high income elasticity of demand (bought *after* necessities when there is an income surplus), ‘paints too simple a picture’. Maintaining social status by giving luxury goods priority over ‘basic needs’ is not unheard of; demand increases sometimes when prices are high due to ‘bandwagon effect’ and ‘snob effect’.¹⁷

Economists, in their quest for rationalising production and consumption, have produced many equations based on income and price elasticities in order to explain trends; but such mathematical expressions can only account for a luxury/necessity

¹⁴ M. Berg, ‘From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Economic History Review* 55:1 (2002), pp. 2-3, 6, 9.

¹⁵ H. Sidgwick, ‘Luxury’, *International Journal of Ethics* 5 (1894), pp. 1-16.

¹⁶ Douglas and Isherwood, *The World of Goods*, p. 69.

¹⁷ C. J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A conceptual and Historical investigation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. xi-xii, 3-12, 26-27.

relationship founded on the belief that financial cost is a primary factor in determining a product's acquisition.¹⁸ The observation made in 1899 by the socio-economist Thorstein Veblen – that consuming 'excellent goods' is a 'canon of reputability' – takes into consideration a less tangible criterion, as does anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's observation that luxuries can be complex signs – social messages – rather than merely things. In ascertaining the meaning of luxury these views remain valid; for there are many facets of consumption that continually redefine the boundary between luxury and necessity.¹⁹ Such a redefinition can be traced, for example, by following the moving threshold of poverty as society's attitude towards what constitutes an acceptable living standard changes. Once-superfluous electronic gadgetry is now considered indispensable in many kitchens; and conversely a necessity could be redefined as a luxury when demand outstrips supply – whether or not price movements are involved.

But current media advertisements clearly show that anything of saleable value – 'fashionable' or 'exclusive', low-priced or expensive – may be described as a luxury. Therefore defining luxury in the sense that it portrays a particular value, such as expensiveness or well-made, places too much emphasis on the consumption end of the commercial process. In today's marketplace the definer of a luxury is not so much the 'end-user' of a product as much as the company marketer; and the transience of something as a luxury is dependant upon a thing's ability to (continue to) generate profit.

¹⁸ See for example the different approaches in: M. Browning and T. F. Crossley 'Luxuries are Easier to Postpone: A Proof', *The Journal of Political Economy* 108 (2000), pp.287-99; F. Allen and G. R. Faulhaber, 'Rational Rationing', *Economica* 58 (1991), pp. 189-98; L. S. Bagwell and B. D. Bernheim, 'Veblen Effects in a Theory of Conspicuous Consumption' *The American Economic Review* 86 (1996), pp. 349-73.

¹⁹ T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, 1899), pp. 73-75; D. E. Robinson, 'The Economics of Fashion Demand', *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 75:3 (1961), pp. 376-80; Bagwell and Bernheim, 'Veblen Effects', pp. 349-52; A. Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 38; A. Warde and L. Martens, *Eating Out* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 15.

Insofar as food is concerned the distinction between a necessity and a luxury does not always equate to that between satisfaction and pleasure; although food per se is imperative, satisfying the need to eat can be pleasurable.²⁰ Archaeologist Marijke van der Veen, in asking when is food a luxury, wrote that products so described are ‘desired by many but attained by few’, and that ‘all agree that luxury goods are, by definition, outside the reach of mass consumption’. She suggests that Christopher Berry’s definition of luxury foods – those ‘that are widely desired because they offer refinement or qualitative improvement of a basic food and are a means of distinction because they are not yet widely attained’ – should be followed.²¹ As compelling as this is, it would seem to see luxury from the perspective of the purchaser at the dawn of the ‘modern consumer age’ in the mid-twentieth century. Today however, as we have suggested, the definer holds the key. Many advertisements attest to the view that a food is described as a luxury in order to engineer sales in a particular way. But we now need a definition that is fit for purpose in the historical context.

The historical context

In using the word ‘luxury’ historians need both to acknowledge the change in its meaning and endeavour to demonstrate consistency in its application. The traditional connotation is inappropriate when identifying high-value foods in order to explain cultural identity to a modern audience – not least because ‘necessity’ carried so many meanings. Unsuitable too is a definition that is based on modern marketing strategies within an economy built on consumer spending, as this would incorporate a spectrum of products and services too broad to be serviceable to the historian. So what is an appropriate definition? When defining early modern consumer behaviour Lorna

²⁰ Warde and Martens, *Eating Out*, p. 16.

²¹ M. van der Veen, ‘When is Food a Luxury?’, *World Archaeology* 34:3 (2003), pp. 407-08, 420.

Weatherill finds that ‘the word luxury is elusive’. It conveys, she writes, the idea of ‘costly and high quality goods or food’ and ‘some implicit judgement that luxuries are immoral’. When contrasted with ‘necessity’ it was something that could be done without – something intended to please rather than to meet real needs. She affirms the view of Douglas and Isherwood that there is also a valid cultural aspect of luxuries; ‘their ability to mark the rank of their owner and thus communicate social position’.²² Stephen Mennell too picks up on the cultural component of the relationship between luxury and necessity; expenditure, at least in court society, was ‘a necessary expression’ of rank and was apparent both quantitatively and qualitatively in the acquisition of goods.²³ Whilst Linda Levy Peck used the Oxford English Dictionary definition: ‘the habitual use of, or indulgence in what is choice or costly, whether food, dress, furniture ... sumptuous food or surroundings’, Christopher Berry sees luxury as ‘qualitative refinement’ – something that can be substituted by a lesser alternative.²⁴

The definition used in this thesis is also based on relative value. A luxury – whether it is something that is out of reach for many, or a necessity of the wealthy – is, for the purpose of assessing social rank and display in early modern England, a food that could be substituted by a *reasonable* alternative of smaller worth. It does not have to be ‘qualitatively refined’; ‘deare bought and farre fetcht’ goods that some of the wealthy apparently insisted on were sought because they were expensive or exotic.²⁵ Nor does a luxury need to be ‘desired by many’ so long as it is *attainable* by few – at least on a regular basis; thus, in assessing a food’s relative value, consideration is given to its price, availability, and frequency and occasion of use. Luxuries are

²² Weatherill, ‘The Meaning of Consumer Behaviour’, p. 207.

²³ Mennell, *All Manners*, pp. 112-13.

²⁴ Berry, *Idea of Luxury*, pp. 24-25; Peck, ‘Luxury and War’, p.5.

²⁵ C. Dalechamp, *Christian hospitality handled common-place-wise ...* (Cambridge, 1632), pp. 59-61.

distinguishable from ‘diet foods’ because the latter, such as basic bread and cheap beer, were consumed regularly – often on a daily basis.

But food items can be luxuries and diet items simultaneously. A ‘basic’ ingredient that has non-luxury status can become an intrinsic part of a luxury meal; this is because the meal can be prepared in a way that gives the dish added value – such as an egg in its omelette form. It could therefore be misleading to assume that an accounting week which shows only purchases of beef, eggs, butter and roots was devoid of a luxury meal. It is for this reason that our reference to luxury foods relates to high-value ingredients and to foods in their prepared state. It is also important to note that, as there was a negative connotation to ‘luxury’ during the early modern period, exotic foods were not desired by all. Godly radicals ostensibly did not desire that which they understood to be luxuries – viewing as they did consumption in excess of ‘necessity’ unfavourably. Foods designated here as ‘luxuries’ were thus consumed (or renounced) for a variety of reasons. They were also subject to change in status along with fashions, availability and price; the relationship between necessity and luxury may therefore be seen to have been in constant flux.

IDENTITY

If want and need were both fluid and interchangeable, then a person’s identity could also be marked by capriciousness and exhibit complex forms. When the individual interacts with others, she or he accesses many intersecting communal spheres that are constructed around their own peculiar cultural frameworks. The individual may thus, subject to desire and ability, assume some of the values or characteristics from within a broad range. As one cannot remain quarantined and isolated from outside influences,

self-image is influenced by many elements, one or some of which can dominate over others and any of which can be bought to the fore.²⁶

Identifying oneself in a particular way – such as a member of a specific community – furthers social categorisation; and, as Thomas Forde and George Tonander have noted, this in turn can encourage the formation of stereotypes. This formation may maximises self-esteem and at once create a means to distinguish one's fellowship from that of 'others'.²⁷ This also applied to early modern English society. Examples of people aspiring to gentle status or rethinking their religious allegiances also demonstrate that exposure to new communities could influence them to the extent that whilst affiliation to one community was strived for, disaffiliation to another was feasible or even required. As cultural identity was dependant upon interaction with others, we find examples of emulative or imitative behaviour and the wish to convey a desired image that reflected social alignment. Thus, Humfrey Braham wrote in 1568 'in these our daies, more then ever hath ben in times passed, an inordinate disdaine among most sortes of parsons hath risen, in that one sort can not stand contente with the state [and] degree of an other'. He went on to complain that whilst self-opinionated men of high degree found the 'lower sort' contemptible, the latter 'loketh to compare with his superior'. If Braham's observation was accurate, this apparent obsession with hierarchical identity ran like a thread through the fabric of society: the 'merchantman', for example, wanted to be considered worshipful whilst the 'handicraftsman' coveted 'the title of maistershippe'.²⁸ Such aspirations, if they were not to be confined to self-delusion, needed an appropriate display of opulence in order to lend them credibility; and presentation called for the acquisition of relevant goods.

²⁶ H. French with J. Barry, 'Introduction: Identity and Agency in English Society, 1500-1800', in H. French and J. Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 1.

²⁷ T. E. Ford and G. R. Tonander, 'The Role of Differentiation Between Groups and Social Identity in Stereotype Formation', *Social Psychology Quarterly* 61:4 (1998), pp. 372-73.

²⁸ H. Braham, *The institucion of a gentleman* (London, 1568), prologue.

The choice of consumable goods – where choice was possible – was perhaps not always definitive. Peripheral spheres of influence and membership of several intersecting communities could, within limits, impact upon choice of identity. A person could and did assume many roles; he or she therefore needed to present the self in many ways, and this called for the shaping of projected character. Diverse responsibilities could hold conflicting interests and called for a balancing act to be performed with regard to time, expectations and the type of people one was dealing with. Success demanded skills, and one of these, Martin Sökefeld writes, was the ‘ability to manage different identities’ and constantly adapt them so that they were fit for purpose.²⁹

Social mobility and changing economic fortunes meant that status and material wellbeing were also far from clear-cut. The income of nobles, for example, could fall below that of successful merchants and other urban businessmen who had gained ‘respectability’ and thus qualified for citizenship and participation in corporate life.³⁰ Status could be ambiguous in the countryside too; the fortunes of yeomen, for example, ranged to the extent that whilst some were little better-off than husbandmen, others considered themselves gentlemen.³¹ Although many influences were assimilated into the personality, and a person’s identity could take many forms, we focus mainly on that relating to portrayal of hierarchical position – taking onboard as many social groups as the sources of evidence allow for. We analyse not just food consumption, but also expectations of consumption in order to connect perceptions of diet with those relating to social status.

²⁹ M. Sökefeld, ‘Debating Self’, *Identity and Culture in Anthropology*, *Current Anthropology* 40:4 (1999), p. 424.

³⁰ T. Munck, *Seventeenth Century Europe: State Conflict and the Social Order in Europe 1598-1700* (Basingstoke, 1990), p. 139-40, 181.

³¹ The ambiguity of the status of yeomen is discussed in D. Cressy, *Society and Culture in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 29-42; D. M. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth: England under the Late Tudors 1547-1603* (London, 1992), p. 84; M. Campbell, *The English Yeoman under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts* (New York, 1942), pp. 20-63.

Food consumption as an identity marker

Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood wrote in 1979 that consumer goods, as suggested by anthropologists, have a dual role: they are at once functional and semiotic – being ‘coded for communication’. In accord with that view Jack Goody suggested three years later that we should reject restrictive investigations that are *either* functionalist (that is to say they stress the importance of the utility or purpose of things), *or* structuralist (a theory that emphasises the meaning of things).³² And whilst anthropologist Grant McCracken noted in 1988 that consumption ‘is shaped, driven and constrained at every point by cultural considerations’, sociologist Colin Campbell asserted in 1995 that consuming ‘can symbolise achievement, success or power’.³³ But specifically with regard to the things people eat, Mary Douglas suggested that if food is treated as a code, then ‘the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed’. It informs us, she noted, of ‘degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries’.³⁴

Shaped from birth and influenced by experiences and circumstances that surround them, then, people’s identities were not only complex but could also have been presented in various ways insofar as situations or resources would allow.³⁵ More than simply ‘markers of difference’, identities have been described by Martin Sökefeld as ‘building blocks’ with which one can construct an image of the self. As the self is not passive, these ‘blocks’ may be shaped as ‘their meaning is constantly being transformed’.³⁶ Thus, whilst the essence of whom the person was remained intact, the

³² J. Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 6, 13; Douglas and Isherwood, *World of Goods*, pp. xxi, 39.

³³ G. McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington, 1988), p. xi; C. Campbell, ‘The Sociology of Consumption’, in D. Miller (ed.), *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies* (London, 1995), p. 111.

³⁴ M. Douglas, *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London, 1975), p. 249.

³⁵ L. Grossberg, ‘Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?’, in S. Hall and P. Du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, 1996), p. 91.

³⁶ Sökefeld, ‘Debating Self’, pp. 422-424, 426.

projected image of personality may have constituted identity processes that included managing posture and attitude, and, not least, consuming specific foods in particular ways. ‘Status consumption’, therefore, could have occurred in order to project either a real or a false image of social class.³⁷

Sociologist Erving Goffman noted that when social inferiors ‘extend their most lavish reception for visiting superiors, the selfish desire to win favour may not be the chief motive’. The former may be attempting to put the latter at ease ‘by simulating the kind of world the superior is thought to take for granted’.³⁸ In addition, the well-to-do might choose to display their opulence or, for reasons such as conformity to religious expectations, choose to mask their prosperity. Thus, as Allison James has noted, stereotypical images of cultural identity can be contradicted by the choice of foods.³⁹ Although identity can be complex and difficult to unravel, identity itself, Berry writes, can reveal the meaning of luxury and necessity.⁴⁰ So if it is true that consumption is a focus for sending and receiving messages because demand is both determined by and manipulates social and economic forces, then communications with regard to identity should be decipherable at many levels.⁴¹

The problems associated with disentangling image from type, or separating a person’s predominant identity from those that are less influential, are considerable and should not be underestimated. For their resolution we need to examine people’s values – that is, what necessity meant to them. This is achievable by analysing the foods that they ate, the time at which they were eaten, and the context of and reasons for consumption. Our sources sometimes reveal this information, and examples of people

³⁷ Smith, *Consumption*, pp. 25-27.

³⁸ E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London, 1969), p. 17.

³⁹ A. James, ‘How British is British Food’, in P. Caplan (ed.), *Food, Health and Identity* (London, 1997), pp. 72-76.

⁴⁰ Berry, *Idea of Luxury*, p. 233-34.

⁴¹ See Appadurai, ‘Introduction’, p. 31.

stepping out from the nexus of their social circle in order to consume and identify with a related but peripheral community are offered and discussed in chapter four.

In addition to types of foods being associated with various groups of people, the quantities of food prepared was an indicator of social rank – either actual or implied. The lavish and conspicuous consumption of the well-to-do fulfilled a dual role. Firstly it marked stature by generating prestige, especially but not exclusively within the nobility as they tried to outbid each other in laying on luxurious entertainment at ‘ruinous expense’. Grant McCracken identifies this as the Elizabethan ‘spectacular consumer boom’ that paved the way for ‘new consumer patterns’. And secondly, the uneaten surplus food was, in theory at least (judging by official orders in times of dearth), given as alms to the poor.⁴²

Seating arrangements and the order in which people were served also reflected hierarchical position and thus signified cultural identity. Foreign observers noted that the monarch sometimes withdrew to his or her chambers to eat, or at least ate at a table on his or her own, and that the best foods were served to the top tables before any of the remainder was passed down. By Elizabethan times many of the social elite were also dining less often in their great halls, with lords sometimes vacating the high table in order to eat separately.⁴³ In the mid-sixteenth century the Willoughbys, a wealthy gentry family from Nottinghamshire, were eating ‘apart from the bulk of their household’.⁴⁴ And Edward Stanley’s son and heir, Henry, also laid down rules of the house that segregated diners according to their rank. In 1587 those identified as ‘the best sort’ were to be ‘placed together and accordinglie served’, whilst those described as

⁴² Fernandez-Armesto, *Food*, p. 119; McCracken, *Culture and Consumption*, pp. 11-15; *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, vol. 26 (London, 1902) 8 August 1596 and 25 December 1596.

⁴³ Observations made by E. van Meteren, ‘untitled’ (1558-1612); P. Hentzner, ‘Journey into England’ (1598); J. Fernandez de Velasco, ‘untitled’ (1604); J. Ernest, ‘untitled’ (1613), all in W. B. Rye (ed.), *England as seen by Foreigners* (London, 1865), pp. 72, 107, 119, 153. See also: D. Hartley, *Food in England* (London, 1954), p. 305; Mennell, *All Manners*, p. 57.

⁴⁴ M. Dawson, *Plenti and Grase: Food and Drink in a Sixteenth-Century Household* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007), p. 246.

‘the meaner sort’ were set apart. And although surplus or discarded food and beer was to be given to ‘the poor’ as alms, another distinction was made; those identifiable as ‘vagrant persons or maisterles men’ were expressly excluded from any sort of hospitality.⁴⁵ In 1577 the radical protestant and ‘critic of contemporary social ills’, William Harrison, also observed the tendency for the head of the households to eat separately and for the undeserving poor to be excluded from receiving alms.⁴⁶ Eating arrangements were subject to the same social-identity based segregation 50 years later. In 1635 Sir William Cecil attempted to establish a measure of frugality at his overspending Hatfield estate; amongst other measures he ruled that ‘inferior servants’ at the ‘lower end’ of the hall were to receive only ‘ordinary and cheapest provisions’. But this retrenchment did not extend as far as self-denial. Cecil decreed that his own table, accessed via a door at the top end of the hall, ‘be furnished rather with more than with less plenty and variety than heretofore’.⁴⁷

Table etiquette as an identity marker

A wide variety of exotic foods prepared in intricate ways was important to the elite in maintaining their cultural identity. But in chapter three it is argued that, from the late sixteenth century, cookery books aimed at the middling orders of English society were enabling their readers to bridge the culinary gap by using techniques that were becoming evermore sophisticated. And as successful middle-ranking families became more affluent, with some of them aspiring to gentle status or wishing to signify their wealth by consuming luxury foods, etiquette – which had long been an identity marker

⁴⁵ F. R. Raines (ed.), *The Stanley Papers, 2: The Derby Household Books* (Chetham Society, original series, vol. 31, 1853), pp. 20-22.

⁴⁶ G. Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison: The Description of England (1577)* (Ithaca, 1968), p. 126-27; N. Tyacke, ‘The Ambiguities of Early-Modern English Protestantism’, *The Historical Journal* 34:3 (1991), p. 10.

⁴⁷ L. M. Munby (ed.), *Early Stuart Household Accounts* (Hertfordshire Record Society, 1986), pp. ix-x.

of the educated rich – may also have assumed more importance to the newly affluent. Meaningless without spectators, table manners – a medium for conveying an image of elegance – had been adopted by those of high degree in order to ‘distinguish them from those of inferior rank’.⁴⁸ Although politeness was associated with gentility, and ‘marked distinctions in the social order’, both Anna Bryson and Lawrence Klein note that it was marketed in books aimed at a wider audience in the eighteenth century. The former writer points out that not many books giving ‘extensive detailed prescription’ were published in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the latter author taps sources after 1660 to demonstrate that manners mattered to those of middling rank in the 1700s.⁴⁹ Despite this, sixteenth and early seventeenth century manuals on courtesy – whether they were ‘heavily based on foreign works’ or whether they were translations – *were* published as profit-generating ventures in England, in English, and were clearly aimed at a large and growing middling order.

The schoole of vertue, published in 1619, and *The schoole of good manners*, published in 1609 and again 20 years later, enabled aspiring gentlemen and their offspring to bridge the cultural divide in the field of etiquette.⁵⁰ Whilst ‘*virtue*’ was deemed ‘fit for all children to learne, and the elder sort to obserue’, ‘*good manners*’ was also ‘very necessarie’ for the education ‘both of old and young’. Examples of courtly conduct cited in these books – such as the correct use of napkins, composure and countenance, and moderation in eating – showed their readers that they too could appear to be eminent by ostentatiously displaying decorum. Some books assumed that coarse manners epitomised those of low esteem, and William Harrison’s generalisation – that

⁴⁸ N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 265-72; Veblen, *Theory*, p. 75; J. Gillingham, ‘From Civilitas to Civility’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 12 (2002), pp. 267-89.

⁴⁹ A. Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 43, 75; L. E. Klein, ‘Politeness for Plebs’, in A. Bermingham and J. Brewer (eds), *The Consumption of Culture 1600-1800* (London, 1995), pp. 362-77.

⁵⁰ R. West, *The schoole of vertue* (London, 1619); W. Phiston, *The schoole of good manners* (London, 1609 and 1629).

although there was little to distinguish the nobleman, merchant and London artificer in the food that they ate, one could tell them apart by their ‘subtlety and craft’ at the table – shows that etiquette could also offset gains made by those of lesser rank who were now acquiring a varied diet.⁵¹

Identifying ‘others’

Throughout the period people appear to have held clear ideas of not only the types of foods that they and their households should eat, but also, as is shown below, the types of food that were deemed appropriate for others. The perceived suitability of certain types of foods – although subject to factors such as age, health and occupation – was increasingly dependant upon hierarchical considerations. Contemporary generalisations with regard to status, diet, and table manners, whether they were uttered by William Harrison or by protestant preacher Thomas Fuller at the end of our period, could be misleading.⁵² Stereotyping, then as now, can contradict the reality that is revealed by a diversity of evidence.⁵³ If the sentiment that food is supposed to mark out cultural identities is true, the problem we might face is defining the identity of the subject. For instance, the younger ‘sort’ – often seen as fickle, more likely to be masterless, and having a tendency to eat at inappropriate times, and the ‘meaner sort’ of husbandmen and ‘country inhabitants’ – who were supposed to eat differently to their superiors, were neither uniform in their aspirations nor always incapable of posturing.⁵⁴ Equally misleading, but with reference to the differences between life at court and in the country, was the fictitious dialogue written by poet Nicholas Breton. Yet, in comparing

⁵¹ Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, pp. 131-33.

⁵² Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, pp. 133, 140, 144; T. Fuller, *The holy state ...The profane state* (Cambridge, 1642), pp. 113-121;

⁵³ A. James, ‘How British is British Food?’, in P. Caplan (ed.), *Food, Health and Identity* (London, 1997), pp. 72-76.

⁵⁴ P. Griffiths, ‘Masterless Young People in Norwich’, in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London, 1996), pp. 46-186; Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, pp. 131-33.

rather than simply contrasting, he at least acknowledged the similarities as well as the differences between consuming patterns of the elite and their country ‘cousins’. Like courtiers, those living in the country, he said, also have ‘holsome fare, full dishes, white bread, and ... faire linen’; and those inhabiting rural areas enjoy ‘delicate sweets’ and cherries too.⁵⁵ But whatever situation people were in, there were many ways in which they could mark their chosen identity through the medium of foodways, and there were various methods that they might employ to create a favourable impression of themselves.

Food events as social markers

Although the nature of hospitality and the giving of gift-foods was changing, as Felicity Heal and Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos have shown, they continued to be important in the marking of identity.⁵⁶ Hospitality was a ‘major aspect’ to at least some of the gentry; and from the earliest times this and conviviality were processes used in projecting image and building and maintaining relationships. They could both demonstrate to the self, God and others altruistic intention, and simultaneously create ‘social shackles’ by keeping dependents in their place.⁵⁷ But the same occasions that marked esteem and identity in a positive way were also inherently exclusive; they could thus be utilised to deny access or to reject anyone perceived as unwanted ‘outsiders’.

Heads of elite households whom, one might suppose, had little need to portray their obvious cultural identity, still wished to impress upon guests and servants alike their hierarchical station. One method used to keep an orderly house, and to ensure staff

⁵⁵ N. Breton, *The court and the country* ... (London, 1618), fol. a4.

⁵⁶ See ‘Food in early modern England’ in this thesis’s Introduction for a review of the works mentioned. See also Chapter Four on gift-foods and special occasions.

⁵⁷ F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (London, 1994), pp. 139-40; Fernandez-Armesto, *Food*, p. 119; J. Walter, ‘The Social Economy of Dearth in Early Modern England’, in J. Walter and R. Schofield (eds), *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 79,128.

received signals of their lords' supremacy, was for the chief clerks to emphasise the heads' absolute authority in matters relating to the preparation and serving of food. In 1568 the household regulations produced by Edward, 3rd Earl of Derby, stated that only specific personnel may be present in the kitchen when his lordship's food was being prepared. The reason for this was perhaps due to his concern about quality control; but it could also have been due to a fear of poisoning for, as discussed in chapter four, the use of toxic substances as a weapon appears to have been a real concern to the elite in the late sixteenth century.⁵⁸ Although the transmitted message was one of power and importance – the cooks were warned of the consequence if they did not 'obey all and every the order' – the received signal may well have been one of an authoritarian who had reason, real or imagined, to be suspicious of others' hostility towards him.

Extravagant expenditure on exotic foods, whether it was seen as appropriate or 'frowned upon' as an undue display of wealth,⁵⁹ required an audience to provide meaning. The company that one kept whilst eating – whether it was life-cycle events, seasonal festivities or spontaneous occasions – could mean more than simply hospitality or sociability. Whilst household accounts show that guests were regularly accommodated at the estates of the wealthy, letters and diaries indicate that dining occasions were opportunities for hosts to portray themselves in a particular way, and were used for the purpose of networking.

In chapter four it is shown that women and men attending company feasts and civic banquets were, by their presence, associated with communities that at least once a year shared common interests and special foods. These foods were luxuries that exceeded some of the partakers' dietary expectations, and were arguably furnished in

⁵⁸ Raines (ed.), *The Stanley Papers*, pp. 8-9; Hentzner, 'Journey into England', in Rye (ed.), *England as seen by Foreigners*, p. 106.

⁵⁹ A. Warde, *Consumption, Food and Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture* (London, 1997), pp. 102-03.

order to develop, negotiate or reinforce relationships within exclusive circles. Relationships could assume many forms. Authority could be asserted by the lordly in a number of ways that included adopting an overbearing stance and employing insidious cunning. And their social inferiors' demonstrations of allegiance, or deference, or expression of disaffection, could take place to either convey or mask true feelings. This communicative process could be imparted effectively at food events that included not just meals, but also the giving and receiving of gift-foods; and these events presented an opportunity to transmit another type of message.

Fashions, emulation and imitation

People who aspired to an elevated social position could use commensality to socialise and thus pursue self-advancement by transmitting signals about suitability.⁶⁰ This could involve eating appropriate foods conspicuously and felicitously. Accommodation at the Inns of Court in London, for example, provided an arena for aspiring gentlemen who had received the necessary education to mix with 'men of good manners and conversation' at the hub of English civilised society. It also enabled them to buy fashionable foods at 'the locus of luxury shopping'. In addition to these benefits, training to become a lawyer could be seen as a 'socio-economic escalator' by the 750 or so young gentlemen who, in the late sixteenth century, entered the profession each year.⁶¹ But a display of affluence could sometimes signify imitation rather than emulation.

⁶⁰ See for example: Peck, *Consuming Splendour*, p. 3; R. Mackenney, *Sixteenth Century Europe: Expansion and Conflict* (Basingstoke, 1993), p. 96; F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series, 30 (1948), p. 38.

⁶¹ W. R. Prest, *The Inns of Court Under Elizabeth I and the Early Stuarts* (London, 1972), p. 21; W. R. Prest, *Rise of the Barristers: A Social History of the English Bar, 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1986), p. 129.

Establishing or maintaining image through imitation could make a statement about affiliation to a kind. This appears to have been important to some people in early modern England, thus examples of fashion consciousness in the sixteenth century are not difficult to find. The perceived need to repeat over and over again sumptuary laws that were enacted to regulate and reinforce social hierarchies, and contemporary observation, demonstrate that imitation was widespread. Even in Cornwall – hardly the focal point for seventeenth-century trendsetters – it was claimed that gentlemen’s purses might be over-emptied by their wives’ inclination to buy modish goods.⁶² With regard to food, although apathy, reluctance to part from tradition, illiteracy, or material deficiency may have slowed fashion-related change in the countryside according to Stephen Mennell, this was by no means universal.⁶³ The growth in popularity of hitherto exclusive items amongst the non-elite that convinces Sidney Mintz of the role of imitation and emulation in marking people’s identities as they tried to raise their social status after 1650 was already happening long before that.⁶⁴ Colin Spencer and R. A. Houston have indicated that the social aspirations of middling-status groups both in Tudor England and on the continent was manifest in their ‘emulation of foods eaten by the elite’ and in their conspicuous consumption.⁶⁵ But although they do not elaborate on this, the sorts of foods that were fashionable between 1550 and 1600 have been discussed recently by Joan Thirsk. They included fruits, vegetables and an array of imported delicacies; and, as the historian has shown, there was no shortage of English and continental cookery

⁶² For concern about sumptuary see, for example: England and Wales, Elizabeth I, *By the Queene, the Quenes Maiestie callyng to her good remembrance howe well thys realme is furnished with good lawes and orders, for redresse of many enormities ...* (London, 1562). For contemporary observation with regard to fashionable consumption see: R. Carew, *The survey of Cornwall* (London, 1602), p. 64.

⁶³ Mennell, *All manners*, pp. 66, 128-29.

⁶⁴ Mintz, ‘Changing Roles’ pp. 265-66.

⁶⁵ C. Spencer, *British Food: An Extraordinary Thousand years of History* (London, 2004), p. 101; R. A. Houston, ‘Colonies, Enterprises, and Wealth: the Economies of Europe and the Wider World’, in E. Cameron (ed.), *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 161-62.

books offering advice on how to prepare them in different ways.⁶⁶ As we will see, these books were aimed largely at middling-status people; and this emulation or imitation of the self-conscious nobility ‘heightened concern’ as social distinction expressed through food consumption diminished.⁶⁷

In chapter three we shall show how people could emulate their social superiors in preparing or adapting both traditional and new fashionable dishes. For those who could not acquire ‘genuine’ ingredients, help was at hand. Counterfeit or ‘mock’ foods were a feature of cookery books that facilitated imitation of the well-to-do; inexpensive and readily accessible items were named substitutes for those of high-value – never vice versa.⁶⁸ Although such imitation would not have beguiled a gentleperson with refined taste, and was unlikely to be used in a display of conspicuous consumption when social superiors were present, foods like these were luxuries to their middling-status consumers and were expressive of self-identity. Their value lay in vanity; whilst consuming inconspicuously they fulfilled the desire for self-satisfaction – to imitate the eating habits of people of means as far as they were reasonably able to do so.

Consumption of luxury foods by those of relatively low status – whether for reasons of ambition, self-gratification or image-projection, or because of acquired taste, reduction in price or increased availability of the product – could have the effect of blurring hierarchical boundaries. In a deeply stratified society in which social ranking and image was important, this raises the possibility that status-sensitive individuals or groups would feel the need to respond in order to redress the status quo. This could be attempted in one of two broad ways. One way was by attempting to prevent those of

⁶⁶ J. Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London, 2007), pp. 27-57.

⁶⁷ K. Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, CA., 2002), p. 216.

⁶⁸ See for example: Anon, *A good huswifes handmaide ...* (London, 1594), p. 17; A. W. *A book of cookrye Very necessary...* (London, 1591), p. 21; J. Murrell, *A nevv booke of cookerie ...* (London, 1615), fol. 22; J. Partridge, *The treasury of commodious conceits ...* (London, 1573), chap. 2.

lower status from consuming at levels deemed to be above their station, or at least limiting their access to high-value goods as far as this was possible. A second way was to redefine boundaries of consumption by acquiring more exclusive products or techniques, thus broadening the gap by creating new markers of social differentiation. Examples suggesting that both of these image-maintaining methodologies were employed between The Reformation and the Civil War are given in the chapters below.

Identity was thus an important aspect of life in the Tudor and early Stuart periods. Accentuating one's place in relation to others was of no minor concern for the elite within a society that was underpinned by social stratification. Evidence suggests that both they, and at least some people of lower rank, were motivated by aspirations of betterment. This was manifest in their image-projection and by upgrading their consumption to the best of their ability. Success was measurable to an extent by the level of consumption of luxury foods and by what was understood to constitute necessities. Although there was a transient nature to luxury foods – some more fleeting than others – they could be defined as such by the high value placed on them when they were either difficult to obtain or were novel; by their appearance at special events and their value as gift-foods; and by their high prices. It is the latter category that is discussed in the next chapter – *Diet, Prices and Status*.

CHAPTER TWO

DIET, PRICES AND STATUS

This chapter considers the differences in diet between various social groups, and examines the price factor – one of the defining characteristics of luxury – in influencing the choice of food consumption. In analysing the association between food prices and the construction and expression of identity, we first consider the sort of diet that was envisaged by some for labourers and poor people. Next we look at the likely fare of servants who were employed by wealthy landowners, and then we turn our attention to the types of food eaten by affluent yeomen. The second section of this chapter examines the diet of the gentry and aristocracy. Staple foods are looked at first, then status-marking high quality/priced variants of basic foods, and finally the consumption of exclusive foods. We conclude by showing that the diets of various social groups were influenced by notions of suitability based partly on price, and that these foods helped to define and mark the social standing of their consumers.

THE DIET OF THE NON-GENTRY

The poor and labourers

For the very poor, like the very rich, the price of foods was not a primary concern regarding affordability. Surviving on handouts and acquiring sustenance by employing various non-pecuniary strategies, the indigent were not subject to market forces – at least not directly. But for waged labourers, although prices were not the only criterion for determining diet – as personal taste, acceptability and identity all had their part to play – the financial cost of food was an important factor. The income of labourers' households may have comprised more than the wages outlined in the introduction; and some workers, like the employees of Henry Best who is discussed below, grew and

possibly caught food.¹ But even though they had ‘a great diversity’ of incomes and lifestyles, the diets of waged workers who were not servants of the gentry were generally less varied than those of their social superiors, and, as Joan Thirsk has shown, more subject to regional differentiation and seasonality of supply.² Unlike Thirsk’s work, however, our concern here is with the diet considered by the wealthy to be *appropriate* to manual workers – the foods with which and by which they were identified. In order to determine what this was we analyse the provision of food by institutions to their dependants, and royal proclamations advising employers on the tabling allowances that could be provided as part-payment of wages. By comparing the former with the food that the latter could buy, we can arguably construct a model of the fare deemed appropriate to this ‘sort’ of person.

Although public institutions provided food that may have contrasted with the customary fare experienced by an individual, the ‘uniform living environment’, where autonomy was limited and homogeneity was expected, may inform us as to the expectations of the powerful for the types of food deemed appropriate for those of lesser rank.³ The food allocations of some public organisations, however, are not without their limitations in an investigation such as this. The Poor Laws enacted at around the turn of the seventeenth century required parishes to provide the ‘deserving poor’ (as opposed to sturdy beggars and self-determined masterless men) with the most basic of necessities. This requirement could be met in many ways, one of which was through charitable provisions doled by the almshouse. Yet even before the enactment, the allowances of 4d to 8d or the bread and ale allocated to dependants of Bablake

¹ D. Woodward (ed.), *The Farming and Memorandum Books of Henry Best of Elmswell, 1642* (London, 1984), p. xl.

² For diversity of labourers’ incomes see A. H. Smith, ‘Labourers in Late Sixteenth Century England: A Case Study From North Norfolk’, part 1, *Continuity and Change* 4:1 (1989), pp. 13-15; for the regional aspect of labourers’ diets see J. Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London, 2007), pp. 215-26.

³ S. Mennell, A. Murcott and A. H. van Otterloo, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture* (London, 1992), p. 113.

almshouse in the parish of Holy Trinity, Coventry in 1554-57, and the dole of 6d to 12d per week given to the poor at Hadleigh almshouse in Suffolk in 1579, were intended only to supplement other forms of voluntary charity that may have expanded the range of food available to the indigent.⁴

Another institution that is of limited value in assessing what constituted diet-food is the pesthouse. Given that plague was not a socially selective disease, the advice pertaining to pesthouse provisions not only allowed for a variety of edibles that fell within the parameters of medical reasoning relating to the virulent, reoccurring epidemics, but also a broad range of foods that encompassed the ‘necessities’ of many ‘sorts’ of people. In 1603 a book on the plague that was written by Thomas Lodge considered salt-meats, beef, pork, spices, and pond-fish as inappropriate for sufferers of the disease. He promoted instead the feeding of the infected with light meats such as veal, lamb, chicken, capon, pullet and, in moderation, sea-fish.⁵ And in Elizabethan Ipswich, those who were infected were provided with a range of basic foods and ‘delicacies’.⁶ Thus, in theory, plague victims from all social strata could find allowable foods befitting their statuses when advice was heeded in hospitals and pesthouses. In practice, this meant also that delicacies may have been available to the poor. In 1624, when Thomas Smyth (a future MP for Bridgewater) was studying at Oxford, he wrote to his father residing at Ashton Court in Bristol saying that poor people ‘are growne so wickedly cunning as to feign themselves infected as to goe to the pest-houses, because

⁴ Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Record Office, DR10 / 1859; M. K. McIntosh, ‘Poverty, Charity and Coercion in Elizabethan England’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35:5 (2005), pp. 458-59, 470.

⁵ T. Lodge, *A treatise of the plague ...* (London, 1603), chapter 7.

⁶ M. Pelling, *The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (London, 1998), p. 45.

they are sure to be there well relieved with victuals'.⁷ Even if this was an exaggeration, such organisations are probably dubious indicators of an 'ordinary' diet.

From his analysis of accounts, Jack Drummond found that the diet at institutions such as hospitals and houses of correction in the late sixteenth century consisted of pork, mutton, beef, herrings (salted or pickled), rye bread and beer.⁸ But even Bridewells, established in order to combat 'anti-society' by correcting 'the faults of a servant class', housed moral offenders who were 'drawn from the ranks of the established citizenry'.⁹ And to complicate the matter further, dietary provisions at Bury's Bridewell at least, were dependant upon the level of cooperation of inmates.¹⁰ Prisoners' food, of course, could also be supplemented by well-wishers or relatives. In 1579, for example, an order made by York Council forbidding any visitor to supply prisoners with 'excesse of wyne, drinke or vitailles' suggests that supplementation here was not hitherto uncommon.¹¹ Dietary provisions for prisoners in the mid-sixteenth century conformed to a 'general convention' that recognised social status, even if, as Archbishop Cranmer and Bishops Latimer and Ridley awaiting execution at the Bocardo prison in Oxford during 1554-55 found, it was significantly below their normal expectations. The prevailing foods supplied here by the keepers, depending on 'personal tastes', accommodation of religious sanctions, and seasonality, were, in three of four special dishes per meal, bread and ale; beef, mutton and veal; rabbit, chicken, ling, oysters, eel and butter. These high-ranking ecclesiastical prisoners also occasionally enjoyed a variety of other foods that included spiced cake, fruit, small wild

⁷ A. Bantock, *The Earlier Smyths of Ashton Court From Their Letters 1545-1741* (Malago Society, Bristol, 1982), p. 71.

⁸ J. C. Drummond, *The Englishman's Food* (London, 1957), p. 56.

⁹ See for example: M. J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c 1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 111; J. Innes, 'Prisons for the Poor: English Bridewells, 1555-1800', in F. Snyder and D. Hay (eds), *Labour, Law and Crime: An Historical Perspective* (London, 1987), pp. 47, 60.

¹⁰ A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640* (London, 1985), pp. 165-69.

¹¹ *York Civic Records*, vol. 8 (ed.), A. Raine (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1952), p. 11.

birds, fresh freshwater fish and wine.¹² ‘Enjoyed’ might also be the appropriate term for Henry Percy’s diet whilst confined as a prisoner to a suite of rooms in Martins Tower within the Tower of London half a century later. £800 annually was spent on his provisions here – and he had his own personal chef.¹³

There are other institutional records that, with reservation, are more helpful. Financial remuneration afforded to army soldiers recruited from the lower ranks of society, and the food that they ate whilst being billeted, are an imprecise indicator as to the types of food they usually ate. This is because variables such as additional resources, gifts, and how they chose to spend their money, render any approximation conjectural. However, the fare that their social superiors considered *appropriate* can be discerned. In 1599 the Earl of Nottingham issued a proclamation setting the amount payable by footmen and horsemen for food supplied to them by victuallers and innkeepers in the vicinity of London. Foot soldiers paid at the rate of 8d a day were to be charged a maximum of 3½d for dinner or supper. For this sum caterers were expressly ordered to furnish their clients with wheaten bread and beer; along with these provisions they were also to receive either boiled or roasted beef, or mutton or veal. On non-flesh days the bread and beer was to be accompanied by either saltfish or ‘ling’, and eggs, butter and legumes. Apart from veal, these were the cheapest and most basic foods one could buy. The earl also decreed that in and around London a loaf of wheaten bread was to be sold for 1d, cheese and beef for no more than 1½d per lb, mutton for 20d per quarter, butter for 4d per lb, and small beer for ½d per quart.¹⁴

These, however, were market prices for raw materials. Victuallers who purchased them needed to recuperate the expense of processing the foods and generate a

¹² C. I. Hammer, ‘A Hearty Meal? The Prison Diets of Cranmer and Latimer’, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30:3 (1999), p. 653-80.

¹³ G. R. Batho, ‘The Wizard in the Tower, 1605-21’, *History Today* 6 (1956), pp. 344-47.

¹⁴ Nottingham, C. Howard, *By the Lord Generall ...* (London, 1599).

profit from their income. It is therefore clear that Charles Howard expected the diet of footmen, who were drawn from the lower ranks of society, to be restricted in terms of variety and limited in quantity. The greater pay that horsemen, lieutenants and captains enjoyed meant that in theory they had more choice at the table.¹⁵ Foods that Howard insisted should to be made available to army personnel, but which did not feature on the recommended diet list for 8d soldiers, included rabbits, pigeons and capons.¹⁶ Gentlemen officers who were sourced from higher social ranks could therefore not only afford to be distinguished at the dining tables in London, but were actively facilitated in doing so.

Howard's order of 1599, effectively determining the hierarchical identity of soldiers through the regulation of wages and the provision of food, was not an isolated one. The diets envisaged for military men of various rank by their social superiors (and by implication diets reasonably acceptable to them as civilians) can be reconstructed from other proclamations. In 1588, the Queen had issued a similar decree relating to soldiers' victuals within 20 miles of London. The maximum allowable market prices for some food items were slightly more in 1599 than they had been in 1588; and at the later date victuallers were allowed to charge ½d more for each meal. But the daily wage for foot soldiers (assuming they received wages, for some of them were reported to have sold army-issued weapons in order to cover alleged non-payment) was pegged at the same rate, despite significant price inflation during the mid-1590s.¹⁷

The Earl of Nottingham's perception as to what soldiers drawn from various ranks of society should eat corresponded closely to that of York City Councillors half a century earlier. This was also similar to the actual provisions supplied to the forces of

¹⁵ For their pay see: C. Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish Wars* (London, 1950), pp. 60-61.

¹⁶ Nottingham, *By the Lord Generall*.

¹⁷ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. 3, (London, 1969), pp. 19-21; England and Wales, Elizabeth I, *By the Queene. The Queenes Maiestie being giuen to vnderstand ...* (London, 1588).

the Henry VIII stationed at Boulogne in the same year – 1545. In York captains were to receive ‘honeste fayr’ for 4d a meal, whilst gentlemen officers were to pay 3d, soldiers 2½d, and servants 2d. And in Boulogne the King’s purveyor supplied the garrison with malt and hops to make beer, salt beef and ‘beefes alive with ther shepe’, cheese, butter, bacon, stockfish and salted herrings.¹⁸ At this time the theoretical maximum market prices chargeable for 1lb of the following foods were: beef, ½d; mutton, 1d; pork, ¾d; and best butter, 2d.¹⁹ If variety was limited, then quantitatively soldiers’ diets were perhaps adequate. In 1563, on the 16 ‘flesh days’ each month, the beef ration for English soldiers based in Ireland was 1½lbs per day. Although this amount had risen to 2lbs in 1600 (or alternatively soldiers could be provided with 1lb of pork), meat was only issued on one day each week. On the other days either ½ lb of butter along with peas or porridge, or 1lb of cheese was supplied. In addition to these items 1½ lbs of bread was provided every day.²⁰

On the basis of this evidence it would appear that to the decision-making elite there was a direct correlation between the status of service personnel and the status of their edible provisions, with little regard being paid to individual preferences. In asking whether soldiers, as civilians, would have eaten such foods, or whether they would have identified themselves with finer fare, consideration needs to be given to the reasons that lay behind the controllers’ choice of foods supplied. They had an incentive to feed the defenders of their masters well, but provisions could have been based on health considerations, on economic factors, or on perceived choice. The latter two could perhaps have been combined in order to accommodate a measure of acceptability within a determined budget. To a point soldiers were able to negotiate for their preferred food.

¹⁸ Muller, J. A (ed.), *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 141-45; *York Civic Records*, vol. 4 (ed.), A. Raine (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1943), p. 133.

¹⁹ England and Wales, Sovereign, Henry VIII, *A proclamation ordained ...* (London, 1544).

²⁰ Falls, *Elizabeth’s Irish Wars*, p. 63.

In 1545 pickled herrings, apparently suggested as a constituent part of fish day meals, were deleted from the soldiers' menu 'bycause they like it not'.²¹ This would also appear to be the case almost a century later for sailors.

Naval supplies as a source for indicating contemporary understanding with regard to food and cultural identity differs from those of other institutions in an important way. Unlike army, hospital, educational, or prison provisions, those assigned to sailors when they were far from land could neither be complemented by gifts nor supplemented by purchasing preferred foods. The fare that was supplied to sailors, therefore, ideally needed to be acceptable – even if it would not have fulfilled their expectations as civilians. And when provisions were deemed unsatisfactory or disagreeable, sailors could be forceful in venting their feelings. On returning to Plymouth following the mission to Cadiz in 1625, for example, the sailors reported that their 'victuals were very ill saved and spoiled; by reason whereof they not only felt want, but much sickness'. Their food, they claimed, was 'corrupt and stinking' due to the negligence of suppliers.²² But what were these victuals?

Documentary and archaeological evidence indicates that rations aboard navy vessels did not change over the century and were similar to those regarded by Charles Howard as being appropriate to foot soldiers. Remnants from a wrecked ship show that in 1545, sailors serving on the fateful last voyage of the *Mary Rose* ate beef, pork and fish. Whilst the sailors' meat would have been preserved with salt rather than fresh, any deposits of the grain-based foods and dairy products that contributed to their diet would, of course, have long since degraded. The 'additional' venison and fresh plums that were found could have been for the consumption of senior officers.²³ Documentary evidence

²¹ Muller (ed.), *Letters*, p. 145.

²² G. Roberts (ed.), *Diary of Walter Yonge Esq., Justice of the Peace and M.P. for Honiton: Written at Colyton and Axminster, Co. Devon, from 1604 to 1628* (Camden Society, original series, 41, 1848), p. 89.

²³ *The Mary Rose Project*, <http://www.maryrose.org/life/food1> (02/01/2009).

shows that both in the same year, and in 1636, sailors' daily allocations were 1lb of biscuits and a gallon of beer. This was accompanied by 2lb of flesh on four days a week, and by a qt of stockfish, two oz of butter and four oz of cheese on the other three days. Given that the financial allowance paid to the ships' caterers was 5d a day for each sailor in 1560 – an amount that, with inflation, had increased to 6d in 1589, and to 8½d in 1636 (with caterers complaining of an operating loss of 1¾d per sailor per month), financial considerations played a large part in the navy's choice of food for sailors.²⁴ But this obviously influential factor was only part of the overall determinant.

Nathaniel Butler, admiral and governor of the Providence Island Company, who had been a common sailor and a privateer during Elizabeth's reign, recorded a dialogue in 1634 that had ostensibly taken place between himself and a ship's captain. Butler reported the captain as saying that our seamen are more likely to suffer from fevers than their Mediterranean, French or Dutch counterparts because English sailors have an inferior diet consisting of salted beef or pork. This was contrasted with the continentals' rations of rice, olives and figs, and with their healthier ratio of peas, beans, wheat, butter and cheese relative to the amount of flesh with which they were served. The admiral, who was in a position to know exactly what sailors ate, responded: 'our common seamen are so besotted in their beef and pork ...that they would rather suffer scurvies ... than to be weaned from their customary diet, or to lose the least bit of it'.²⁵ Whether or not this dialogue was fictitious, the report is revealing in three important ways: it demonstrates that the admiral's account of the food supplied to sailors was accurate; that the stereotypical image portrayed – one of a type of food being synonymous with a social class of people – is in accord with this thesis; and that a modern understanding of food, health and the body (a knowledge based on the

²⁴ M. Oppenheim, *A History of the Administration of the Royal Navy* (Aldershot, 1988), pp. 82, 140, 143, 238.

²⁵ W. G. Perrin, (ed.), *Boteler's Dialogues* (Navy Record Society, 65, 1929), p. 65.

observation and recording of cause and effect over a period of time – describable as ‘scientific’) both existed and were given scant regard in 1634. The dialogue also suggests that sailors had an input, albeit probably minimal, in the types of food that they were served, as was the case with army soldiers.

As foods supplied to people of low degree at institutions were comparable with each other, and similar to the food budget of London’s labouring poor, the probability exists that rations reflected in general terms the dietary experiences – and in some cases the preferences – of some within the lower ranks of society.²⁶ These people were accustomed to inexpensive options in the marketplace, and were facilitated in acquiring them in times of shortages and high prices through orders regulating the supply and price of grain and other basic foods.²⁷ Demarcation in consumption resonated with the ‘better sort’ who saw stereotypical images as a means by which they could continue to mark their own identity by choosing high-value fare.

Factors affecting dietary intake by lower ranks of society could, however, be complex; and one aspect was the affordability of high-priced foods due to hidden financial resources. As Donald Woodward has cautioned, a single visible wage cannot be taken as evidence for what food a family might buy.²⁸ It was not uncommon, for example, for a labourer or craftsman to enjoy several sources of income as the opportunity arose, or for his family to produce some of their own food. This they could either eat or sell; and if they chose the latter, the modest revenue that sporadic or seasonal sales generated could, if circumstances permitted, be used in other ways. Whilst we should not downplay the very real problems that were experienced by some,

²⁶ For the possible diet of London’s poor see J. Boulton, ‘Food Prices and the Standard of Living in London’, *Economic History Review* 53:3 (2000), p. 464.

²⁷ Such orders include *Acts of the Privy Council of England* vol. 26 (London, 1974), pp. 269, 541.

²⁸ D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 236-41; P. Bowden, ‘Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents’, in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. IV (Cambridge, 1967), p. 609.

neither should we underestimate the ingenuity and resourcefulness of others. The apparent disruption in income as a result of seasonal work, or a reduction in the real wage when prices rose more sharply than wages – as was the case in the mid-1590s – could sometimes be compensated for by ways and means. Such methods could include related families cooperating with each other for their mutual benefit, subsidising an intermittent income by undertaking small business ventures such as brewing and selling beer, through the by-employment that was ‘common in early modern England’, or through finding casual work.²⁹

Although Jack Drummond acknowledges the consumption of beef by the ‘labouring classes’, he doubts that village peasants and poorer town dwellers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries ate as well as they had in previous times.³⁰ However, the undertaking of more than one job by family members during times of economic hardship, such as whipping dogs out of the church or cleaning the steeple for a reward of 8d, or gathering up stones under a bridge, was a strategy of the poor that could help to balance income with necessary expenditure. But in good times it could also allow for the occasional purchase of a relatively costly luxury.³¹ When times were hard it was not uncommon for the price of grain to double; but this did not necessarily mean that the poor had to pay these prices. In December 1622 the price of wheat reached 11s a bushel in London; and earlier in the year letters were issued to sheriffs and justices around the country ordering them to be vigilant ‘to repress insurrections in

²⁹ See for example: S. Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth Century London* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 136-37, 148-49, 152; A. H. Smith, ‘Labourers in Late Sixteenth Century England: A Case Study From North Norfolk’, part 2, *Continuity and Change* 4:3 (1989), pp. 367-68, 370; P. Clark, ‘The Alehouse and the Alternative Society’, in D. Pennington and K. Thomas (ed.), *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (Oxford, 1978), p. 56; M. Overton, J. Whittle, D. Dean and A. Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (London, 2004), p.65; A. Everitt, ‘Farm Labourers’, in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. IV (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 425-29.

³⁰ Drummond, *Englishman’s Food*, pp. 49-51, 56, 98-101.

³¹ T. Wright (ed.), *Churchwardens’ Accounts of the Town of Ludlow, in Shropshire, from 1540 to the End of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Camden Society, original series, 102, 1869); P. Northeast (ed.), *Boxford Churchwardens’ Accounts 1530-1561* (Suffolk Record Society, 23, 1982), p. 64. See also S. Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c. 1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 15-58.

regard of deadness of trade and hard living of poor tradesmen and husbandmen, as there were in Wiltshire'. Perhaps fearing further disorder when the price of wheat again hit double figures in November 1630, the Mayor of Dorchester purchased wheat and 'sold it to the poore at 6s 8d'.³² Thus, theoretical food prices that could be discounted, and visible wage rates that could form but part of an income, are at best indicators as to the spending power of families.³³

The type of diet that the Crown envisaged for these workers, however, is clearly indicated by the food and drink allowance that was deemed acceptable as part-payment for labour. Although it varied according to trade, an artisan's allowance in 1563 was around 5d and a labourer's 4d; by the mid 1590s a skilled male thatcher or a plumber was entitled to 6d worth of food, whilst the ration of a male mower of corn was worth 4d. Women undertaking similar work were expected to eat slightly less.³⁴ Although Alfred Hassell Smith has found that female workers in Stiffkey, North Norfolk, were paid at half the rate of men when their wages were calculated 'without meat and drink', proclamations show that their food and drink allowance over much of the country was typically 1d less than that of their male counterparts.³⁵ This may reflect a difference in the quantity rather than the variety of food eaten.

Food allowances as part-payment for a wage could, of course, be abused by employers who were intent on reducing costs. One identifiable method for achieving this aim would be to economise on the variable overheads of wage payments without a diminishment in manpower and consequential reduction in productivity. This could be

³² W. Whiteway, *William Whiteway of Dorchester: His Diary, 1618-1635* (Dorset Record Society, 12, 1991), p. 49; Roberts (ed.), *Diary of Walter Yonge*, p. 60.

³³ For an overview of wages see 'Social Status in England' in the Introduction.

³⁴ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (London, 1969), pp. 210-33, 392; and vol. III (London, 1969), pp. 40, 122, 146, 150; R. H. Tawney and E. Power, *Tudor Economic Documents: Being Select Documents Illustrating the Economic and Social History of Tudor England*, vol.1 (London, 1924), pp.334-35, 367-70. See also Rappaport, *Worlds*, p.129; D. Woodward, 'The Background to the Statute of Artificers: The Genesis of Labour Policy', *Economic History Review* 31:1 (1980), pp. 42-44.

³⁵ Smith, 'Labourers', part 1, p. 30.

achieved by cutting back, either qualitatively or quantitatively, on the food allowances of their workforce. Any move away from labourers receiving part-payment in meals in favour of a cash wage could be explained by employers opting for the cheaper alternative when food was dear, or by workers declining victuals and providing for themselves when meals had become unsatisfactory. In order to arrive at officialdom's perception of what foods befitted those who worked with their hands, whether they chose part-payment in meals or not, consideration should perhaps be given to the foods that could or could not be purchased with the allowances advocated by royal proclamation.

As there is a probability that food was being prepared daily in the kitchens of employers, neither additional fuel nor extra manpower was required to produce workers' meals. Supplementary costs incurred in feeding employees therefore lay exclusively in the purchasing of raw materials. Maximum food prices that were set in order to protect consumers from undue exploitation at the hands of overcharging traders periodically feature in royal proclamations.³⁶ But as a guide to actual prices paid in the marketplace these notices can be misleading. On the one hand they were intended to be *maximum* permitted prices. As such, cheaper foods, especially those that were in some way inferior, could perhaps be purchased. On the other hand, the perceived need to admonish traders about excessive rates and sharp practices, and to repeat the caveat over and over again, suggests that higher food prices than those appearing on the proclamations were charged broadly and frequently. Although kitchen expenses reflected in the household accounts of the rich may be less than reliable in determining what tradesmen and labourers paid for their food, due to quality differentials and

³⁶ One of many examples can be found in *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (Oxford, 1983), pp. 408-11.

quantity discount, they may serve as a guide to the market prices paid by some employers who ‘tabled’ their workforce.

By referring to these payments and cross-checking them with the maximum prices proclamations deemed justifiable, it can be seen that the authoritative view on permissible food allowances – and thus the types and standard of food that was deemed appropriate to the lower orders of society – was influenced by socioeconomic factors. Discrepancies between the ‘tabling’ rates of skilled and unskilled workers, and the rates themselves, demonstrate that the objective of the powerful was sumptuary-inspired control by economic means. On the eve of the seventeenth century, typical London prices of basic ‘second’ foods (as opposed to ‘best’) were as follows: bread, ½d per loaf; beer, ½d per quart; beef, 1½d per lb; eggs, 3 for 1d; butter, 4d per lb; and cheese, ½d per lb.³⁷ The 4d food allowance allocated to male labourers was thus intended to restrict their diet to the same bread, beer and beef (or fish and butter) that was consumed by soldiers. Whilst unskilled female labourers were possibly supplied with a lesser quantity of food and drink, the 5d or 6d allocated to skilled craftspeople was almost certainly to provide them with a greater choice than that which their unskilled colleagues were furnished with.

Second quality chickens and rabbits costing 4d each, capons at 9d and pigeons at 2d were pitched beyond an artisan’s individual allowance.³⁸ Yet if they lived in urban areas and did not have access to these birds and animals by rearing or catching them, the joint allowance of skilled workers collectively could perhaps enable them to sample these foods periodically – as was apparently imagined by Charles Howard for higher-ranking army personnel. A pigeon costing 2d and yielding around five oz of meat was hardly a cost-effective choice of food in terms of the quantity of grain it consumed to

³⁷ Nottingham, *By the Lord Generall*.

³⁸ Prices taken from: Nottingham, *By the Lord Generall*.

achieve its potential size. This fact was not lost on contemporaries. Arthur Standish, evidently worried about a recent wave of change in land usage in the east midlands in the early seventeenth century and its possible impact on grain supply, estimated that, due to the popularity of pigeon meat, there were 40,000 pigeon lofts in England. These lofts, Standish complained, housed a fraction of the overall population that devoured and destroyed valuable crops.³⁹ Yet despite or because of this extravagance and improvidence, some of the households of the wealthy consumed this bird in copious quantities. And although this food was much in demand, usually a reason or a pretext for price-hiking, the sheer number of them available at market might have been enough to hold their price down for over a decade (see chart 2:1). This conceivably allowed craftsmen who were not able to catch their own birds the opportunity of occasionally enjoying the flavour of pigeon meat. But whether or not skilled labourers acquired the taste for such foods as part of their allowance, their culinary experiences were, for the duration of the working day, restrained by boundaries demarcated by the elite and their representatives.

Even if price/wage ratios and other factors combined to allow for a diet more sophisticated than that envisaged by the powerful, employers – at least for the time that their employees were at work – were enabled through official sanction to regulate consumption through the use of time. As time became increasingly associated with ‘work-discipline’ in the Elizabethan period, it was increasingly seen as money, ‘the employer’s money’.⁴⁰ Thus, unlike wages and prices proclamations that reflected the concerns of the Crown, the enactment of the Statute of Artificers in 1563 limited by law the length of time in a day during which labourers and artificers could eat. The order, which required manual workers to serve their masters from dawn to dusk in the winter

³⁹ A. Standish, *The commons complaint VWherein is contained tvvo speciall grieuances* (London, 1611).

⁴⁰ E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), pp. 353, 358-59.

and longer in the summer, specified that just 30 minutes was to be taken for breakfast, and only one hour was allowable for eating and digesting food at a dinnertime that was convenient to the master. Thus, William Harrison noted fourteen years later, whilst the nobility and gentry were able to mark their status by dining leisurely for hours, the ‘poorer sort’ had to dine ‘as they may’.⁴¹ This time restriction – telling workers when they could eat and how long they could take doing it – then as now determined ‘to a noticeable extent’ *what* could be eaten, the location and setting of the meal, and the sort of company that one kept. A contrast between the dinnertime freedom enjoyed by the powerful and the closely controlled mealtimes imposed on their subordinates in this way hampered the latter’s opportunity to blur hierarchical boundaries by circumventing wage/price restrictions.⁴² Mealtimes of the humblest servants in wealthy households may also have been closely controlled, but although they formed part of Harrison’s lowest tier of English society along with labourers, they were potentially in a better position to sample luxury foods.

Servants in wealthy households

In wealthy households it was not uncommon for the household heads to employ gentlemen and yeomen to act as servants and officers. Even if an ‘idealising’ anonymous pamphleteer’s comment that ‘their fare was always of the best’ was an exaggeration, these senior-level servants would have been fed according to their rank.⁴³ But low-level servants who were fed by their employers were cushioned from inflation, and on occasions they may have had the opportunity to eat a varied diet.

⁴¹ Tawney and Power, *Tudor Economic Documents*, p. 342; G. Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison: The Description of England (1577)* (Ithaca, 1968), p. 141, 144.

⁴² S. W. Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past* (Boston, Mass., 1996), p. 21. A similar modern scenario has been identified by E. Batstone, ‘The Hierarchy of Maintenance and the Maintenance of Hierarchy’, in A. Murcott (ed.), *The Sociology of Food and Eating: Essays on the Sociological Significance of Food* (Aldershot, 1983), pp. 45-46.

⁴³ B. Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672: The Origins, Wealth and Power of a Landowning Family* (Manchester, 1983), pp. 85-86.

Servants' diets are not easy to determine exactly. Information on who ate what within households seldom feature in accounts, and diaries that reveal the culinary tastes of people to whom they owe their existence are less than specific about the foods eaten by their employees. Despite this, we are able to generalise to a certain extent by using two methods. One is analysing the quantities of different types of food reaching the kitchens. The acquisition of vast quantities of beef and coarse flour at a time when there were a limited number of family members and guests present, for example, would suggest that they were consumed by servants and other workers on the estate. Conversely, quantities of veal and cream too small to feed the entire household indicate that these relatively expensive foods did not, as a matter of course, reach the bottom table. The other method is to note foods that were bought to be consumed when the family and their main servants and officers were not in residence. Foods acquired at such times – times during which the estate was being looked after by a handful of servants – may be compared with those bought when the lord and lady were at home. One such time, the Reynell household accounts make clear, was a five-day period in October 1628 when Sir Richard was staying at his rented accommodation in Exeter. On this occasion the only foods accounted for at the Forde estate in his absence were beef, a small amount of mutton, unspecified fish and one pullet. In the same week the quantities of veal, rabbit, mutton and salad items bought by Reynell at Exeter were similar to the quantities that he usually purchased at Forde House. And whilst unspecified (probably low-value) 'fish' was being eaten at Forde, the only aquatic foods bought at Exeter were salmon and a small quantity of shrimps.⁴⁴ Neither bread nor butter generally appeared as purchases in the Reynell accounts, but these were home-

⁴⁴ Reynell, pp. 27-28.

produced foods. They were, however, bought by Sir Richard in Exeter, and were probably also eaten by his servants left at home.

There is a possibility that this five day period is atypical; but on its basis we begin to see that the types of food household members ate depended on social status. The suggestion is that whilst senior members of the household ate veal, rabbit, mutton, high-priced fish, salad, bread and spices (that were also always bought in Exeter), the diet of servants was marked by its relative lack of luxuries. Apart from the one pullet, the other foods – the bread, beef, cheap fish and home-produced dairy products and beer – were the same as those provided by institutions for their dependants. There are grounds for believing that this diet was normal for low-level servants in wealthy households. When the Newdigates were away from Arbury in July 1640 the only foods recorded as being received by the kitchen were almost identical: mutton, bread, butter and eggs.⁴⁵ These should be contrasted with the luxurious fare that the family usually enjoyed at the Warwickshire estate.⁴⁶ The foods that servants were expected to eat on a daily basis – the identity markers assigned to them by their employers – can also be extrapolated from the food allowances that were granted to them when they were sent to market on business. Those granted to the servants of both Sir Richard Shuttleworth – a Lancashire lawyer, and Henry Best – a Yorkshire yeoman, were typically a choice-limiting 4d at around 1583 and 1620 respectively.⁴⁷ We will recall that in 1599 soldiers based in London paid 3½d for bread, beer and a portion of beef or mutton.

If beef was a food associated with low-ranking army personnel and common sailors, then judging by the quantities bought and prices paid, it was also fed to labourers and servants in wealthy households. Bought by the stone at Arbury, the Newdigates paid around 2d per lb for beef in 1638. Also in the 1630s this meat, along

⁴⁵ Newdigate, CR/136v140, see week ending 1 August 1640.

⁴⁶ See *The Diet of the Gentry and Aristocracy* below.

⁴⁷ For example see: Shuttleworth, p. 12; Woodward (ed.), *Farming and Memorandum*, FB 167.

with mutton, accounted for 73.2 per cent and 68.3 per cent of all meat purchased at Quickswood and Gorhambury respectively. Beef was favoured as a household staple by the Reynells. The cost in Devon was a mere 1.7d per lb in October 1627, and rose slightly to 2.25d per lb in 1631. Because of the quantities accounted for, it was undoubtedly fed to Sir Richard's servants. Beef may also have been provided by Lady Lucy Reynell to sustain local indigents during the winters of 1627-1630. Reynell's accounts show that at this time of year she purchased large quantities of the meat – apparently over and above that which was bought for the household's consumption – using her own money; and, according to her biographer, she was renowned for clothing and feeding the poor.⁴⁸ The household of Sir Thomas Sackville also purchased considerable quantities of beef and mutton for his household in London during 1603-04; bought in roughly equal quantities the price he paid for a whole mutton was usually 11s (which was almost identical to the price paid by Reynell in 1627), whilst beef was only 1.6d per lb. To put the price of beef into perspective, the purchase price of butter to Sackville at that time was 5d per lb, five eggs cost him 2d, and each brace of rabbit was valued at 1s 4d. Five years earlier, the household of Percival Willoughby – a gentleman and future knight from a wealthy and prestigious Nottinghamshire family – also had consumed large quantities of both beef and mutton.⁴⁹ One of his two principal seats was Middleton Hall near Tamworth and, perhaps not coincidentally, consumption was weighted slightly in favour of mutton, as it was later at Newdigate's Arbury Hall – just ten miles to the south-east. Thus, although mutton was probably the commonest meat

⁴⁸ For Lady Lucy's reputation see T. Gray, *Devon Household Accounts, 1627-59*, Part 1 (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1995), p. xxxvi; for two examples of Lady Lucy's beef purchases see Reynell, p. 37.

⁴⁹ M. Dawson, *Plenti and Grase: Food and Drink in a Sixteenth-Century Household* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007), pp. 22-28, 82-83.

in the English diet as Joan Thirsk had noted, choice must have depended on local agriculture and tradition to a large extent.⁵⁰

A comparison with spending patterns in the sixteenth century reveals that there was continuity in the status of beef and mutton between 1540 and 1640. These meats were as important to the fourth Earl of Derby between 1586 and 1590 as they had been to the Cecils and the Radcliffes – with his household typically consuming ten mutttons and one and a half oxen a week. The household of Henry Stanley’s father, Edward, also attached importance to these meats. His accounts show that he spent £306 16s 8d on beef and mutton in 1561, a sum that amounted to 19 per cent of his total spending on food. And in Essex during 1543 the Petres of Ingatestone Hall also viewed these two meats as basic commodities; they spent almost four times as much on beef and mutton as they did on veal, lamb, pork and boars.⁵¹

Both mutton and beef, like any other basic product, could become a high-value item depending on its preparation. The addition of spices or the infusion of herbs – of which forty-three types were listed by Thomas Tusser in 1577 – could impart a whole new meaning to a meal.⁵² But these meats were at the bottom end of the price scale and were often if not always available to elite households. As such they can be considered ‘diet’ items with both – but especially beef – being directly associated the lower orders. This association was not a phenomenon that can be solely explained away by contemporary medical wisdom; for although foods considered cold and moist were deemed suitable to the digestion of heat-producing labourers in medieval times, in Europe by the late sixteenth century, Ken Albala notes, medicine was being informed

⁵⁰ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 240.

⁵¹ Petre, p. 301.

⁵² T. Tusser, *Five Hundreth Points of Good Husbandry ...* (London, 1577) pp. 40-42; K. Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 2002), p. 165.

by cuisine as opinions of dieticians had become ‘a simple matter of social prejudice’.⁵³ This was also the case in England, for as Henry Butts remarked in 1599, beef was a bodybuilding meat appropriate to ‘youth, labourers and great exercisers’.⁵⁴ It is no surprise to us then that this cheap meat, along with other inexpensive foods, was bought by and for those who worked with their hands – be they manual labourers or domestic servants.

But as other foods were kept on the estates and in the houses of the wealthy, and servants had access to keys, opportunities to eat well may have arisen from time to time. The diet of servants possibly differed from that of the poor and of labourers in two other important ways. Joan Thirsk has said that whilst leftover meats passed to servants in the hall, more exotic foods may have been rationed.⁵⁵ But firstly, surplus food from elaborately made and exotically flavoured dishes following oversupply from the kitchen may have been sampled at the lower tables; and secondly, accounts suggest that a few luxuries were bought in quantities too vast to feed just family and guests at festive times.⁵⁶ Luxurious foods, however, were eaten more frequently by wealthy yeomen.

Wealthy yeomen

One such person who described himself as a gentleman, and whose wealth and lifestyle was akin to that of some of the lower-gentry, was Henry Best from Elmswell in East Yorkshire.⁵⁷ He apparently enjoyed a varied diet that was distinctly different from the food eaten by his employees and others of lesser rank. The Bests’ income that paid for luxurious foods came from leasing part of their estate, and from commercial mixed farming which was evidently driven by a desire to maximise profit by exploiting the

⁵³ Albala, *Eating Right*, pp. 191, 196, 271.

⁵⁴ H. Butts, *Dyets dry dinner consisting of eight severall courses ...* (London, 1599), chapter 3.

⁵⁵ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 210.

⁵⁶ See chapter four.

⁵⁷ The yeoman whose accounts are the topic of Woodward (ed.), *Farming and Memorandum*.

growing market-economy. Between 1617 and 1627 Best employed up to 9 servants, several day labourers, and a few casual or seasonal workers who were hired at appropriate times during the annual agricultural cycle. Although their wages were slightly less than average according to Donald Woodward, it was claimed that they received superior meals to those offered to workers on other estates. This was probably correct, for labourers on Best's estate received butter, cheese, milk or porridge, either eggs, pies or bacon, and ale (or sometimes best beer) at each of the three meals a day.⁵⁸

These provisions may have contrasted sharply with those supplied to employees of another 'gentleman farmer', Nathaniel Bacon, twenty years earlier at Stiffkey; for his labourers were 'reluctant to accept meat and drink terms'. Here, as at Elmswell, much of the workforce consisted of husbandmen and specialist labourers whose by-employment formed part of a 'multi-faceted fringe economy'.⁵⁹ Although Best's manor does not seem to have contained the trappings that would indicate a desire for conspicuous opulence, he compared favourably his own food with that of his social inferiors. The yeoman purchased exotic drinks and an array of expensive spices that he would have used sparingly to add variety to his daily meals. On one occasion in July 1617 Best spent £2 17s 6d on a range of luxuries that included cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, pepper, sugar, raisins, currants, saffron, aquavita and rosewater.⁶⁰ Rosewater, like the spices, still had a medicinal role in the early seventeenth century and featured in the collection of cures owned by Lady Grace Mildmay; but it also had a culinary use. Having been 'adopted into the cuisine of the European courts and aristocracy' it subsequently featured in English cookery books, particularly as an

⁵⁸ Woodward (ed.), *Farming and Memorandum*, FB 157, 220, 217.

⁵⁹ Smith, 'Labourers', part 1, pp. 12, 19, 22-23; Smith, 'Labourers', part 2, pp. 367-70, 380-81.

⁶⁰ Woodward (ed.), *Farming and Memorandum*, FB 92, 172, 207-08, 210-13, 217, MB 5, appendices I and II.

ingredient in dairy-based recipes.⁶¹ Costing around 1s per pint, the rosewater that was to feature as an expense of the Newdigates on seventeen occasions between 1636 and 1640, usually in May and at Christmas, had been bought by the Yorkshire yeoman three decades earlier.

But ‘yeoman’ is a broad category that included many people with varying degrees of income and success; therefore Best’s extravagant expenditure on food was hardly typical of all yeomen.⁶² For indications of typicality amongst others in Best’s position, however, a search could perhaps be made for a similarly successful farmer at the opposite end of the country. One such case is that of William Honnywell, a prosperous farmer of Ashton, South Devon.⁶³ Honnywell, who kept a diary from 1596 until his death in 1614, claimed in 1603 that his property was worth £492. This was a remarkably precise figure that might indicate a reliable audit had been carried out. In addition to his fixed assets, his sheep, cattle and crops were valued at over £400. Honnywell, like other aspiring ‘gentlemen’, spent a considerable amount of time in London where he purchased high-value consumables whilst his wife, who was familiar with business management from before the time of their marriage, administered the Devon estate that spanned two parishes. The purchases that the yeoman made during his visits to the capital suggest that he both liked to live well and enjoyed displaying his opulence. In 1596, a year of such considerable hardship in Devon that the Privy Council issued a warrant allowing the county to purchase grain from its neighbours, Honnywell’s acquisitions in London included a pair of velvet-edged shoes and 30 gold buttons that were made specifically for him in order to adorn a hat band. His food

⁶¹ L. Pollock, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620* (London, 1993), pp. 110-42; C. A. Wilson (ed.), *The Country House Kitchen Garden 1600-1950* (Stroud, 1998), p. 89; Kent, E. Grey, Countess of, *A True Gentlewomans Delight ...* (London, 1653); W. M., *The Compleat Cook ...* (London, 1655).

⁶² J. A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England: A Social History, 1550-1760* (London, 1987), p. 204.

⁶³ F. J. Snell (ed.), ‘A Devonshire Yeoman’s Diary’, *Antiquary* 26 (1892), pp. 255-56.

intake on a daily basis, like that of Best's, is not known; but entries in his diary show that purchases included rabbits, woodcocks and snipe. Whilst Honnywell occasionally received gift-foods such as cheeses and a shoulder of venison, and boasted of entertaining his friends lavishly, the tabling allowance of his staff was calculated at 6d per day.⁶⁴

Despite the separation of Henry Best and William Honnywell by 318 miles, the similarities between the two successful agricultural businessmen regarding diet, luxury and identity were far from superficial. Best liked to be known as a gentleman; and Honnywell, having expanded his empire by marrying Mrs Staplehill, the widow of his former landlord in 1604, clearly visualised himself as one. Whilst both ate high priced luxurious foods, consumed conspicuously when entertaining, and spent money extravagantly, Best identified commoners by their diet and made the distinction between theirs and his own superior foods. Both country 'gentlemen' paid their employees at or near to the rate which was deemed appropriate for labourers, and both fed their workers with foods befitting their station. Neither man could claim a distinguished pedigree, but both of them aspired to and aligned themselves with their immediate social superiors by distancing themselves from 'others' of lesser rank. Thus, the process of establishing and consolidating their chosen identity was seen to be achievable at least partly through making luxury foods their necessities.

Not all wealthy farmers wished to express their prosperity through the medium of food consumption, however. The accounts of Robert Loder, a landowner who farmed a large estate of about 150 acres in north Berkshire during the early seventeenth century, show that he was more concerned with the accumulation of wealth than with

⁶⁴ Snell (ed.), 'A Devonshire Yeoman's Diary', pp. 255-56, 258; H. Stone (ed.), 'A Devonshire Yeoman's Diary', *Antiquary* 31 (1893), pp. 214-15. For the hardship in Devon see *Acts of Privy Council of England*, vol. 25 (London, 1901), p. 323.

extravagance in diet.⁶⁵ Loder practiced mixed farming with an emphasis on arable cultivation, but his preoccupation with enhancing profit margins, which is manifest throughout the ten-year period of his accounts, can be discerned on many levels. Each year he calculated which crops would be the most profitable to grow, and which animals would give the best return on his investment; but scheming to make as much money as possible did not stop there.⁶⁶ The farmer's accounts reveal that he thought employing the smallest possible workforce was crucial to success, and that employing men rather than women in his orchard would result in speedier harvesting and reduced pilfering.⁶⁷ He also lamented the fact that he may have occasionally undercharged for his produce.⁶⁸ The accounts also reveal that the enthusiasm shown by this rural businessman for making money was not kindled by an overwhelming desire to eat luxuriously. Despite Loder's net profit usually exceeding £200 per year,⁶⁹ he estimated the annual cost of food to be about £10 for each of the seven to eleven members of his household.⁷⁰ This would have worked out at little more than the food allowance afforded to his day labourers, which, for the 'wheller' and 'his boy', was 6d and 3d respectively.⁷¹

The diet of Loder and his family consisted of food and drink made from wheat and barley, and the main meat consumed derived from home-reared pigs. Beef was an occasional addition to the table, and the other foods listed as expenses were milk, butter, cheese, fish and a small amount of fruit and spices.⁷² The annual cost of fruit and spices was around just £1, and these included small amounts of mustard, rice, currants, raisins,

⁶⁵ The size of Loder's estate is estimated in G. E. Fussell (ed.), *Robert Loder's Farm Accounts, 1610-1620* (Camden Society, 3rd series, 53, 1936), p. x.

⁶⁶ Reviewing the type of produce to maximise profit margins is a constant theme in Loder's accounts.

⁶⁷ Fussell (ed.) *Robert Loder's*, p. 108, 148.

⁶⁸ Fussell (ed.) *Robert Loder's*, p. 103.

⁶⁹ Fussell (ed.) *Robert Loder's*, p. xxvi.

⁷⁰ See for example his calculation for 1612, Fussell (ed.) *Robert Loder's*, p. 45.

⁷¹ Fussell (ed.), *Robert Loder's*, p. 44.

⁷² See for example diet expenses for 1612 and 1613 pp. 44-45, 67-68

cinnamon, cloves, mace, ginger and pepper.⁷³ Sugar was also used to flavour the Loders' food, but this was used sparingly. The amount purchased in 1618 weighed only 6½lbs.⁷⁴ Both Loder and his staff ate cherries from the orchard, and in addition apples, quinces, pears and plums were also available to him.⁷⁵ He also kept pigeons, hens and geese; and, although they are not accounted for, rabbits and wild birds may have been eaten by the family. Thus Loder's diet was reasonably varied but hardly luxurious; and Thomas Fuller's assertion that the fare of yeomen consisted of meat that was neither 'disguised with strange sauces' nor 'surrounded by salad' was more applicable to Loder than to others of his degree who aspired to gentility.⁷⁶ Large-scale farmers, however, were not the only people who were able to blur the edible markers of social distinction between themselves and the gentry – even if some chose not to. In chapter four it will be shown that merchants and master craftsmen of urban areas also aspired to a higher social position and at least occasionally ate luxury foods. But these foods were eaten on a daily basis by the gentry.

THE DIET OF THE GENTRY AND ARISTOCRACY

Before luxuries, their consumption, and their role as identity markers are discussed, we first consider the acquisition of staple foods by the nobility and gentry. These were relatively low-priced foods purchased in large quantities for habitual consumption by at least some members of their households, and which were generally affordable to – or at least obtainable by – a broad range of people under normal economic and supply conditions. Many of these were eaten by servants; and although they could be

⁷³ These particular spices are itemised on pp. 88, 152-53.

⁷⁴ Fussell (ed.) *Robert Loder's*, p. 153.

⁷⁵ Fussell (ed.) *Robert Loder's*, p. 89, 133, 149.

⁷⁶ T. Fuller, *The holy state ...The profane state* (Cambridge, 1642), p. 117.

transformed into special foods by using novel methods and exotic additives, they were also the foundation of the diet of the well-to-do.⁷⁷

Staple foods

In *Servants in wealthy households* above, we saw that beef and mutton were purchased cheaply in quantities that suggest they were eaten as staples by both senior members of the households and their servants. We have also seen that salt pork featured as a principle element in the rations of foot soldiers and sailors, and was also doled by public institutions. But whilst pork was bought in small quantities at our households, often in advance of special occasions,⁷⁸ other relatively inexpensive foods purchased by the gentry included some types of fish, chicken, basic dairy produce, bread, beer and legumes.

On non-flesh days and at fasting times, regulative orders required alternative foods to be eaten – and one of these was fish. But although fish partially replaced meat on fasting days, this was by no means universal.⁷⁹ Whilst acknowledging the possibility that ponds and streams were often a resource of large households, the same could be said of demesne land in respect of reared animals; yet unlike cattle, sheep and poultry there is sometimes no mention of a home-bred supply of fish. The efforts that Joan Thirsk says the well-to-do went to in order to secure a variety of fish ‘in all seasons’ applied to the Shuttleworths but not to the Newdigates.⁸⁰ The Newdigates of Arbury do not appear to have been particularly fond of seafood, spending as they did £11 7s 1d on fish over five years. Out of a total expenditure on food of £630 0s 7d, this amounted to a mere 1.8 per cent. More was spent on mackerel at 3d to 8d each than on any other

⁷⁷ The transformation of basic foods into special dishes is discussed in chapter three.

⁷⁸ See chapter four.

⁷⁹ See *Lent* in chapter four.

⁸⁰ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 266.

fish, and was bought only during May and June for between 3d and 8d each. In contrast, the Cecils at Quickswood purchased many different varieties of fish. The cheapest of these were saltfish and green-fish (uncured fish, usually cod) and were purchased every week, often in large quantities.

The Reynells, perhaps not surprisingly given the geographical location of their Devon estate, bought a considerable amount of seafood. The average annual value of fish purchases was £18 6s 6d; but paradoxically this family spent only 1s 5d over five years on mackerel, a species of fish very common around the southwest coast of England. The staples here were corfish (saltfish), costing 3d to 5d each; pilchards, purchased each August and September for 4d per 100; and oysters, bought between September and April for between 2d to 6d per 100. Lobster – which was something of a luxury for the Newdigates at 1s to 1s 6d each – was bought regularly by the Reynells between March and September for 3d each.

Whilst fish is not mentioned in the kitchen accounts relating to the London residence of the Earl of Dorset in 1603 and 1604, those of the Earl of Northumberland show that he spent 6.8 per cent of his food budget on this food – including saltfish – between September 1585 and January 1587. The purchasing of seafood was somewhat sporadic at the estates of George Vernon in 1549, and the Shuttleworths between 1582 and 1617, but saltfish was an important component of the household diet of Sir William Petre during 1543. Here at Ingatestone Hall ling and haberdine, along with some ‘fresh fish’, was purchased weekly.

The substitution of meat by fish on non-flesh days, then, was not always adhered to by the gentry and nobility. But where it was, the inexpensive varieties bought in sufficient quantities to feed the servants were mainly saltfish (usually ling), herring, and occasionally some stockfish (dried cod). The latter, a regular feature on institutional

menus, had been doled out with bread to the poor by the Petre household.⁸¹ The dietary experience of servants on days when meat was unavailable differed distinctly from their masters and mistresses. Whilst the former were fed with inexpensive seafood deemed fit for those of low social rank, the latter often chose to eat the high-priced luxury fish considered below.

Unlike seafood, which was sometimes a partial or complete substitute for meat, the consumption of birds was often an addition to the meal. The seasonal nature and relative price/weight ratio of 'wild' birds arguably disqualifies any of them from admittance into the classification of 'diet foods'. Poultry, however, and especially the chicken, was often purchased all year round. Although the Newdigates regularly bought capons, chickens – even after allowing for the probable difference in size – were still cheaper at around 7d to 10d each for most of the year. For Cecil and Radcliffe, although chickens only accounted for 0.7 per cent and 2.8 per cent of the overall food and drink budget respectively over the periods covered by the accounts, they were purchased almost every week. The price that the Earl of Sussex paid for this bird between 1637 and 1639 was 8d to 10d each; ten years earlier the Earl of Salisbury typically paid around 4d to 8d. At none of these estates were chickens purchased in sufficient quantities to feed all of the staff; but these birds could also be home reared and were eaten regularly by some household members.

At Gawthorpe in 1616 the Shuttleworths consumed chickens regularly – yet only four each week reached the dining table; and the quantity of chickens listed in the accounts of Henry Percy indicates that just a few people within his household ate them frequently. Other sets of accounts indicate that chickens were not key diet items despite their relative cheapness, even though they were very occasionally purchased in bulk.

⁸¹ F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), p. 172; C. A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to Recent Times* (London, 1973), p. 44.

On 12 August 1549, for example, Sir George Vernon purchased six ‘chekyns for ye howseholde’ at 1d each.⁸² Although a relatively inexpensive and popular poultry product, chicken was not a definitive staple in the sense that it was enjoyed regularly by low-ranking servants. Our accounts show that there was an escalation in the frequency and number of chickens purchased by the nobility and gentry as they became more expensive. But at around 8d each, although it had arguably become more acceptable to the wealthy, this bird was hardly an upper-class status marker, even though the less well-off might have come to view it as such.

Low-priced foods such as bread, beer and unrefined dairy products were also staples; but unlike chickens, whether they were purchased from external suppliers or home produced, they were acquired in sufficient quantities to feed the entire households. Whilst the Newdigates bought bread, milk and ale almost every day, and bought eggs and butter twice a week, the Cecils also purchased large quantities these products every week over the winter of 1634-35. Bread, dairy produce and beer accounted for 15.2 per cent of the total monetary value of all food and drink purchased at Arbury, and the same items accounted for 23.7 per cent of all kitchen purchases at Quickswood. When the spending on these basics is added to that on beef and mutton, the percentages increase to 44.5 and 58.5 respectively. Although bread, ale and milk were often grouped together and assigned an aggregate monetary value in the kitchen daybook belonging to the Arbury estate, the price of butter was between 5d and 8d per lb. At Quickswood butter was the same price; and both here and at Gorhambury – where dairy produce alone accounted for 10.3 per cent of the monetary value of food purchased – eggs were ½d each. Small beer, which was bought by the hogshead and

⁸² Vernon, p. 69.

cost the Cecils the equivalent of 2d a gallon, was even cheaper at Gorhambury; here its purchase price was 1.3d per gallon.

Different styles of bookkeeping require adjustment in analysis. Whilst the Newdigates assigned financial value to all of their recorded acquisitions, both home-produced and those sourced from external suppliers, the Reynells did not.⁸³ At Forde, cattle and sheep were home-reared, and beef and mutton purchased supplemented these; but beer, cider, bread and dairy products were, on the evidence of wages and of equipment bought, nearly always home-produced. These items were not allocated quantitative or monetary values. Despite this, there is evidence in the Forde accounts to suggest similarities between Reynell's consumption and that of other gentlemen. During weeks when Reynell stayed in Exeter on business, purchases of such foods are accounted for and make up a considerable proportion of the overall food acquisitions. One example shows that during his five-day stay in the city in October 1628 bread, dairy products and beer represented 34 per cent of the total food and drink costs that included 24 different items.⁸⁴ At Coughton Court in Warwickshire, butter, bread rolls and ale also appear to have figured prominently in the diet of Robert Throckmorton – if a surviving daily food bill from 1633 is a typical example.⁸⁵ And for the household of his grandfather and predecessor, the recusant Sir Thomas, eggs appear to have played an important role in the autumn of 1609.⁸⁶

In the northwest during the late sixteenth century, the stewards' accounts of the Shuttleworths indicate that the household's consumption was built around the eggs, cheese, milk, beer and mutton produced on their own farm, and this was supplemented

⁸³ Cattle and sheep slaughtered on the Arbury estate and 'bought' by the kitchen were assigned financial value.

⁸⁴ Reynell, pp. 27-28.

⁸⁵ Throckmorton, CR/1998/63/30 (10 November 1633).

⁸⁶ Throckmorton, CR/1998/63/16a, and CR/1998/63/16b (weeks ending 24 September and 1 October 1609).

by external supplies. Although the food consumed here appears to have increased in sophistication between 1582 and 1617, and luxury food purchases were by no means rare, basic diet items consumed remained essentially unaltered. In the early seventeenth century, for example, two hogsheads of small beer, a whole cheese, half a stone of butter, 120 eggs and 10s 9d worth of bread was consumed on average each week. In 1561 the Earl of Derby spent 33.8 percent of his food budget on bread, beer, beef, mutton and dairy products at his home in Lancashire and when he was staying in London – although dairy products did not figure as prominently in Stanley’s household consumption as they did in other households. And at Henry Percy’s estates at Syon, Bath and Tottenham, and at the Petres’ Ingatestone Hall, during December 1552 and January 1553, the same basic foodstuffs were ever-present features of consumption. It is clear from the rate and volume of purchases of these relatively inexpensive items that they were diet foods at the estates of the wealthy, but even these, as we will see, had their fine or refined versions with which hierarchical identity could be expressed. The same applied to vegetables that were also often home-produced.

Although vegetables were not often bought by all of our households, there is sometimes information contained in sets of accounts that indicate horticultural activity – including the varieties and quantities of produce grown. In contrast to expensive, fashionable vegetables that satiated refined taste, the most basic types – those that were most associated with poor rural peasants – were legumes. Although an array of vegetables may sometimes have been grown and eaten by less well-off people, especially in rural areas, peas and beans were commonly purchased in their dry form by poor folk who used them as an integral component of, and bulking agent in some of

their meals. In the experience of Henry Best, peas were ‘usually’ an ingredient in the bread eaten by the relatively poor.⁸⁷

The Newdigate household purchased, on average, 12.5 pecks of peas and 10d worth of beans a year – with the peas being bought during May and June (and occasionally in July), and the beans in July and August. The price paid for fresh peas was usually between 6d to 7d for a peck, but out of season dried peas were bought for around 12d. Newdigate’s contemporary, the Earl of Sussex, spent 14s 6d on peas during March 1639 at the rate of 11d a peck; this amounted to 1.08 per cent of the household expenditure on food during that month. A few years earlier the Reynells had paid 2d a peck for peas. However, Sir Richard and Lady Lucy’s accounts reveal that, in addition to the legumes sourced from external suppliers, both peas and beans were grown on the farm at Forde. Beans were set by the gardener in late January at a cost of 6d.⁸⁸ Although our pre-1600 household accounts are largely silent regarding the purchasing of legumes, George Vernon bought dried peas for his household’s consumption and probably also grew them on his extensive estate near Bakewell.

Like these vegetables, all of the basic diet foods discussed here were relatively economical to buy; and, notwithstanding supply problems when they might assume the status of luxuries, they were easily obtainable products that formed the basis of the diet of wealthy households. These were substitutable by more expensive or refined alternatives that helped to mark the identity of the gentry and nobility by distinguishing their diet from that of their social inferiors.

⁸⁷ Woodward (ed.), *Farming and Memorandum*, FB 172.

⁸⁸ Reynell, p. 9.

High quality and high-priced variants of staple foods

We have seen that salt beef and pork formed a sizable portion of the provisions supplied to those of low social status by institutions. By contrast, as accounts make clear, the meat reaching kitchens of wealthy households after animals had been slaughtered on the estate was fresh. It is thus reasonable to suppose that beef and mutton purchased at market for consumption by senior members of the manor was also fresh, and that it was of the ‘best’ quality rather than the cheaper ‘second’ quality.⁸⁹ But even the most fundamental of necessities – daily bread – was subject to status-marking refinement. As Joan Thirsk has advised, we need to exercise caution when discussing types of bread, for it could be made in many ways and from different grains.⁹⁰ But both the Petres in the mid-sixteenth century and the Radcliffes, Cecils and Reynells in the seventeenth century clearly distinguished between their households’ basic, coarse mixed-grained bread and their own premium bread that had been refined. As the latter sort was consumed for its qualities rather than purely for its sustenance value, it qualifies as a luxury food.⁹¹ At Gorhambury, the best quality bread, manchet, was purchased for around 2d; this compares with lesser ‘kitchen’ loaves that cost Radcliffe 1.5d, and smaller rolls of bread that were half that price. At Quickswood, three times more ‘household’ bread than best quality manchet was purchased in 1634-35. ‘Household’ bread, as the name implies, was for the consumption of lower-level servants; and the proportional relationship of the grades of loaves consumed reflects reasonably accurately the hierarchical structure of the Cecil estate at that time. At Arbury, although actual prices per loaf are not recorded, the same hierarchical distinction was made

⁸⁹ For price differentials between best foods and second foods see proclamations issued through the office of the Clerk of the Market. One example is: England and Wales, Sovereign, Henry VIII, *A proclamation ordained ...* (London, 1544).

⁹⁰ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 231, 235.

⁹¹ C. J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 11-12.

between the bread provided to servants ('diet' or 'household') and the refined sort that in part defined the lord's identity at the table ('whit' or 'mancheat'). Here the outlay for the latter was twice that for the coarser bread – indicating that the quantities bought were roughly equal.

This seemingly polarised arrangement at the manor where wheat bread was reserved for the well-to-do was neither uniform nor static within the nation at large. Although there was a general decline in real income over the period between 1540 and 1640, and despite many labourers in London being 'almost entirely market dependant', those on low incomes became increasingly reluctant to buy bread that they considered to be of inferior quality once they had become accustomed to the wheaten variety.⁹² But the taste for wheat, a grain that Henry Best stated was an identity marker of the gentry, had spread not only to the labouring poor in London and elsewhere, but also to those dependant upon charitable handouts.⁹³ Local authorities in the Midlands and in East Anglia both acknowledged this and assisted the indigent in making wheaten bread. In 1623, 1630 and 1631 the overseers of the parish of Cratfield in Suffolk subsidised prices not of barley or rye, but of 'wheate which was sould out to the pore'.⁹⁴

How could the social elite living in wealthy households respond to this when the shifting boundaries that obfuscated cultural identity required new markers to be established? Although this could be accomplished by adding rare or precious ingredients to the flour when making bread (spiced breads, as we shall see, were presented to guests at exclusive social events organised by some powerbrokers), there is nothing in the kitchen accounts of the gentry to suggest that spiced bread was purchased by them. An alternative course of action was open to those who wished to pursue it; namely, the deletion of bread from the table menu – at least on occasions when

⁹² Boulton, 'Food Prices', p. 479; W. Ashley, *The Bread of our Forefathers* (Oxford, 1928).

⁹³ Edelen, *William Harrison*, p. 133-35.

⁹⁴ L. A. Botelho, *Old Age and The English Poor Law, 1500-1700* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 144.

conspicuous consumption mattered. The ‘sumptuous and profuse’ banquets at which Elizabeth I, James VI and I, and Charles I attended included many courses of meats and ‘delicate dishes’; but even where descriptions of these events are detailed, bread is not mentioned.⁹⁵ It is of course possible that bread was not referred to by contemporary reporters because its consumption was taken for granted; but this is not what one observer thought. It was noted by John Ernest, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, that when he visited King James at Theobalds in September 1613, the king was ‘seldom seen to eat any bread’.⁹⁶ In the light of an observation made by Fynes Moryson, a writer who travelled extensively throughout Europe and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, perhaps these sumptuous feasts with many dishes and apparently little bread should not surprise us. In writing about the diet of the gentry, ‘the English’, Moryson noted, ‘prepare largely for ordinarie dyet for themselves’. He contrasted this mediocrity, which included ‘a moderate proportion of bread’, with the ‘excessive’ number of dishes that ‘stand one vpon another’ when company is expected.⁹⁷

Dairy produce was another type of food associated with labourers and the poor; but low-cost milk and cheese could also be refined or substituted by high-quality variants. Cream, according to C. Anne Wilson, was consumed at all levels of society; but it was increasingly used by the well-to-do as a cooking ingredient.⁹⁸ Indeed it was purchased with increasing frequency by the Newdigates between 1636 and 1640. Costing 4d per pint, around four to six times as expensive as milk, it was bought in quantities of one or two pints at a time during the spring and early summer. Although

⁹⁵ See for example: J. Fernandez de Velasco, describing a banquet given by James I in 1604; P. Hentzner, ‘Journey into England’ (1598); both in W. B. Rye (ed.), *England as seen by Foreigners* (London, 1865), pp. 106-07, 119. See also the banquet described in T. Gray, *Devon Household Accounts, 1627-59*, Part 1 (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1995), p. xxxvi.

⁹⁶ J. Ernest, describing a visit to James I on 17 September 1613, in Rye (ed.), *England as seen by Foreigners*, p. 152

⁹⁷ F. Moryson, *An Itinerary written by Fynes Moryson gent ...*, part 3, (London, 1617), p. 150; P. C. Mancall, ‘Introduction: What Fynes Moryson Knew’, *Journal of Early Modern History* 10:1 (2006), pp. 1-4.

⁹⁸ Wilson, *Food and Drink*, p. 174.

the Arbury accounts are concerned only with the value of foodstock reaching the kitchen and do not therefore record the nature of meals delivered to the dining table, it is perhaps significant to note that cream was often purchased on the same days as gooseberries, strawberries or cherries. The fruit itself was not inexpensive; gooseberries costing 6d per quart at the start of their season were reduced to 2d by the summer, and the market price of cherries varied between 4d and 8d per lb. 80 years earlier the future Earl of Leicester, Robert Dudley, also purchased strawberries and cream together, perhaps signifying an association between these two types of luxurious foods. Cream was also an essential element of syllabub; and ready-made syllabubs costing 3d to 4d each were purchased at Arbury around five times a year throughout the summers of 1636 to 1638.

Cheese was considered by William Harrison in 1577 to be ‘appertinent only to the inferior sort’, and recently Ken Albala has noted that the hard variety was often deleted from the healthy diet of the ruling classes as it became associated with the poor. The irony that the wealthy still ate cheese, ‘a protein-rich bodybuilding food appropriate to labourers’, is explained by the food historian pointing to the certainty that the rich and powerful would not accidentally be identified as peasants.⁹⁹ This, of course, would have worked for all foods. The acceptability of cheese to the elite in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries is perhaps more likely to be the criteria of its superior quality, its geographical origin (being sourced from afar), and its consequential high price and thus its exclusivity. Joan Thirsk sees this as ‘a snobbish preference’, and it was certainly a preference that the wealthy used as an identity marker.¹⁰⁰ One cheese that the Earl of Sussex personally enjoyed in 1639, for instance, was a luxury import from the continent. The wording of his kitchen clerk in distinguishing between the

⁹⁹ Edelen, *William Harrison*, p. 126; Albala, *Eating Right*, pp. 67, 194.

¹⁰⁰ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 278.

hundredweight of cheap cheese and the relatively small amount of the expensive ‘Holland’ variety bought specifically ‘for my lord’ leaves little doubt that there was a clear association between types of cheese and social class.¹⁰¹ This also appears to have been the case three decades earlier at Gawthorpe Hall in Lancashire. In addition to producing cheese on the family estate, Colonel Richard Shuttleworths bought ‘Holland’ cheeses on several occasions. Like those imported from Italy, cheese that was produced in the Low Countries had a reputation for high quality.¹⁰² In the southwest of England during the early seventeenth century this dairy product does not appear to have been purchased at Forde; although 4s 7d was paid by Reynell in March 1628 for the carriage of two cheeses each weighing 3 lbs.¹⁰³ This was a significant sum that may reflect the value attributed to a special food.

The polarity between the consumption of staples by household heads and their subordinates who significantly outnumbered them is underlined, as we have seen, by the quantities purchased. The seven basic foods – bread, beer, cheese, butter, milk, beef and mutton – amounted to half of the overall expenditure of households on food. But because they were cheap, in terms of weight they represented a mass well in excess of 50 per cent of edibles purchased; the other half of the disbursement paid for a wide variety of foods bought in small quantities. In the case of the Newdigates, variety meant purchasing 214 different items of food and drink over five years that were either clearly distinct from, or variants of the aforementioned basics. It is to these foods that we now turn – the superior high-priced exclusive consumables that were described as ‘necessaries’ by the wealthy. We will see that the eating of such foods, in addition to marking social status to guests and to servants when being consumed conspicuously, could also establish or develop a sense of self-worth and serve vanity when they were

¹⁰¹ Radcliffe, p. 83.

¹⁰² For European cheese and its merits see Wilson, *Food and Drink*, pp. 174-75.

¹⁰³ Reynell, p. 14.

being consumed inconspicuously. Some of these high-priced luxuries were fashionable ‘new’ foods. However, C. Anne Wilson’s suggestion that new items were accepted ‘most readily by the wealthy for the sake of their novelty’, although undoubtedly true for some, should be qualified.¹⁰⁴ We will see that acceptance of unfamiliar high-value foods occurred at differing rates and with various levels of enthusiasm.

Exclusive foods and foods used sparingly

Because of the negative meaning of ‘luxury’, and because of the possibility of tarnishing one’s reputation by using it to describe wanton self-indulgence, justifying one’s own excessive consumption and the contrasting diet of social inferiors required the use of the word ‘necessity’ and its variants. ‘Necessaries’ – a word that over and over again was used to describe the basic provisions of foot soldiers and common sailors – also, then, related to fine foods. As such, Henry Percy described his dietary complements – such as exotic fruits, cream, artichokes and spices – as ‘necessaries’.¹⁰⁵ Thus, if beef and mutton were simultaneously ‘diet’ meats and necessities at one level, because of their low price and their frequency of consumption within the households, then the analysis of accounts reveals which luxurious meats were necessary in the sense that they both satiated appetite and conveyed symbolic meaning.

Before the mid-sixteenth century the price of rabbits had fallen as they had become more commonly available in the marketplace. This, along with their escaping into the wild, has prompted historians to conclude that they were no longer an ‘expensive luxury of the rich alone’.¹⁰⁶ Whilst Joan Thirsk has pointed out that rabbits were now available ‘to a wider circle’, C. Anne Wilson has noted that their meat was

¹⁰⁴ Wilson, *Food and Drink*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁵ Percy. See for example pp. 14, 18.

¹⁰⁶ J. Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture: A History From the Black Death to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 10-11.

now ‘enjoyed by all’.¹⁰⁷ But despite their increased availability to people from many walks of life – through either purchasing or catching them – household accounts evidence suggests that rabbits were slow to lose their status as an estimable food of the well-to-do. Its relatively high price when considering its meat-yield, its supply as a special-occasions food (discussed in chapter four), and its association with high-ranking members of at least one gentry family, indicate that it was still highly regarded.

The Newdigates usually paid between 6d and 8d for each rabbit for most of the year during the latter half of the 1630s; but, as we will see in chapter four, this price was subject to the kind of seasonal fluctuation that is suggestive of a prized commodity. In Hertfordshire during the same decade the Cecils paid a similar price for each of the vast number of rabbits that they purchased – 8d in October rising to 14d in December. Sir William spent £4 6s 0d on this animal in the second and third weeks of December 1634; this amounted to 8 percent of the overall spending on meat at that time.¹⁰⁸ Notwithstanding seasonal fluctuations, the price of this animal appears to have remained almost unaltered and was uniform across the country since the turn of the century. The Throckmortons at Coughton Court in South Warwickshire during October 1609 had purchased fourteen rabbits a week for the total cost of 8s 2d; this amounted to 7d for each animal.¹⁰⁹ But eighteen years earlier the price paid for each rabbit by the Earl of Northumberland at his Bath residence had been significantly cheaper – 4d. Typically three of them were shared – along with other meats, butter and eggs – between two members of the Percy family, four of their guests, and four servants.¹¹⁰ During the latter years of the sixteenth century the Shuttleworths at Smithills paid on average 3.75d for each animal. Whilst the price of lesser meats such as beef and mutton

¹⁰⁷ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 243; Wilson, *Food and Drink*, p. 108.

¹⁰⁸ Cecil, p. 26-32.

¹⁰⁹ Throckmorton, CR/1998/63/16a, and CR/1998/63/16b (weeks ending 24 September and 1 October 1609).

¹¹⁰ Percy, pp. 9-14.

– although subject to short-term fluctuation – had remained relatively stable, rabbit meat had doubled in price during the years of poor harvests and food-supply problems in the mid-1590s. This, together with the undulation in purchase patterns and market prices that corresponded to the annual festive and abstinence cycle, suggests further that rabbit held on to its luxurious status at least up until the mid-seventeenth century.¹¹¹

But if rabbit meat was now being eaten by some people of low rank, offal was, by contrast, a hitherto low-status food that was becoming increasingly popular with the upper-orders of English society. Joan Thirsk has recently written that sheep's heads and calves' feet were 'far more common at the tables of ordinary folk than muscle meat'.¹¹² But as we have noted above, beef was a diet item of labourers and servants; and it is evident from fashionable cookery books, from the popularity of offal at festive times, and from the small quantities purchased frequently and the prices paid, that offal, suitably prepared, was becoming sought-after by the well-to-do.¹¹³ In contrast to just the one animal by-product – neats' tongue – that was bought weekly in 1612 by Sir Richard Newdigate's father, Sir John, the Arbury kitchen daybook of 1636-1645 shows that fourteen different offal products were purchased. The most popular of these, bought in small amounts on a regular and frequent basis, were lambs' heads, calves' feet, neats' feet and tongues, udders and sausages. Additionally, ewes' ears, trotters and dishes of sweetbread were occasional bought in quantities that clearly limited the scope for widespread consumption. Prices of the more prevalent products are shown in table 2:1. In Hertfordshire between one and five lambs' or calves' heads were purchased during eighteen of the 24 weeks in the winter of 1634(5) by the Cecils. They also bought up to four neats' tongues most weeks until mid-January, whilst udders and small

¹¹¹ For seasonal fluctuations in price see chart 4:1.

¹¹² Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 236.

¹¹³ For fashionable cookery books see chapter three; for offal's popularity at festive times see chapter four.

quantities of sausages were occasional purchases. Although sausages had formed part of the diet of merchants and ‘affluent peasants’ in medieval times, they were seldom found at the tables of the English gentry.¹¹⁴ Yet by the early seventeenth century our sets of accounts show that a limited number were being purchased at manor houses for twice the price of beef. As was the case for other offal products, the quantities of sausage bought were inadequate to feed the entire household.

For the Reynells at Forde, tongue, calf’s head and calf’s intestines were the most popular offal purchases; but the very small quantity of these and other animal by-products occasionally acquired from external sources may have been simply to supplement organs taken from home-reared animals. Half a century earlier a butcher’s bill presented to the Earl of Northumberland requested payment for ‘marie bones’ and 18s 4d worth of neats’ tongues.¹¹⁵ And a breving book relating to his household’s consumption at Bath in 1591 shows that one pair of calves’ feet was consumed at the supper table each evening by Henry Percy, twenty-three travelling staff, and between seven to ten high-ranking guests.¹¹⁶ Like the four ‘neats’ feet’ supplied to the earl in the Tower of London in February 1607, the small quantity of meat or jelly yielded by these ‘feet’ – which cost 4d each – was either exclusive to one or a few, or it was eaten sparingly as part of a dish by several people.¹¹⁷

The accounts of the Earl of Derby and of the Shuttleworths in the 1560s and 80s respectively do not give an indication as to whether this type of product was purchased. However, as for Forde and other estates with livestock-rearing capacity, non-purchase does not necessarily mean non-consumption. The provision account book of Ingatestone Hall for the week ending on 14 January 1548 show that Sir William Petre’s

¹¹⁴ P. Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (New Haven, 2008), p. 41.

¹¹⁵ Percy, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Percy, pp. 8-14.

¹¹⁷ Percy, see accounts for week ending 13 February 1607, p. 19.

household consumed just two neats' tongues and two marrowbones during that period; and in the winter of 1551/52, again just two tongues were consumed – on 20 December and 7 January. Thus, our household accounts indicate that this type of food, whether it was purchased ready cured or raw, became more popular with the gentry later in our period as it was bought more frequently and eaten in small quantities.¹¹⁸

But who else was now eating offal? Mennell points out that English cookery books on their own are an ambiguous indicator as to the early modern consumption of offal, for there were few recipes for its preparation until French influence became stronger in the eighteenth century.¹¹⁹ Despite this, however, we see in chapter three that the increasing complexity in its preparation and the extravagant use of enhancing agents called for by recipes in which offal did feature, indicate that the new consumers were those targeted by such manuals – the swelling numbers of people making up the 'middling-sort'. These merchants, lawyers, financiers and other urban professionals and their families could possibly justify paying the market price for these luxuries (see table 2:1). Thus offal, formerly cheap enough for the urban poor and college caterers to buy, probably became a status-marker for a time. But by the 1800s, after it had fallen out of fashion and its price had decreased, it was once again directed at 'the working classes'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Petre, pp. 306, 308, 314.

¹¹⁹ S. Mennell, *All Manners of Food* (Oxford, 1985), p. 312-13.

¹²⁰ C. Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 199; G. L. M. Strauss, *Philosophy in the kitchen* (1885; London, 2006); C. E. Francatelli, *A Plain Cookery Book for the Working Classes* (1852; Stroud, 2007); E. Roberts, 'Working-Class Standards of Living in Barrow and Lancaster, 1890-1914', *Economic History Review* 30:2 (1977), p. 313.

ANIMAL PRODUCT	HOUSEHOLDS				
	Newdigate 1640	Radcliffe 1638	Cecil 1634-35	Reynell 1630	Sackville 1604
Lamb's head	12		12	12	
Neat's tongue	15	10 – 16	6 – 12	11	9
Neat's foot	4	6		4	4
Calf's foot	3	4		3	
Calf's head	24	12 – 14	8 – 18	6	
Calf's intestines				6	
Udder	6	10	12 – 15	6 – 10	

Table 2:1. Prices paid for offal products by five households between 1601 and 1640.

Values, expressed in pence, are the average prices paid in the years shown. Sources: Newdigate, 1640; Radcliffe, pp. 94-158; Cecil, pp.5-62; Reynell, pp. 58-83; Sackville, 1604.

If animal by-products were purchased by households in insufficient quantities to feed servants and 'tabled' tradesmen, then this was also the case with many birds. Although domestic fowl was not a definitive luxury, some poultry was held in esteem as an additional element in a varied diet. But for the historian there is the problem of comparing like with like when analysing the consumption of fowl, for prices often refer to quantities rather than weights which were inherently variable. Given the reasonably comprehensive data in kitchen expenses books, however, it is possible to construct a model of consumption patterns and generalise regarding relative prices. Pullets, being immature hens, were small; pound for pound they were more expensive than chickens, and this reflected their special status as a young, tender bird. Capons, like cockerels, yielded more meat than chickens; but even allowing for the size differential, they were disproportionately expensive (see table 2:2) and were thus highly valued.

At Arbury, whilst hens were usually only purchased during February, the expensive pullet was an occasional acquisition. Capons, however, were bought all year round. Purchases at Gorhambury at the same time indicate a contrast in taste. Although capons were regular but low-volume acquisitions, the Earl of Sussex bought around 145 pullets the first thirteen weeks of 1639. At Quickswood, from October until the end of December 1634, the Cecils' main purchases of domestic fowl were capons and geese. In the New Year, however, either his priorities or the availability of poultry changed,

because from that time until the end of March more money was spent on hens and turkeys than on other birds. Yet throughout most of the six months at this location pullets and chickens were also purchased regularly – and in roughly equal quantities.

During the previous decade, despite or because of the cheapness of poultry in Devon, expenditure by the Reynells on this type of food was low. Between 1627 and 1631 only £1 16s 3d was spent on hens and pullets; and whilst cockerels were regular winter acquisitions, capons were occasional purchases and only one goose was bought. A lack of enthusiasm for domestic fowl amongst this household's elite is clearly evident, as a smaller percentage of their food budget was spent on fowl when they stayed in Exeter with probably fewer servants. Although personal taste was a likely factor in the family's apparent indifference towards poultry, given their ardour for luxury foods, price was also a possible element; a cockerel costing only 1d more than a pigeon was hardly a luxury here in terms of price.

Like the Reynells, Sir Richard Shuttleworth, followed by his younger brother Lawrence, and then Colonel Richard Shuttleworth, farmed their own estate and produced much of their own food at Gawthorpe and Smithills in Lancashire between 1584 and 1613. Whilst the nature of consumption here became more luxurious, particularly at around 1605, chickens along with capons, hens and pullets were consumed by the household throughout the period. The differences between the prices paid by the Shuttleworths in Lancashire, George Vernon in Derbyshire and Henry Percy in London (see table 2:2) demonstrates that regional location is a factor that should be carefully considered when discussing the link between the prices of poultry and their acquisition. And, if gift-foods such as capons or pullets (discussed in chapter four) qualify as luxuries because of their meaning to the benefactor or to their recipient, then their price – relative to that of the chicken – tends to affirm this assumption.

FOWL	HOUSEHOLDS						
	Newdigate (Warks)	Radcliffe (Herts)	Cecil (Lon*)	Reynell (Devon)	Shuttleworth (Lancs)	Percy (Lon)	Vernon (Derby)
	1636-40	1637-39	1634-35	1627-31	1586-91	1586-91	1549
Capon	26-40	27-30	25	10-15	6-8	20	9-14
Pullet	16-22	14-21	20	8	4	16	
Hen	17-21		21	8	4		
Turkey	42	20	58				
Goose	24-38	24-38	26	14			7
Chicken	4-10	8-10	4-14	3	2	4	1

Table 2.2. Prices paid for poultry by seven households between 1549 and 1640.

*Average prices of domestic fowl; values, expressed in pence, are for each bird. *Possibly purchased in London and transported to Quickswood. Sources: Newdigate, 1636-40; Radcliffe, pp. 79-158; Cecil, pp. 5-62; Reynell, pp. 1-105; Shuttleworth, pp. 30-70; Percy, pp. 9-15, 17-18; Vernon, pp. 62-81.*

The prices paid for wild and semi-wild birds also varied according to geographical location, their species, and the month of the ‘bird season’ in which they were purchased.¹²¹ C. Anne Wilson suggests that small wild birds were, in general terms, becoming less popular in the early modern period.¹²² Despite this, between 1636 and 1640 the Newdigates spent 6.45 per cent of their winter meat budget on wild birds. This was a significant intake by at least some members of the household, and does not include both ‘wild’ and ‘tame’ pigeons that were always bought in April and May. In addition, wild teal, wild widgeon and ‘ducks’ (probably domestically-bred waterfowl) were sporadic purchases throughout the year. A ‘duck’ usually cost between 7d and 12d, whilst the teal a widgeon cost 5d to 6d and 6d to 8d respectively. As the latter two water birds were wild and weighed much less than a home-reared ‘duck’, it is evident that a premium was paid for rarer foods that were difficult to obtain and thus considered to be luxuries. This, William Harrison claimed, was the type of food that was most desired by guests.¹²³ Gallinaceous birds were also expensive and were consumed

¹²¹ The bird-eating season was approximately from September until February. For the purpose of this study ducks, pigeons and game birds have been included in the wild bird category. Although these could be home-reared and semi-tame, it is not always obvious that this is the case. Moreover ‘wild’ birds could be kept and even bred in aviaries, thus making a distinction between the two ‘groups’ somewhat ambiguous.

¹²² Wilson, *Food and Drink*, pp. 126-28.

¹²³ Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison*, p. 130.

frugally by the Newdigates. Only one brace of quail costing 2s was bought at Arbury over five years.¹²⁴ Considering their high price relative to their poor meat yield, quail was clearly a luxury food. The same can be said of partridges; only eight of these birds, normally costing 9d each, were entered in the Newdigate kitchen accounts over five years. Other gallinaceous birds were undoubtedly acquired by Sir Richard, but as no more than three were bought at any one time, partridge meat was an exclusive luxury that distinguished the consumption of the family from that of their waged staff.

Another bird that figures prominently in the purchase record of the nobility and gentry is the pigeon. Factors determining their financial value were their status of 'wild' or 'fattened', and the quantity purchased, for there was often a discount for bulk buying. In Warwickshire in the 1630s a wild pigeon cost 2d singly, whilst a 'domestic' one was 4d. However, when the Newdigates purchased five dozen pigeons in 1640 they were charged just 5s.¹²⁵ Although this was a substantial saving for those who could justify the expense of buying 60 birds, each pigeon still cost the same price as a loaf of bread – 1d. Snipe was an infrequent acquisition of the Newdigates, and at 2d each it was expensive for its size. Another bird, the similar looking yet unrelated woodcock that was four times as bulky usually cost the family 9d to 10d. Larks were purchased often, usually by the dozen, and cost the equivalent of 0.3d each for most of the 'season'; but as we will see, their market price increased significantly during the festive season.

Newdigate was not alone in this respect in the 1630s. At Gorhambury, Radcliffe purchased over 900 larks over a seven week period. Snipe, partridge and woodcock also featured as purchases during the first week of 1638. Snipe was an expensive luxury at Gorhambury, possibly because they were relatively scarce in Hertfordshire

¹²⁴ Newdigate, CR/136v140, week ending 1 September 1638.

¹²⁵ Newdigate, CR/136v140, entry for 12 September 1640.

(see chart 2:1). But despite or because of the price £2 13 4d was spent on its acquisition over three months. Exclusive too were some of the birds that the Cecils purchased five years earlier. Sixteen different species were bought for consumption at Quickwood between October and March; these were possibly acquired in London, for the prices paid for partridge and heron closely match those prevailing in the capital where a premium was paid for the acquisition of most birds. Whilst a teal, which was the same size as a pigeon, cost up to 14d in London, pigeons themselves were marginally cheaper in the capital than they were in other locations; here they could be bought for around 2d to 3d each. Some of the other birds purchased by Cecil over a six month period included a heron costing 3s, lapwings at 6d each, bitterns, knots, wintering fieldfares, and almost 2000 larks.

Not all of the gentry, however, sought small birds in large numbers. Reynell's lack of enthusiasm for domestic fowl, it appears, extended to wild fowl. Despite this, the quantity of non-domestic birds paid for by the family increased year-on-year between 1627 and 1631. In that year wild birds accounted for 3 per cent of the household's food and drink budget between September and December. The species eaten at Forde and at Exeter were the same as those consumed at Gorhambury but with one important exception: the Devon locations included consumption of the 'heath-poult' – a much esteemed game-bird, possibly a red grouse, that inhabited the moorlands of southwest England. This rare addition to the table, weighing 1½ lbs undressed and costing 14d, was only ever bought singly. The cheapest birds eaten at Forde House were larks; but even these could be excessively priced for some people when considering their meat yield. This bird had not increased in financial value for two decades however; the 300 purchased by Sir Richard Reynell between 1627 and 1631

cost the same as they had for Sir Thomas Throckmorton in September 1609 – the equivalent of 0.5d each.¹²⁶

Prior to the four consecutive years of poor harvests between 1594 and 1597, the price of birds was relatively low; but whether wildfowl was adversely affected by cold springs and wet summers, or whether suppliers identified a window of opportunity for profiteering at a time of dearth, it is clear from the accounts that the inflated price of wild birds after the mid-1590s did not start to fall until the mid-1630s. In 1546 woodcocks were purchased for 1d by the Vernons; and two years later at Ingatestone Hall, the variety and quantity of birds consumed was similar to those purchased elsewhere almost a century later – albeit at a considerably cheaper rate (see chart 2:1). Although they could be caught in the countryside by resourceful people who had access to nets, traps and ‘engines’, small wild birds were luxuries to people who relied on the market to obtain them; this was because of their poor meat yield relative to their retail price.¹²⁷ But wild birds were ‘necessaries’ to the well-to-do whose culinary expectations were built around variety. The luxurious context in which they were eaten also distinguished their wealthy consumers from those who were poorer. In terms of nutrition and financial outlay they could be substituted by a cheaper alternative in the form of chicken; the appearance of small birds at the tables of the well-to-do was thus a matter of cultural expression.

¹²⁶ Throckmorton, CR/1998/63/16b (week ending 1 October 1609).

¹²⁷ For the catching of wildfowl see G. Markham, *Hungers prevention: or, The whole arte of fowvling* (London, 1621).

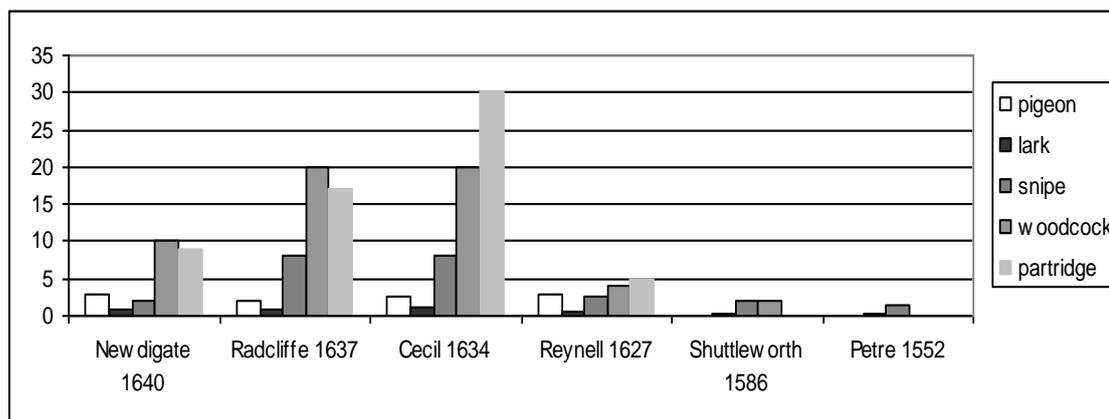


Chart 2:1. Typical prices of some of the more popular wild birds purchased by six households between 1552 and 1640.

Values are expressed as pence. Sources: Newdigate, 1640; Radcliffe, pp. 79-94; Cecil, pp. 5-34; Reynell, pp. 1-7; Shuttleworth, pp. 25-32; Petre, p. 138.

As it was for birds, certain types of fish could be considered luxurious if their prices were pitched beyond the reach of manual workers. One such example was fresh salmon. Although only 2 per cent of their kitchen budget was spent on aquatic food by the Newdigates – mainly on Fridays – £1 5s 0½d was spent on fresh salmon during the second half of the 1630s. Each salmon purchased at Arbury cost between 2s and 2s 6d; and whilst trout was bought for 6d, pike and carp were usually valued at around 10d. Although the latter two fish could grow to a weight of seven lbs or more, which would have made them a viable acquisition to many people, their consumption may have been restricted, at least officially, to the few with rights over pond or stream. Fresh seafood transported from the coast to Nuneaton was expensive; lobsters cost 1s to 1s 6d each, mackerel – the favourite marine fish of the Newdigates – were 3d to 8d, and shrimps cost 1s per 100. Thus fresh seafood could be construed as a luxury in North Warwickshire on the grounds of price alone.

At Gorhambury much of the fish purchased was of the freshwater variety, but fresh salmon – bought for up to 7s 6d each, trout, and eels costing between 1s and 1s 6d – also appear in the accounts. Cecil's kitchen clerk was more adventurous; 27 different types were purchased at Quickwood between the beginning of October 1634 and the

end of March 1635. Here £63 19s 4d was spent on this type of food, which amounted to 6 per cent of the household's total spending on victuals. The prices paid by Cecil – probably for fresh varieties sourced in London – were higher than those paid five years later at both Arbury and Gorhambury, and were far in excess of those paid in South Devon five years earlier (see tables 2:3 and 2:4). Whilst 45 per cent of the fish purchased was high volume, low-value 'saltfish', 'greenfish', whiting and herring – probably enough to feed many of the 60 servants – some of the more esteemed fish was prohibitively expensive to many and was undoubtedly expressive of the earl's family's eminence. Some of the 22 higher-valued species of fish, molluscs and crustaceans are noted here.

FOOD	PRICE	FOOD	PRICE	FOOD	PRICE
Lobster	21-24	Flounders	6-7	Trout	30
Cod	24-84	Salmon	144	Pike	60-66
Sole	18-42	Gurmet	14	Bream	16-36
Skate	12-18	Turbot	90	Carp	18-36

Table 2:3. Prices of aquatic food purchased by the Cecil household in 1634 and 1635.
Values are expressed in pence. Source: Cecil, pp. 5-62.

With the proximity of Reynell's estate to Newton Abbot and Teignmouth, the seafood consumed by the household during the late 1620s was purchased at a fraction of the cost incurred by other families who lived further inland. Even highly regarded fish like the dory and the salmon were relatively inexpensive at Forde. Although the expenditure figures in Reynell's household accounts suggest that fish made up a large portion of the overall consumption, the picture is distorted by the fact that some of the food consumed on the estate was home-produced. Despite this, the £20 16s 1d spent on seafood in 1630 was still impressive; and in addition to saltfish, herring and oysters that accounted for half of the family's seafood expenditure, 23 other types of crustaceans, molluscs and fish – nearly all of which were marine species – were acquired by Reynell. Although hardly any freshwater fish are mentioned in the accounts, Sir Richard may

have availed himself of resources inhabiting local streams and ponds; but perhaps significantly, such fish are also absent from records of gifts given or received.

Apart from lobsters and pilchards that appear regularly in the accounts, especially during the summer, there was no discernable pattern to the acquisition of ‘premium’ seafood at Forde. Various species (listed below) were bought randomly and in small quantities. It seems that marine-sourced food was valued by Sir Richard for the variety that it provided to the top table more than for its role as a staple. Although fish in South Devon marketplaces was inexpensive compared to those being offered for sale in London and at inland locations, the price of foods like salmon, trout and dory still rendered them exclusive. Table 2:4 shows the usual prices of a selection of the seafood purchased by the Reynells between 1627 and 1631, and chart 2:2 indicates the relative contribution made by each of the major types of seafood to the Reynell’s total consumption of aquatic food during the typical year of 1628.

SEAFOOD	PRICE	SEAFOOD	PRICE
Mullet	4	Bass	9
Corfish (salted)	3-5	Pilchards (per 100)	4
Poor john (salted)	1	Conger eel	36
Cod	12	Salmon	12-42
Ling	24	Peal	2
Herrings (per 5)	1	Trout	8
Dory	7-14	Oysters (per 100)	2-6
Hake	8	Lobster	3

Table 2:4. Prices of fish and other seafood purchased by the Reynells in South Devon between 1627 and 1629.

Values are expressed in pence. Sources: Reynell, pp. 1-58.

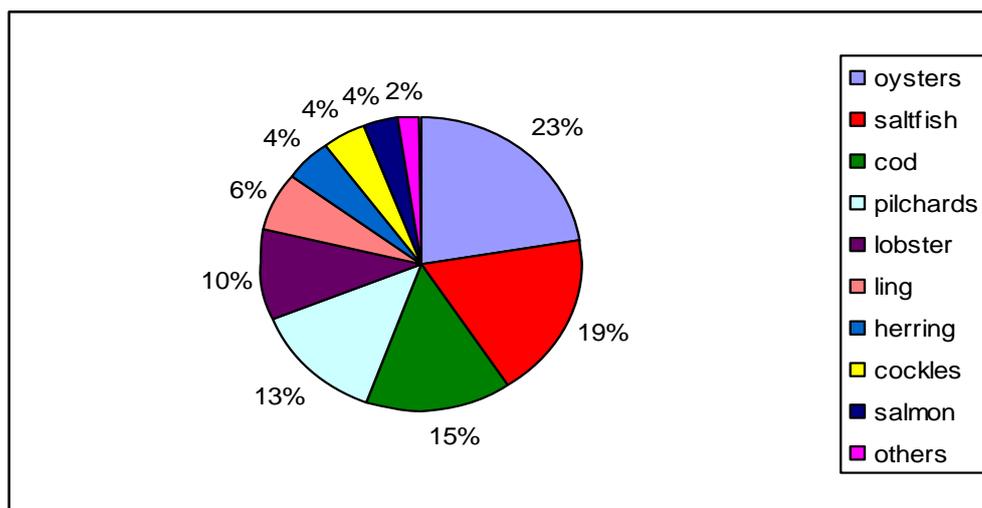


Chart 2:2. Composition of aquatic food consumed by the Reynell household in 1628.

'Others' are mullet, hake and bass. Source: Reynell, pp. 7-35.

Three decades earlier much fresh and salted fish was bought at Preston market by the Shuttleworths. Amongst the luxury fish purchased for consumption at Smithills were salt salmon, costing on average 4s 0d each, and the flat ray-like skate. Skate, an expensive seafood, was particularly popular with the family during the 1590s. Each one normally cost between 1s 4d and 2s 4d; however, on one occasion in 1595, half a skate was bought for 4s 0d.¹²⁸ Freshwater fish was also purchased for consumption at Smithills during the late sixteenth century. These included bream at around 10d, tenchlings at 14d for ten, and 'freshwater trouts'; and at around the same time, carp and its close relative barbell were on the Friday menu of Henry Percy at his London residence.¹²⁹ Purchased in very small quantities these were costly additions to the table at 1s 4d and 1s each respectively. But such luxuries helped to define the status of an earl and his high-ranking guests, and mark the difference between them and their subordinates who were provided with cheaper alternatives. In this there was continuity from the 1540s. Whilst both salted and pickled herrings and ling played a significant part in the fish-day meals of the household in general at Ingatestone Hall, other aquatic

¹²⁸ Shuttleworth, p. 102.

¹²⁹ Percy, p. 18.

food purchased by Sir William Petre included cod (the average price of which was 1s 4d), salmon, the less expensive plaice, and oysters.¹³⁰ The association of fish with fasting, and its low profile or absence at festive occasions, would ostensibly negate its inclusion into the category of luxuries; however, in a similar way to other types of edibles, there were relatively high-priced marine- and freshwater-sourced foods with which the more affluent members of society could be identified.

One of these other types of food was vegetables. Although they were often associated with the rural poor in times past, some herbs were ‘welcomed into upper-class diets’ in medieval times.¹³¹ But some green produce in this category, particularly high-priced premium produce, was increasingly identified with a broader social range of people over the century.¹³² Very few vegetables are recorded in the earlier accounts, and there is no reference to them in either of the selected and published accounts of Sir George Vernon or Sir William Petre in the mid-sixteenth century. But the kitchen expenses book of the Newdigates shows that by 1640 28 different varieties of vegetables, salad items and herbs for cooking and flavouring – in addition to unspecified roots and herbs – were being purchased at least once each week.

Although the price of ‘greens’ were not subject to annual inflation over the last five years of the 1630s, they did fluctuate seasonally. With one lb of beef costing the Newdigates 2½d at this time, potatoes – a relative newcomer to the English kitchen and referred to in our accounts for the first time in May 1636 – were expensive enough at 5d per lb for most of the year; but on occasions their market price exceeded 1s. Whilst another recently introduced vegetable, the Mediterranean cauliflower, also varied in price – costing as little as 2d each or as much as 6d depending on the season, artichokes

¹³⁰ Petre, pp. 140, 142.

¹³¹ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, pp. 284-86.

¹³² Drummond, *Englishman's Food*, p. 96; Wilson, *Food and Drink*, pp. 340-43; Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture*, pp. 31-32.

ranged from 1d to 3d each (see chart 4:4). Cucumbers, radishes and ‘salad’ were purchased at Arbury between the months of May and August; and whilst no individual prices for these items are given in the accounts, an average of around 3d a week was spent on them. The market prices of these various plants were considerably more expensive than those for legumes; and, as they were bought in small quantities, it seems likely that they were intended for the consumption of a select few at the manor house.

At Gorhambury vegetables purchased by the Earl of Sussex account for only a fraction of those consumed by the household. In the estate’s garden both seeds for sowing and edible plants for growing-on were set and cared for during the late 1630s by Radcliffe’s gardener. In addition to the 300 to 400 cabbage plants bought at a cost of 4s 6d to 5s a year, 120 artichoke plants costing 4s 6d were acquired by the earl in London in May 1638.¹³³ The quantity of plants purchased, particularly the latter variety, suggest that providing for the household rather than market gardening was the purpose of this endeavour. And the extra eighteen artichokes bought for 2d each from an external supplier in October that year, together with the clear distinction made between the ‘kitchen garden’ and the ‘great garden’ by the household steward, would seem to support this view. The 120 artichoke plants – whether they were flower-bud ‘globe’ variety or the tubers of the ‘Jerusalem’ sort – were also inadequate to feed all of the elderly earl’s staff. As they cost 2d each they were exclusive luxuries to be enjoyed by a privileged few.

Beets, cauliflowers, watercress and unspecified roots were also purchased for consumption at Gorhambury; and during the first week of 1638 6lbs of potatoes and 100 chestnuts were bought for 4s and 6d respectively.¹³⁴ It is possible that the potatoes and chestnuts were cooked and eaten together, for their association – in taste if not in

¹³³ Radcliffe, p. 171, 185.

¹³⁴ Radcliffe, p. 100.

cookery – goes back to the explorer Pedro Cieza de Leon in 1538.¹³⁵ Legumes, in contrast, remained at the bottom end of the vegetable hierarchy and were still associated with impoverished people in 1639. A bushel of peas costing 3s 8d was cheaper than the equivalent weight of wheat costing 5s 7d, and whilst the latter was fed to his poultry by the Earl of Sussex, of the two bushels of peas that were purchased in March 1639 at least one was specifically allocated to ‘the poor’.¹³⁶

At Quickswood, although most of the vegetables purchased over the winter of 1634-35 were not itemised, 20lbs of potatoes were acquired at the end of February for a cost 3d per lb – a reduced price that may be explained by a discounted bulk purchase. Camomile to the value of 1s and ‘water parsnip’ (the sweet-tasting root of an aquatic plant) worth 8d also feature as kitchen expenses. These herbs, if used to garnish or enhance the flavour of dishes, were bought in small quantities that restricted their consumption to all but a few within the Cecil household. Most of the vegetables purchased for the Quickswood kitchen were, however, described simply as ‘roots and herbs’. This was a catch-all phrase that included ‘all green-leaved plants’ and other ‘garden produce’ that was intended for consumption.¹³⁷ As ‘greens’ accounted for just less than 1 per cent of the overall expenditure on food, it is possible that they supplemented home-grown produce that the clerk of the household omitted from the financial statements.

This was undoubtedly the case at Forde in South Devon. Here the Reynell accounts indicate that the household consumed vegetables ranging from artichokes and samphire, a fleshy coastal plant that usually inhabits cliff faces, to peas and beans. Although very few vegetables were purchased from external suppliers, payments were

¹³⁵ R. Schlesinger, *In the Wake of Columbus: The Impact of the New World on Europe, 1492-1650* (Wheeling, Illinois, 1996), p. 95.

¹³⁶ Radcliffe, p. 145.

¹³⁷ Wilson (ed.), *Country House*, p. 91.

made to at least one gardener for setting legumes during the late winter of 1627-28.¹³⁸ Four hundred and fifty cabbage plants were also purchased during March and April at the rate of 8d per 100, and there was enough work to keep two or three 'weeding women' regularly employed over the growing season. During the weeks when Sir Richard Reynell was staying at his rented accommodation in Exeter, however, the percentage of his overall food expenditure laid out on vegetables increased from 0.5 per cent to around 3.5 per cent (see table 2:5). This, together with the together with the small quantities purchased, suggests that certain greens had become fashionable as consumer products at a high social level. The main types of produce purchased for consumption at Exeter were radishes, cucumbers, onions, carrots and cabbages; the latter were bought for 2.5d each.

<i>TYPE OF FOOD</i>	VALUE	%	<i>TYPE OF FOOD</i>	VALUE	%
Animal meat	555	59½	Animal meat	15107	63½
Fish	78	8½	Fish	3916	16½
Birds	62	6½	Birds	1948	8
Veg., herbs & salad	30	3½	Veg., herbs & salad	131	½
Dairy produce	1	--	Dairy produce	291	1
Bread	114	12	Bread	256	1
Spices & fruit	95	10	Spices & fruit	2272	9½
Total	935	100	Total	23919	100

Table 2:5. Reynell's food purchases during 1629.

On the left is the purchase value of food bought at Exeter over two weeks in September 1629; placed in juxtaposition is the value of the food purchased during the whole year. Values expressed in pence. Source: Reynell, pp. 35-58.

Very few vegetables, apart from legumes, were bought by the Shuttleworths before 1608, during which year an unspecified quantity of carrots and 'herbs' for 3d, turnips for 2d, and radishes, parsley and a cucumber for 2d were purchased. Cucumbers were becoming more affordable; the price paid for this fruit by the Throckmortons in 1609 was 1½d; yet by the 1620s household accounts show that they were commonly

¹³⁸ One example may be seen in Reynell, p. 9.

available for 1d each.¹³⁹ This data lends weight to C. Anne Wilson's assertion that the fruit was by now being eaten all year round.¹⁴⁰ Thus a member of the gourd family that had hitherto been a luxury was, by virtue of its reduced price and wage inflation, available to a broader cross-section of consumers in the early seventeenth century. This might explain the presence of gourds 'or such like' on the menu of servants employed by a bishop in 'about 1605'.¹⁴¹ Herbs and a small quantity of onions were listed as necessary additives in meals taken by the ninth earl of Northumberland and his guests in 1591; and five years earlier cabbage and turnips valued at 14d, and artichokes worth 40d, were consumed by the earl in London.¹⁴² At around the same time Robert Dudley also purchased artichokes. These were particularly expensive, and only a few – perhaps enough to feed a limited number of high-ranking people – were bought for 6d.¹⁴³ The fruit and vegetables that were considered to be necessary to Henry Percy would not have been recognised as such by his great uncle Ingelram Percy 70 years earlier; typically his daily menus, like those of Sir William Petre in the 1540s, excluded any mention of such foods.¹⁴⁴

Given the level of detail with regard to weekly provisions and daily menus at Ingatestone Hall, one might expect vegetables to be mentioned if they were consumed, even if they were home-grown. Any part played by vegetables in the meals consumed at Ingatestone Hall, however, was deemed not worth mentioning by Petre's accounts clerk. Yet despite the lack of reference to greens, their consumption was hardly novel at this time; for such foods had long since been eaten routinely by the rural poor. But from the mid-to-late sixteenth century, greens – or at least those perceived to be of high-

¹³⁹ Throckmorton, CR/1998/63/16a, week ending 24 September 1609.

¹⁴⁰ Wilson, *Food and Drink*, p. 343.

¹⁴¹ Reynell, p. xxv.

¹⁴² Percy, pp. 14, 18.

¹⁴³ Dudley, p. 252.

¹⁴⁴ Drummond, *Englishman's Food*, p. 61.

value – were increasingly being eaten by some of the gentry and by those who aspired to that status. This change in fashion across England was uneven. It appears, for example, that in 1587-88 the Willoughbys of Wollaton Hall were tardy in availing themselves of the kind of high-prices exotic green produce that was being grown commercially at that time.¹⁴⁵

So why did exotic vegetables become fashionable with the gentry? Evidence discussed in subsequent chapters – the festive aspect of greens, their use in fashionable recipes, and the candying of them – indicates that their consumption by the wealthy characterised a growing trend in which an ever-greater choice of consumables was demanded. Arguably, the taste for high-value vegetables was at least partly acquired in order to broaden the range of sophisticated tastes that detached the gentry from their inferiors, and at once made a connective association between like-minded consumers.

Like legumes and the other staples discussed above, another basic food that had a superior counterparts with which the prosperous could identify and be identified was eggs. Eggs could be acquired cheaply throughout most of the century and were bought in considerable quantities by large households. During September and October 1609 5.5 per cent of food and drink purchased by the Throckmortons of Coughton Court was on eggs (although the spending in these weeks excluded any of the bread, ale and butter that were almost certainly received by the kitchen); and in the 1630s eggs accounted for 1.8, 1.7 and 1.96 per cent of the total food and drink purchased by the Newdigates, Cecils and Radcliffes respectively. Based on prices paid by the Newdigate and Sackville households, and on the maximum prices theoretically allowable (see chart 2:3), we can see how eggs became dearer. Five eggs could be bought for 1d in 1544; but although their price had increased sharply during the dearth years of the mid-1590s,

¹⁴⁵ Drummond, *Englishman's Food*, p. 54.

and had risen again to two for 1d by the late 1630s, they were probably still affordable to many. The eggs of turkeys and ducks, then, were an expensive alternative for those who could afford to buy them. Whilst the Cecils purchased six turkey eggs for 4d just once over a period of six months, the Newdigates occasionally bought a small number of duck eggs.¹⁴⁶

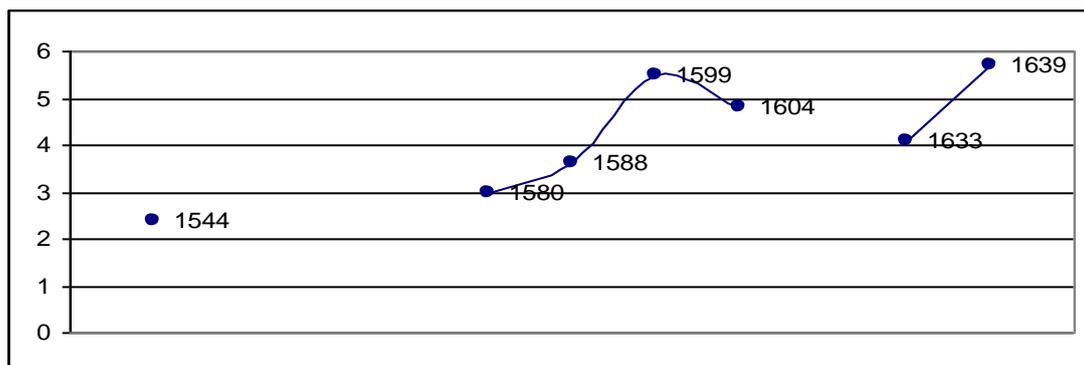


Chart 2:3. Long term movements in egg prices in London and the Midlands between 1544 and 1639.

*The numerical values on the left are pence and prices are for a dozen eggs. Sources: Tudor Royal Proclamations, vol. 1 (London, 1964), 21 May 1544; Tudor Royal Proclamations, vol. 3 (London, 1969), 7 August 1588; Stuart Royal Proclamations, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1983), 14 May 1633; Nottingham, C. Howard, *By the Lord Generall ...* (London, 1599); Sackville, 1604; Newdigate, 1639.*

Other high-priced foods that were used sparingly in the homes of the social elite were spices and exotic fruits. Whilst the latter could be eaten at the table, both of them were used to make sweet treats or added to dishes in order to change their flavour and texture. These relatively expensive and socially expressive foods that added variety to the mealtimes of the well-to-do are considered in the next chapter along with game such as pheasant and deer.

CONCLUSION

Between 1540 and 1640 the diet of labourers and some poor people in England almost certainly extended beyond the basic and monotonous fare assigned to them by their betters and, more recently, by some historians. Despite this their resources were

¹⁴⁶ Cecil, p. 10.

relatively limited, and they were more dependent upon seasonality of supply and regional peculiarities than their social superiors who were able to buy from further afield. But the foods that they were identified with – those that in the eyes of the well-to-do defined and marked their social standing – were the most inexpensive and the most commonly available that money could buy. Household accounts show that, to an extent, this stereotypical image of cheap, basic foods being appropriate to manual workers also applied to low-ranking servants – although many may not have been affected directly by market forces, and some may have availed themselves of opportunities to sample exotic foods from time to time. But here at the estates of the rich and powerful, as elsewhere, the dining experiences of the households were generally sharply stratified. Whilst our evidence shows that this applied to rural and urban households alike, accounts of middling-status yeomen who farmed land in Devon, North Yorkshire and Berkshire suggest that these people too were status-conscious individuals whose awareness of their position was reflected in the foods that they ate and expected others to eat. These wealthy farmers sometimes enjoyed luxurious fare, and at the same time fed their employees with relatively banal food. The gentry and nobility also consumed high-priced foods – at least partly as a means to express their cultural identity. To these people expensive luxuries were necessities – necessary in the sense that they differentiated their consumers from people who could not afford them. The fare that they ate included high-quality variants of staples and exclusive items that were used sparingly.

Twelve sets of household accounts suggest that the gentry and aristocracy enjoyed a strikingly similar diet to each other. Apart from preferences for one basic meat or another, or for certain types of poultry or wild bird – both of which may have been influenced by local custom or traditional availability – there was little to separate

their consumption patterns. Basic and inexpensive produce continued to be sourced in significant quantities throughout the century; but despite this, the luxuries that they ate increased in scope and sophistication as the century moved on. This sophistication appears to be due to foreign and national travel, broad-based networking, the import and specialist production of foods, and an ever-growing print culture that is evident in the array of cookery books published after 1590. By using these books, both high-priced foods and staples could be transformed into luxurious dishes and become important identity markers to those who ate them. Other special foods and the use of recipes to prepare distinctive meals are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

SPECIAL FOODS AND THEIR PREPARATION

By analysing and interpreting household accounts and other evidence, we have seen that many high-priced foods and those purchased in small quantities and used sparingly were often luxuries with which the powerful and wealthy sometimes sought to demarcate their social sphere. These generally contrasted sharply with the inexpensive and (usually) easily obtainable foods that were associated with the lower orders. There are, however, other foods that were in some way special, and these luxuries could also give expression to ideas of ‘self’ and ‘otherness’. In considering these, this chapter first looks at different types of young and tender produce and examines the possible reasons for their popularity at the estates of the well-to-do. Our attention is then focused on game – a food of eminence that was associated with the social elite, before considering the role of spices and fruit in the cooking of exclusive dishes. The second part of this chapter starts by examining recipes and the preparing of these dishes in a way that would broaden the scope of available tastes, disseminate high fashion, and exclude emulation by those of low social rank. We then look at sweetmeats and ‘banqueting stuff’ before moving on to pastries and the purchasing of ready-made meals. Finally, we consider fake luxuries – the consumption of which could fulfil a desire by some to imitate the eating habits of their social superiors.

SPECIAL FOODS

Assigning greater value intrinsically to one food over another can be misleading. As the importance accredited to a food at any particular time depended on the function it was expected to fulfil, value clearly took on more than one meaning. Basic bread, beef and ale were important commodities to the social elite because they enabled these people to

sustain their subordinates and allowed them to fulfil their moral obligations of charitable ‘giving’. Items that were expensive or difficult to obtain, or purchased for festivals or other special occasions, were no less important; these were luxuries that could signify to the self and to others ones social and economic standing. But fresh, young and tender foods were no less special. If eaten appropriately, in surroundings and circumstances befitting the occasion, such foods were as much markers of refined taste – itself a sixteenth century characteristic of people holding authority – as felicitous countenance, composure and luxurious attire.¹ Their consumption was not just a matter of taste and symbolic importance, however; it was also a matter of good health – and these factors converged during the sixteenth century.

Ken Albala has noted that by the middle of the sixteenth century the essence of European literature on regimen had changed significantly. Previously, Galenic theory – where imbalances between humours could be corrected by ingesting appropriate foods that were thought to be either warm, cold, dry or moist – had influenced writers, and had theoretically influenced choice of consumption. But now, as a widening gulf between rich and poor ‘prompted the evolution of food symbolism’, whereby edibles were ‘increasingly invested with social meaning’, dietary prejudices had become class-based.² Many coarse foods that had previously been eaten by everyone, Albala wrote, were now stigmatised and excised from the ideal diet because they were associated with the poor. If customs were becoming accommodated in medical theory in England, as the food historian claims, then this is in part borne out by our findings. But rather than deleting many peasant foods from their diet and replacing them with some of the fine young and tender alternatives discussed here, the elite and middling groups, as we shall

¹ See: G. Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison: The Description of England (1577)* (Ithaca, 1968), p. 126.

² K. Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 2000), pp. 186-87, 192, 204. For changes in attitude in England compare A. Boorde, *A compendious regyment ...* (London, 1547), with H. Butts, *Dyets dry dinner ...* (London, 1599).

see, found clever ways in which to reclaim them and thus broaden the scope of their mealtime choice.

Young and tender foods

Fresh, young and tender meats that had become popular with the ‘high aristocracy’ in the 1400s were, by the late sixteenth century, seen as both delicate and subtly flavoured foods that distinguished their consumers from those who ate coarse meats, and appropriate for the digestion of those who were exempt from manual labour.³ One such delicacy was veal, the tender flesh of a calf. The Newdigates typically purchased veal three weeks out of every four; yet despite this level of frequency only £33 3 9d was spent on it during the five years up to and including 1640. The average amount spent on veal per week by the household was 4s 1d – enough to buy a neck and a breast, but not quite enough to pay for a quarter of a calf which usually cost between 4s 6d and 6s. This might suggest that few people within the household savoured this young, tender meat.

Contemporaries of the North Warwickshire gentleman, the earls of Sussex and Salisbury, also purchased veal every week. But although the average spend-per-week by Sir Edward Radcliffe and Sir William Cecil on this product far exceeded that of Sir Richard Newdigate (£1 2s and £3 8s respectively), it was still a relatively small sum compared to their expenditure on basic meats. In 1603 at his London residence, the Lord Treasurer, Thomas Sackville, purchased around 200lbs of mutton and beef each week at a cost of approximately £2 5s. Yet here too the quantity of veal consumed was comparatively small – just one shoulder was normally purchased each Wednesday for

³ For the eating of these foods in the 1400s see C. M. Woolgar, ‘Meat and Dairy Products in Late Medieval England’, in C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson and T Waldron (eds), *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition* (Oxford, 2006), p. 92.

1s 4d.⁴ And between 30 and 40 calf carcasses a year were consumed by the Willoughby household during the 1590s; but with gentlemen servants and family members making up to 50 per cent of the household, it is probable that the meat yielded by these calves would not have been sufficient to feed lower-level servants regularly.⁵ As the pattern of veal acquisition in 1640 was similar to that which prevailed in our households a century earlier, where the accounting systems allow for this determination, continuity is evident for the status of this meat. At Haddon Hall, for example, there were nine entries for the purchases of veal over three months during 1549 by the gentleman and JP Sir George Vernon.⁶

It seems that the meat of calves was perceived as a food for the enjoyment of those of high or middle rank. So why was veal a food of distinction? Light in colour, subtle in flavour, fine in texture and easily digested, this meat fulfilled the expectations of leisured people with cultivated taste. Its qualities contrasted with those attributed to beef, which were seen as analogous to many of its consumers – relatively strong and coarse.⁷ Although veal was seen to be suited to those of high social status because of its inherent subtle flavour and fine texture, as a market commodity it could be purchased by those of lesser status when financial circumstances permitted. And because of or despite its status, it was occasionally a target of theft. In April 1630, for example, two women ‘rogues’ wandering through Salisbury took a ‘limb of veal by unlawful means’.⁸ Although this ‘limb’ may not have been stolen for their own consumption, such thefts suggest that high-value meat was occasionally available to those who stole it, and to people who were able to buy it on the black-market.

⁴ Sackville, U269/A2/1, kitchen expenses for 1603 and 1604.

⁵ M. Dawson, *Plenti and Grase: Food and Drink in a Sixteenth-Century Household* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007), pp. 34-35, 83, 101-02.

⁶ Vernon, pp. 62-77.

⁷ P. Stubbes, *An Anatomie of Abuses...* (London, 1583), chapter ‘Gluttonie and drunkenesse’.

⁸ P. Slack (ed.), *Poverty in Early-Stuart Salisbury* (Wiltshire Record Society, 31, 1975), p. 57.

Another special food of this kind was the young of domestic fowl – pullets and caponets. Although ‘pullet’ was defined more loosely by contemporaries than the months-old female bird has been in recent times, household accounts show that kitchen clerks were intent on differentiating them from hens, chickens, cocks and capons. Like pullets, caponets were young birds whose flesh was tender and whose price was disproportionately expensive in terms of the meat that they yielded. Both of these young birds were purchased by the Newdigate household; pullets were bought, on average, on about ten occasions annually whilst caponets were acquired somewhat less frequently. As these fowl were usually bought either singly or as a brace, and on no occasion were there more than three purchased, it is probable that very few people Arbury would have access to their meat. The kitchen clerk here was careful to make clear distinctions between young, tender flesh and mature meat in the daybook; thus both geese and goslings, and turkeys and young turkeys are accounted for. On a price/yield basis, a gosling was a premium product that cost the Newdigates over 20d per lb when it was purchased at just a few weeks old in May or June. This ‘greene goose’, like a young turkey, would have been exceptionally tender if it was eaten at that time. The absence of any mention of goslings or young turkeys in many kitchen accounts could suggest that such products were not generally consumed; however, given the similarities between the apparent consuming practices at early seventeenth century manor houses, their inclusion or omission in acquisition records could depend on the level of detail deemed necessary by clerks and auditors.

Certainly Mark Dawson has found that ‘green’ geese were provided for the elite members of the Willoughby household in the late sixteenth century. In 1588 seventeen goslings were consumed, and in 1598-99 thirteen of them were eaten. As at Arbury, these were acquired in the late spring and early summer only; and, at an estimated

edible weight of 1.1lbs each, they would almost certainly have been exclusive to the eight family members and possibly just a few of the fifteen gentlemen servants that made up the 46 strong household.⁹ The possibility that very young birds, like other immature produce, were bought and prepared for consumption by the social elite – even if the age distinction is not made in the accounts – should not be understated. Squabs (plump, tasty pigeons taken from their nests at a pre-fledgling stage) may well, for example, have accounted for many of the 1000 pigeons bought over the six months by Cecil, and for some of the 200 purchased by Radcliffe.

Other young and underdeveloped produce that aided the marking of social and economic status included fry – the young of fish. At Forde House the recorder of Reynell's household accounts thought it important enough to distinguish between salmon and trout on the one hand and peal, the fry of these fish, on the other. The latter, purchased in small quantities of four to six as they became available usually between June and August, imparted a delicate flavour and light texture, and were clearly very special at around 10d for half a dozen. In March 1588 another gentleman lawyer, Richard Shuttleworth, bought ten young tench at Preston market for his family's consumption at his Smithils home in Lancashire.¹⁰ These young freshwater fish with a similar flavour to carp fry were purchased for 1s 2d. The records of kitchen acquisitions tend to suggest that when immature flesh was in season, the household heads availed themselves of enough to treat a few privileged people. But the kitchens of the upper-classes were not the only ones to acquire young fish. Husbandman William Knevett and his partner-in-crime William Pryer were indicted in 1577 for illegal fishing; they had, apparently, caught eighteen trout on two occasions using

⁹ Dawson, *Plenti and Grase*, pp. 34-35, 83, 86, 113-14.

¹⁰ Shuttleworth, p. 50.

undersize nets.¹¹ As the merits of peal to these men or to their customers were clearly understood, it is evident that such special foods were available widely by ‘ways and means’.

Appreciation of fresh and tender foods was not confined to flesh. A premium was also paid by those with both refined taste and adequate financial resources for the flavoursome buds of plants containing undeveloped leaves or petals. Although these could be used for medicinal purposes – their properties thought to rectify imbalances between bodily humours – contemporary cookery books made it clear that they were also suitable for garnishing and improving the flavour of meals. Fresh flower buds costing upward of 8d per quart in 1640 were seasonal acquisitions at the Arbury estate, with broom-buds being purchased in May and rosebuds in July. Because of their relatively long ‘shelf life’ they were sometimes bought in bulk; this meant that some could be added to meals whilst they were still fresh, to lend piquancy to baked or boiled dishes, and that the remainder could be preserved for future use. A cookery book published shortly before Newdigate bought five quarts of broom buds advised on how to conserve them for use in salads and cooked meals.¹² Thus, the 1200 rosebuds bought by the Earl of Sussex for 3s in July 1638 does not necessarily indicate that they were sampled by the entire household; their price, and the knowledge of preservation techniques – with or without the ownership of kitchen manuals – suggests rather that they were used frugally.¹³

Like rosebuds, capers are also the buds of a perennial shrub; the latter, however, were sourced from Mediterranean regions. Costing between 1s and 1s 4d per lb in the late 1630s, this exotic food features in all of our post-1620 household accounts, and also

¹¹ *Calendar of Assize Records, Hertfordshire Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1975), ref. 122.

¹² Anon., *The ladies cabinet opened ...* (London, 1639), p. 48.

¹³ Radcliffe, p. 173.

in the expenses accounts of two assize judges riding the Western Circuit in the 1590s.¹⁴ Newdigate occasionally purchased at least 1lb of these buds at various times between 1638 and 1640; and whilst the Earl of Sussex bought 2½lbs of capers in January 1638, the Earl of Salisbury purchased 12lbs of them in January 1634(5).¹⁵ On 1 October 1630, capers to the value of 3s 6d were also bought by Sir Richard Reynell during his fortnight stay in Exeter.¹⁶ As buds were luxuries to be consumed inconspicuously, their value lay in their service to refined, exquisite taste – and possibly in the self-satisfaction and reassurance that connected the consumption of invisible luxuries with self-esteem. The same could be said of fresh, young flowers and leaves.

Flowers and leaves of plants such as roses, broom, marigolds and cowslips were also purchased for consumption by our households. In October 1586, the kitchen clerk of the Earl of Northumberland purchased ‘flowers’ by the peck for consumption at his London residence.¹⁷ Paying 1s 9d for them he described them as ‘necessaryes’. Although it is unclear whether they were in the form of buds, cookery recipes published at that time illustrate the extra-medicinal use of both blooms and leaves. One book of 1584 stated that along with the ‘vertues’ of prepared herbaceous material to bodily health, the assets attributed to rose vinegar, for example, was the ‘savour and odor of the rose’.¹⁸ There was nothing new about flowers forming part of a meal at this time; instructions on how to create a tart of marigold flowers was contained in a cookery book that was published four decades earlier.¹⁹ But despite this, young flowers and other tender produce to serve the senses were increasingly prescribed in cookery books over the century.

¹⁴ Details of the judges’ meals are discussed in chapter four.

¹⁵ Radcliffe, p. 99; Cecil, p. 43.

¹⁶ Reynell, p. 75.

¹⁷ Percy, p. 18.

¹⁸ J. Partridge, *The treasury of commodious conceits* ... (London, 1584), chapter 6.

¹⁹ Anon., *A Propre new booke of cookery* ... (London, 1545).

By the late 1630s violet and camomile flowers costing around 1s 5d per quart and 4d an oz respectively were purchased by the kitchen clerk at Arbury. Meals containing such ingredients were somewhat expensive and complex to produce if contemporary manuals are a fair guide. Early seventeenth century recipes calling for the use of leaves and petals also required the addition of costly spices and necessitated the employment of baking, roasting and frying facilities. But as flower buds and the most delicate and freshest of produce could be found in fields and by the roadside, they were, of course, available to the rural poor – and indeed to vagrants. The ‘water poet’ John Taylor, in extolling the virtues of a beggarly existence in 1621, identified the types of herbaceous food that was freely obtainable to an indigent roaming the countryside.²⁰ Yet such produce, framed within prevailing circumstances, would have taken on a different meaning. To both masterless wanderers and to gentlemen, rosebuds were an addition to the variety of tastes available; to both ‘sorts’ of people this item could qualify as a necessity in its own right; but the manner in which the food was prepared, and the context in which it was eaten, both characterised and delineated cultural identity.

Game: foods of eminence

There could be no ambiguity with regard to the procurement of foods of eminence, however. Some high-value prestigious foods – difficult to obtain by the non-elite for a variety of reasons – were not only meant for the exclusive enjoyment of the upper-classes and their guests, they were specifically intended to symbolise their consumers’ prominent position in society. This applied to the consumption of game – and especially to venison. And as high social status could be marked not just by the

²⁰ J. Taylor, *The praise, antiquity, and commodity, of beggery, beggers, and begging* (London, 1621), fol. C1.

observable consumption of special foods, but also by the nature of, and factors affecting their procurement, the hunting of deer for venison was circumscribed by and for the social elite through Acts of Privy Council

The attempt that was made to restore ancient royal prerogative for hunting rights to their former glory by James I, following the ‘laxity of Queen Elizabeth’s day’, does not reflect the importance attached to the status of game as a food in the latter half of the sixteenth century.²¹ And despite endeavours in 1603, 1606 and 1609 to limit the acquisition of deer, pheasant and partridge to the elite so that ‘men of small worth’ were excluded from obtaining them, there were many other efforts to control the supply of game before the first Stuart monarch acceded to the throne.²² On 11 November 1577 the lords of the Privy Council sent a letter to the Lord Mayor of London expressing the queen’s concern regarding the trade in pheasants and partridges by the city’s poulterers. Partridge consumption had expanded steadily since the Middle Ages, and because of the great numbers now being caught in the counties and subsequently being sold in London, a governmental decree forbade poulterers in the city from buying ‘any partridges or pheasantes of any persone whosoever’ – or to sell any – for two years.²³ This ostensibly even-handed order was, in reality, directed at the lower orders. These birds, like deer, were associated with the landowning gentry who could still gain access to game, as well the queen knew, by hunting on their own estates and on the estates of others within their social circle. Whether this hunting was a substitute for participation in warfare, as at least one historian has reasoned, or whether it was an exclusive sport with which one might mark his or her hierarchical position, as has been indicated by

²¹ C. and E. Kirby, ‘The Stuart Game Prerogative’, *English Historical Review* 46 (1931), p. 243.

²² D. Beaver, ‘The Great Deer Massacre: Animals, Honor, and Communication in Early Modern England’, *Journal of British Studies* 38:2 (1999), p. 193; *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. I (Oxford, 1973), pp. 14-15, 227-28.

²³ *Acts of the Privy Council*, vol. 10 (London, 1895), see entry for 11 November 1577; N. Sykes, ‘The Dynamics of Status Symbols: Wildfowl Exploitation in England AD 410-1550’, *Archaeological Journal* 161 (2004), pp. 96-97.

contemporary books on the subject, the end result was game on the dining table.²⁴ And as refined taste was a characteristic of the privileged elite, the foods' ultimate consumption served to establish or reinforce a self-identity that was appropriate to the consumer and to the occasion.

Partridges and pheasants, as we will see, were given as gift-foods and featured as part of the fare at special events; but whilst pheasants were rarely purchased (bought only by the brace at a cost of 2s by the Earl of Sussex in 1637 and 1638), partridges occur more often in the kitchen ledgers of the elite. Acquired in quantities that rendered its flesh exclusive to very few household members, this bird appears only occasionally in the Arbury accounts. Just twenty-one were bought on eight occasions during the last four years of the 1630s – usually between the last week in October and the third week in January. At Gorhambury, by contrast, around eighty partridges were purchased by the Radcliffes between December 1637 and the following March; and five years earlier Sir William Cecil bought forty partridges for consumption at Quickwood. Cecil's purchases of this game bird were mainly made in February. At their Forde estate near Newton Abbot, Sir Richard and Lady Lucy Reynell purchased game birds infrequently during the late 1620. The first partridges of the 'bird-consuming season' appear in the accounts in the last week of August; at this time half a dozen or more were usually bought, but from then until mid-January purchases were small and sporadic.²⁵ Of the other game birds purchased by the Devonshire knight, the heathpoult was the most prestigious.²⁶

²⁴ R. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485-1640* (Oxford, 1993), chapter 2. For indication of the intended status of hunters (and thus consumers) of game, see for example: J. Berners, *Hawking, hunting and fishing* (London, 1586); T. Ravenscroft, *A briefe discourse of ... charact'ring the degrees* (London, 1614); G. Gascoigne, *The noble art of venerie or hunting* (London, 1611); T. S., *A ievvell for gentry ...* (London, 1614).

²⁵ The 'bird-consuming season' was approximately autumn and the first half of winter; although pigeons and ducks, like poultry, were eaten at any time of the year.

²⁶ Considering the geographical location, this bird was probably a red grouse rather than a black grouse (as defined by OED).

The sparsity of purchases of pheasants and partridges that is adequately reflected in household accounts does not, of course, rule out further undocumented acquisitions; these could be, and probably were, made by way of hunting with nets, guns, traps or birds of prey. Adjoining Forde House, for example, there was a park owned by Sir Richard Reynell. And in addition to the game birds purchased by Sir William Cecil, his household accounts indicate that a number of partridges and pheasants arrived at the kitchen via the ‘huntsman’ and the ‘falconer’. At the beginning of the seventeenth century – on the eve of his becoming 1st Earl of Dorset – the Lord Treasurer, Thomas Sackville, infrequently bought a couple of partridges for consumption at his London residence. His financial outlay of 1s for each bird would have taken a London craftsman around a whole day to earn at that time. Sackville, speaking at The Bar, had made at least one outspoken appeal for greater charitable giving; but his championing of the less fortunate did not extend as far as sharing partridge meat with his servants – let alone with London’s needy.²⁷ Both the quantity that he purchased and the association of the game bird with the well-to-do prevented this from happening. At other major households too, just enough partridges to feed a privileged minority were purchased. In the third week of October 1586 Thomas Wicliffe purchased for his master, the Earl of Northumberland, just one partridge for each of the first four days of the week.²⁸ And at Ingatestone Hall Sir William Petre’s household consumed a mere five of these birds during the second week of January 1548.²⁹

Although their distribution within the manor houses was carefully regulated, game birds could still be bought from poulterers. Yet at these retail outlets stock was limited and prices were high; and even though proclamations attempted to reduce food

²⁷ Speech of Lord Buckhurst at The Bar on 28 October 1602, in J. Bruce (ed.), *Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple ... Barrister-at-Law* (Camden Society, original series, 99, 1868), p. 73.

²⁸ Percy, pp. 17-18.

²⁹ Petre, p. 306.

prices that were thought to be excessive, the advised maximum prices of some game birds were still set at restrictive levels. Quails, Henry VIII ordered on 21 May 1544, should be sold at 4s for a dozen (4d each); and the price of each partridge, it was proclaimed in February 1634, should be 1s.³⁰ How, then, could they be obtained and consumed by people who would struggle to justify this expense on high-cost low-yield items? Eight months after the Clerk of the Market had issued the 1634 price guidelines, Charles I expressed his concern about the decay in the number of partridges. This was due to ‘persons of sundry quality’ using dogs and nets with which to catch them. In addition to offenders being punished, a Royal Proclamation stated, the dogs and nets were to be destroyed.³¹ Scant regard must have been paid to the words of the king, for a repeated and more forceful warning was issued in December. Acknowledging the ingenuity of poachers of diverse social degree, the monarch decreed that all nets and all engines manufactured for snaring both partridges and pheasants were also to be ruined.³² Innovative poachers, it seems, were catching highly-prized birds and either consuming them themselves or supplying them – presumably at an advantageous price – to other people.

In 1596, during a four-year period of dearth, a labourer in Kent was indicted for grand larceny after allegedly stealing, amongst other birds, seventeen partridges valued at 8s, and a pheasant at 2s.³³ But although many food-related thefts were the subject of indictments at this time of severe hardship, edibles that were highly regarded by the nobility and gentry were seldom targeted by thieves – at least not in Essex, Surrey or Kent. For alleged thieves described as ‘labourers’ (a classification that included vagrants who could not be so described because vagrancy itself was a crime), priority in

³⁰ England and Wales, Henry VIII, *A proclamation ordeined and made by the kinges highness ...* (London, 1544); *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (London, 1983), pp. 408-11.

³¹ *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. II, pp. 434-36.

³² *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. II, pp. 444-46.

³³ *Calendar of Assize Records, Kent Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1979), ref. 2348.

times of shortages and high-prices was often given to foods just beyond, or at the top end of their normal diet, such as rabbits, hens and ducks. Court records also show that many of the alleged felons who were brought to trial for poaching salmon, trout and game were described as ‘yeomen’ or ‘husbandmen’; they too clearly aspired to the consuming standards of their immediate social and economic superiors.³⁴

Like game birds, deer were ‘perceived as currency of rank and honour’, and therefore held the potential to mark identity.³⁵ Venison featured occasionally as a gift-food and was consumed on special occasions (see chapter four); but unlike game birds, this meat was not usually available as a market commodity and therefore does not feature as a kitchen expense in the household accounts. Yet access by the social elite to this food of distinction can be discerned in the accounts on at least two further levels: delivery charges were paid and rewards were occasionally made for the supply of venison or deer, and venison pies and pasties – known as ‘a dainty, rarely found in any other Kingdome’ – are sometimes mentioned as items in stock.³⁶ Although the acquisition of this meat in the kitchen book of Arbury Hall is not alluded to, it would appear that venison featured on at least one occasion here. Inside its front cover there is a hand-written recipe for making ‘a nornerly sised pasty of venson’.³⁷ An ordinary sized pasty was, apparently, sufficiently capacious to require half a peck of flour, three lbs of butter and eight eggs to be used in its manufacture. This information is particularly valuable because contemporary kitchen manuals furnished their readers with all the

³⁴ See for example the circuits between 1596 and early 1598 in *Calendar of Assize Records, Surrey Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1980), *Calendar of Assize Records, Essex Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1978), and *Calendar of Assize Records, Hertfordshire Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1975).

³⁵ Beaver, ‘Great Deer Massacre’, p. 193.

³⁶ F. Moryson, *An Itinerary written by Fynes Moryson gent. ...* (London, 1617), p. 150.

³⁷ Newdigate, CR 136 v 140, inside front cover.

ingredients necessary, including the appropriate spices, but not with the weights or quantities that were to become a feature of later cookery books.³⁸

Members of both the Radcliffe and the Shuttleworth households also ate venison. On 8 October 1637 a 'red deer pie' was carried forward as a food-stock item from the previous week at the Earl of Sussex's Gorhambury residence, and in December 1588 Sir Richard Shuttleworth paid 5s for the delivery to Smithills of a 'fat doe'. In the following August a fat stag and a side of venison were also delivered to the Lancashire hall.³⁹ And two decades later, in January 1609(10), Sir Richards's younger brother, Colonel Richard, paid 2s to a man who delivered venison to his house in London.⁴⁰ The Willoughbys, a gentry family with an income of around £1000, also consumed a considerable quantity of venison each year. In the mid-to-late sixteenth century they hunted deer at Middleton and Woolaton and, for a fee, also hunted at the parks of other landowners.⁴¹ At the start of our period, in September 1549, Sir George Vernon rewarded the keeper of the Derbyshire's High Peak with 5s for the killing of a stag, presumably from his own extensive deer park near Nether Haddon;⁴² and at around the same time much venison was consumed by the Petre household at Ingatestone Hall.

The rewards that issued from country gentlemen and greater nobles for the supplying of deer and venison are indicative of gratitude for the receipt of high-value food with which they could signal their superior social standing. But this valuable meat, like basic beef, could also be tough for 'delicate stomachs' to digest; therefore the problem of digestion was circumvented by allowing it to decay slightly over a period of

³⁸ S. Pennell, *The Material Culture of Food in Early Modern England, circa 1650-1750* (unpublished D. Phil thesis, Oxford, 1997), p. 105.

³⁹ Radcliffe, p. 83; Shuttleworth, p. , 48, 53.

⁴⁰ Shuttleworth, p. 185,

⁴¹ Dawson, *Plenti and Grase*, pp. 22-28, 90, 114-115.

⁴² The Vernons established their deer park near to Nether Haddon in the fifteenth-century; see A. Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: The Peak Country 1520-1770* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 245.

time.⁴³ The financial cost of many foods could render them exclusive; venison, however, was not in this category, since its acquisition was theoretically restricted. Even so, its consumption in practice was not limited to the families and guests of nobles; so who acquired venison, and how? Astronomer and natural scientist John Dee, who inhabited a communal sphere that included people of the highest degree, including the queen whom he apparently advised, shows that he was familiar with its taste; as was the successful merchant John Johnson who hunted deer by warrant.⁴⁴

Many other middle-ranking people, as we shall show, ate venison now and again; but much to the annoyance of the elite and their governmental representatives this meat was also sporadically accessible to those of lower social standing. On 29 November 1621, the same year in which Gervase Markham's book on how to trap and snare fowl by using diverse 'engines' had been published, a letter was sent by the Privy Council to the High Sheriff of Sussex reminding both him and the Justices of the Peace of their obligation in preventing the 'vulgar sort' from further depleting the stock of 'deer, phesantes, partridges ...', with their 'gunes, nettes, dogges, cross-bowes ...'. Four days earlier The Council had ordered that £4 was to be paid to the constable of Stratford Langton 'for his paynes' in capturing four poachers who stole deer.⁴⁵ As this luxury food was considered a resource of the social elite, it should perhaps not surprise us that representatives of the landowning class were handsomely rewarded for apprehending any of the 'vulgar sort' who threatened to render meaningless the insignia of high-status and superiority. As a counterbalance to the 'carrot' of reward, there was the 'stick' of punishment for anyone who aided or harboured such offenders. In 1623 a

⁴³ Albala, *Eating Right*, p. 158.

⁴⁴ J. O. Halliwell-Phillips (ed.), *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee, and the Catalogue of his Manuscripts* (Camden Society, original series, 19, 1842), pp. 13, 41-42; S. Bond, 'John Dee and Christopher Saxton's Survey of Manchester (1596)', *Northern History* 42:2 (2005), p. 275; B. Winchester, *Tudor Family Portrait* (London, 1955), p. 133.

⁴⁵ G. Markham, *Hungers prevention: or, The whole arte of fowvling* (London, 1621); *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, vol. 36 (London, 1932), see entries for 24 September and 29 November 1621.

proclamation was issued for the apprehension of Henry Field who made an occupation out of stealing deer and selling them; severe punishment was promised for anyone harbouring or maintaining this man who was effectively broadening the consumer-base of the cherished meat.⁴⁶ And in May the following year a proclamation for the apprehension of Edward Ekins, who had killed and stolen ‘our deare’ from ‘Higham-Ferries’, warned that anyone protecting him would be proceeded against ‘with all severitie’.⁴⁷

The severity with which accomplices were to be punished reflects not only the seriousness with which the elite-sponsored authorities viewed the theft of nobles’ property, but also their anxiety at the status-marking property falling into the hands of the unentitled. As such, the felonious acquisition of large quantities of grain, cheese or ale could be, and often was, viewed less seriously than the theft of silk, silverware and deer.⁴⁸ When announcing on 15 April 1587 that a stag intended ‘for the use and pleasure’ of The Queen was ‘slue and carried away’ by ‘certain lewd and licentious persons’, the Privy Council ordered the apprehension and commitment to gaol of the offending ‘delinquents’ ‘with all due speed’. This was because the consumption of deer by the non-gentry was intended to be by invitation only. Thus, three months later, the lords ordered that ten bucks should be sent to Peterborough to be eaten at the funeral ‘supper and dynner’ of the ‘late Scottyshe Queene’.⁴⁹

Portraying poachers of game in such colourful language was neither new in James’s time, nor in Elizabeth’s. On 2 May 1554 Queen Mary had issued a proclamation relating to the use and abuse of the forests of Whittlewood and ‘Sawcy’.

⁴⁶ England and Wales, James I, *a proclamation for the apprehension of Henry Field* (London, 1623), in *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. I (Oxford, 1973), p. 577.

⁴⁷ England and Wales, James I, *By the King a proclamation for the apprehension of Edward Ekins* (London, 1624).

⁴⁸ This is evident from entries in the Calendar of Assize Records for Kent, Essex and Surrey (see bibliography for details).

⁴⁹ *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, vol. 15 (London, 1897), see entries for 15 April and 14 July 1587.

The problem of the wasteful felling of trees and coppicing that hampered the sporting pursuits of the gentry was compounded by the ‘extreme dealings of such light persons of the meaner sort’. Whilst gentlemen were reminded that they must not kill deer out of season, the most scathing of official wrath was directed at poachers from the lower orders of society who were accused of seeking, ‘by night as by day’, ‘the utter ruin and destruction of our game for the commodity of the flesh’.⁵⁰ Yet poaching was by no means the only method of covertly acquiring venison, nor was its acquisition always effected by men.

Although some men either occasionally or habitually stole animals to be converted into meals, women too could be involved in food crime – and on many levels. Some stole both basic and luxury foods, either independently or with the assistance of other women or men; they were sometimes the recipients of stolen foods; it was often they who prepared the carcasses for cooking; and it was frequently women who ‘were active in converting such commodities into tasty dishes’.⁵¹ On the 3 January 1606 Elizabeth Sherwood – one of the alleged ‘foreign’ idlers and wanderers that Salisbury Council was accustomed to whipping and sending back to their place of birth – was spared the beating in consideration of her pregnancy, but was given a passport to her home town of Bristol. She had compounded her sin of idleness with stealing venison from the house of a Mr. Sidenham.⁵² Sherwood may have been an unfortunate victim of prevailing economic circumstances in the wake of the years of high prices and food shortages between 1594 and 1597, or she may have been an incorrigible rogue who neglected her social responsibilities. But one must wonder why, at this festive time, the

⁵⁰ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (London, 1969), pp. 42-43.

⁵¹ G. Walker, ‘Keeping it in the Family: Crime and the Early Modern Household’, in H. Berry and E. Foyster (eds), *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), p.76; G. Walker, ‘Women, Theft and the World of Stolen Goods’, in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), pp. 81-104.

⁵² Slack (ed.), *Poverty*, p. 37.

woman chose to steal away venison in preference to an alternative type of meat that would probably have been available, and to which she may have been accustomed. This prestigious meat may not necessarily have been for her own festive enjoyment, but its theft by a vagrant indicates that venison was at least occasionally obtainable by many 'sorts' of people if they could afford the black-market price. This obtainability extended the boundary of the food's consumption outwards and thus threatened its capacity to mark hierarchical primacy.

Another method of obtaining venison was by the use of subterfuge. Fraudulently claiming 'fee deer' from forests, chases and parks by 'sundry persons under pretence of their offices' was a concern of Charles I. In May 1626 it was pointedly remarked that there was 'no such right belonging to any such subjects' other than for principal officers who had been granted that right. The tone of this proclamation, like the tenor of the previous communiqué, left little doubt that the consumption of game, and especially venison, was viewed as an identity marker of the social elite. It is equally clear, however, that such foods found their way to the tables of those of questionable pedigree. Any subjects attempting to acquire fee deer, or wardens falsely serving warrants with which to obtain them, the order ominously stated, will 'feel our displeasure'.⁵³ Sometimes false warrants did not need to be issued for those of relatively low rank to enjoy this food; nor was there always the need to steal away deer under the cover of darkness. The fences of parks 'were frequently in a state of disrepair', and villagers, on seeing deer damaging their crops (or allegedly seeing them do so), took the opportunity to kill the animals – sometimes with the aid of dogs. It was claimed in a court case that smallholders in a Lincolnshire village killed forty deer between 1618 and 1620. Some of the venison was allegedly taken by villagers to

⁵³ *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (London, 1983), p. 89.

unlicensed alehouses where it was ‘riotously’ consumed ‘in banqueting and feasting’, whilst ‘other parts thereof’ were distributed to ‘other persons of like lewd behaviour’.⁵⁴

So what was the attraction of venison to the poor folk of this county? The geographical landscape of the county and the predominant climatic conditions lent themselves to successful arable farming and root-crop growing. And although the availability of sufficient food was subject to many factors, such as those of distribution management and changes in agrarian structures and land usage, they do not seem to have been problematic during 1618, for this was a year in which the Tillage Act was repealed due to the abundance and cheapness of grain. Given the number of deer killed and consumed over the period, it is also unlikely that curiosity regarding its taste was a factor. One attraction of venison was that it could only be obtained illicitly by many; this may therefore have increased the pleasure of eating it. Another reason for the disposal of deer might be social protest – especially when there was unresolved dispute or altercation between a lord and his tenants. But yet another possible explanation for the meat’s consumption by ‘light persons of the meaner sort’, and by other villagers of middling-status, was their intent to express through emulation or imitation a desire to blur or to transgress the social boundaries between themselves and their superiors. If, on the other hand, the reason for its consumption can be explained by these people having obtained an appetite for the meat over time, then the perceived sophistication associated with its consumption had diffused through the ranks and had obscured signs of social differentiation. Either scenario would require the gentry and the nobility to refine their meals through the use of sophisticated culinary methods and the addition of expensive or difficult-to-obtain ingredients in order to re-establish the status quo.

⁵⁴ Manning, *Hunters and Poachers*, pp. 135-36, 152-54.

Spices and fruit

The refinement of meals could be achieved through the addition of high-priced and socially expressive ingredients whose function it was to enhance dishes by changing their flavour or texture. These items are spices – including sugar and dried fruit – and exotic fruits. Often sold as a result of long-range trade, they were expensive and usually purchased in small quantities in order to facilitate diversity in diet for both the wealthy and those of high social status living in urban areas.⁵⁵ And although Stephen Mennell has said that some of the English gentry in rural areas may have remained reliant on home-produced or locally sourced foods, our accounts reveal that exotic foods were readily available and purchased by other country gentlepeople during their occasional, if not frequent visits to London and other towns.⁵⁶

Expensive spices that accounted for a large proportion of the food budget of our households, especially towards the end of the period, were meal enhancers that could convey cultural meaning. The enduring concept put forth by some food historians according to which the use of spices in medieval and early modern cooking was to mask the tainted flavour and aroma of substandard or deteriorating meat, has correctly been challenged by others.⁵⁷ Whilst Stephen Mennell states that spices were ‘expected to be used with fresh meat too’, and Paul Freedman points out that the bad taste of spoiled meat would not, in any case, be substantially allayed by spices or anything else, Christopher Dyer introduces a cultural aspect to the argument by explaining that spices ‘provided a link with the sophisticated Mediterranean world’.⁵⁸ To these observations we might simply add that if one was wealthy enough to buy spices costing between 6s

⁵⁵ F. Fernandez-Armesto, *Food: A History* (London, 2001), p. 126.

⁵⁶ S. Mennell, *All Maners of Food* (Oxford, 1985), p. 131.

⁵⁷ See for example: J. C. Drummond, *The Englishman's Food* (London, 1957), p. 36.

⁵⁸ Mennell, *All Maners*, p. 53; P. Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (New Haven, 2008), p. 3; C. Dyer, ‘English Diet in the Late Middle Ages’, in T. H. Aston, P. R. Coss, C. Dyer and J. Thirsk (eds), *Social Relations and Ideas: Essays in Honour of R. H. Hilton* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 194.

and 14s per lb, one would almost certainly be happy to write off spoiled meat as conspicuous wastage – a hallmark of the cultural identity of the elite – and buy some of better quality.

Spices, whether bought for culinary or medicinal use, were expensive enough in the Middle Ages; and although their prices were declining after 1600, it was not by enough to make them more affordable to the ‘poorer sort’ and at once less appealing to the gentry. This did not occur until ‘well after’ the medieval period in France – in the era of Louis XIV (1638-1715), and then later in Italy and Northern Europe.⁵⁹ The findings of Paul Freedman are substantiated by many household accounts of the early seventeenth century, confirming, as they do, that the substances continued to be much sought-after and were often purchased for special occasions.⁶⁰ Freedman cites wages of skilled London craftsmen to indicate the value of spices in 1439. But in the table below their continued exclusivity is highlighted by reproducing these figures in juxtaposition to those applying to craftsmen in York two centuries later – a time when the purchasing power of artisans had fallen by 50 per cent since 1450 due to a steady erosion of the real wage.⁶¹ Donald Woodward’s data shows that in 1639 a skilled labourer’s daily wage was 14d; and in the same year Newdigate paid 6d, 11d and 8d for each ounce of cinnamon, mace and cloves respectively, and 13d for a pound of sugar.⁶² Thus, although it is unlikely that labourers would have bought spices by the pound, if at all, we are able to produce this table to serve as a comparison between the affordability of spices in 1439 and in 1639.

⁵⁹ Freedman, *Out of the East*, pp. 3, 46, 216-17, 220-23. See also J. Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London, 2007), pp. 316-17.

⁶⁰ After having normally accounted for up to 5 per cent of the food expenditure of the well-to-do in medieval times (Dyer, ‘English Diet’, p. 194), expenditure on spices relative to overall disbursement appears to have fallen slightly in the 1540s before rising to 8.6 per cent in the 1630s (all data includes purchases of sugar).

⁶¹ P. Bowden, ‘Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents’, in J. Thirsk (ed.), *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. IV, (Cambridge, 1967), p. 599.

⁶² D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 275.

SPICE	1439	1639
SUGAR	2	0.9
CLOVES	4.5	9.2
CINNAMON	3	6.8
SAFFRON	30	--
MACE	--	12.6

Table 3:1. Relative cost of spices to a skilled labourer in real terms in 1439 and in 1639.

The numerical values indicate the number of days a skilled labourer would have to work in order to purchase one lb of any given spice (assuming the individual received no other income and this was his only purchase). For examples of wages and prices used in these calculations, see text above the table. Sources: Paul Freedmen (2008), p. 127; Newdigate, 1639; Donald Woodward (1995), p. 275.

Not all well-to-do households still consumed vast quantities of spices. During the sixteenth century the ‘supporting role’ of these luxury ingredients that turned food into cuisine in the kitchens of the Willoughby household was cut back significantly. By 1599 there was a reduction both in the weight and range of spices purchased, with the only apparent exception being nutmeg, a spice that was associated often with sweet dishes rather than savoury ones. There was also a reduction in the quantities of sugar purchased, with amounts at the end of the century dropping back to their 1520s level.⁶³ At Sir John Newdigate’s Arbury in 1612 and 1613, and at the London residence of the Lord Treasurer, Lord Buckhurst in 1603-04 too, kitchen expenditure records reveal no purchases of spice – although their acquisition may have been entered into different account books. If we accept that the cookery books discussed below were hopelessly out of touch with current trends – still advocating the use of ingredients that had long since gone out of fashion – we might conclude that this, along with the aforementioned three sets of accounts, suggests that the demise of spices as a fashionable luxury occurred in the mid-to-late sixteenth century. Whilst this is a possibility, it is not what Freedman thinks. He places the move towards to plainer foods in England much later – in the Georgian era, not in the Stuart or Tudor periods. In this respect, the findings of this thesis concur with those of Freedman.

⁶³ Dawson, *Plenti and Grase*, pp. 174, 187, 195.

The types of ingredients called for in some late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century printed kitchen manuals correspond to those bought by gentlemen and nobles such as Reynell, Shuttleworth, Newdigate, Cecil and Radcliffe. Some spices had gone out of fashion, but the array that were bought included cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, mace, ginger, saffron, sugar, pepper and liquorice. These were deemed to be so important that they made up between 3.8 per cent and 8.1 per cent of the total household expenditure on food and drink. Further, although Lord Buckhurst's accounts do not mention the acquisition of spices amongst the banal and the luxury foods that he purchased, neither do they mention herbs, vegetables or fruit. Whether Thomas Sackville preferred plain cuisine or not, purchases made over the festive season – a time when, on the basis of other sets of accounts, one would expect to find spices mentioned – are conspicuous by their absence. The diminishing quantities of spice purchased by the Willoughbys in the late sixteenth century may be explained by expanding on Mark Dawson's observation. 'With regard to sugar consumption', Dawson points out, '...the Willoughbys may have had to temper their appetite for high living with the reality of their worsening financial situation'. Such a predicament, however, could also explain the reduction in the quantities of other spices purchased for consumption at Middleton and Wollaton; spices that were kept under lock and key 'due to their value'.⁶⁴ This value, as we will see below, was clearly illustrated in up-to-date cookery books that publishers claimed had been 'augmented', or included 'new additions', or incorporated 'new English and French fashions'.⁶⁵

In the 1630s, as in earlier times, there was a correlation between the expensiveness of spices and the symbolic value attached to them. The more expensive products – cloves, nutmeg and mace for example – conferred well-being and social

⁶⁴ Dawson, *Plenti and Grase*, pp. 202, 210.

⁶⁵ These books are discussed below.

distinction; and, as they were sourced from far-off lands, they probably qualified as some of the ‘deare bought and farre fetcht’ items that the rich demanded according to Caleb Dalechamp.⁶⁶ Thus, a variety of spices including sugar and dried fruit, and fresh fruits, were bought by the Newdigates at irregular intervals and in small quantities during the late 1630s. Whilst apples and pears were inexpensive, some of the more exotic fruits were relatively high-priced (see table 3:2). Although figs were bought for 6d per lb at Arbury, the more exotic – perhaps fresh ‘blue figs’ (usually associated with the Far East) – cost the Newdigates 1s 4d per lb.⁶⁷ And dates, purchased in quantities sufficient only for a few family members to enjoy, were also probably imported fresh at a cost of 2s per lb. Oranges acquired at Arbury were also relatively expensive. As the accounts identify the few occasions on which they were bought in a preserved state, these too were fresh and could possibly have been either the sweet variety imported from Portugal or grown at an orangery closer to home. But from wherever they were sourced, no more than 2lbs were purchased at any one time. Other fruit purchased at Arbury included medlars, pineapple and both red and black cherries – the latter sort being more expensive. Costs incurred at Arbury for other exotic foods such as high-value spices, various oils and nuts are shown together with the Newdigates’ annual expenditure on these products in table 3:3. Chart 3:1, conveying the monthly breakdown of purchases on such goods and comparing it with that of Reynell, shows the trough in spending at Arbury when Sir Richard Newdigate was away at court, and the peak in Sir Richard Reynell’s spending during October when he made extra purchases whilst staying at Exeter.

⁶⁶ C. Dalechamp, *Christian hospitality handled common-place-wise ...* (Cambridge, 1632).

⁶⁷ Newdigate, CR/136v140, week ending 16 December 1637.

FRUIT	PRICE
Apples	1.4 – 4 (for 10)
Pears	1.6 – 3.2 (for 10)
Quinces	11 – 16 (for 10)
Cherries	4 – 8
Dates, fresh	24 – 28 (per lb)
Oranges	30 (per lb)

Table 3:2. Prices paid for fruit at the Arbury estate in Warwickshire during 1639. Values are expressed in pence. Source: Newdigate, 1639.

PRODUCT	PRICE	VALUE OF PURCHASES
Sugar	13	2886
Currants	5	258
Raisins	5	299
Prunes	2	32
Figs	4	96
Olives		2
Capers	14	52
Pepper	24	28
Nutmeg	64	60
Aniseed	10	4
Ginger	16	4
Cloves	128	48
Cinnamon	96	22
Mace	176	76
Liquorish	128	24
Almonds	16	43
TOTAL		3934

Table 3:3. Prices of dried fruit and spices, and the value of the purchases of the same at Arbury in 1640.

Prices are per lb and all values are expressed as pence. Source: Newdigate, 1640.

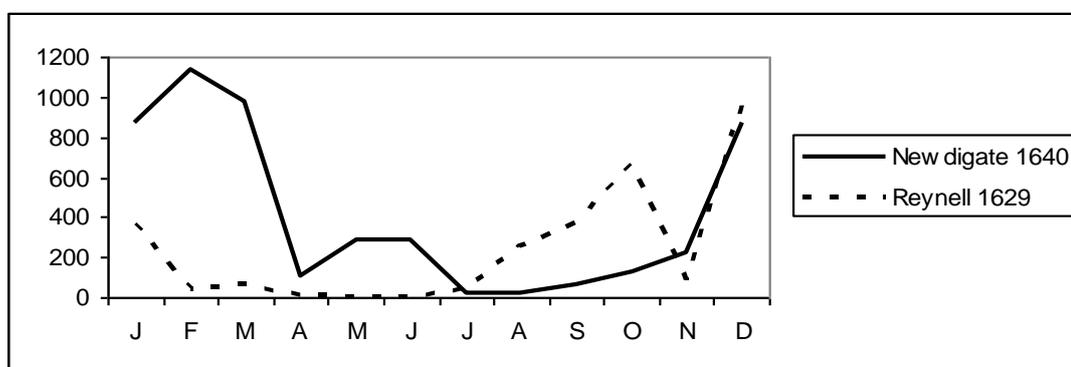


Chart 3:1. A comparison between monthly fruit and spice purchases of the Newdigates in 1640 and the Reynells in 1629.

Spices include sugar; values are expressed in pence. Sources: Newdigate, 1640; Reynell, pp. 35-58.

The data extracted from Newdigate's kitchen daybook demonstrates the importance attached by the family to these expensive and socially expressive foodstuffs. Over the five years between 1636 and 1640, 15.2 per cent of the household's total food budget was afforded to spices and fruit. Although much of this was used to enhance the flavour and texture of tasty dishes, some of the fruit, the accounts make clear, was table fruit. The spice consumed at the same time at Gorhambury is no less impressive. Those purchased by the 79 year-old Earl of Sussex matched almost exactly the types bought by the 37 year-old lawyer and future baronet from Warwickshire. The prices paid for most exotic foods by both households were comparable, but whilst Newdigate occasionally bought saffron to the value of 6d – a minuscule amount when one considers that the price of this spice was 5s per oz – half an oz was purchased by the kitchen clerk at Gorhambury and used in cooking during the New Year of 1638.⁶⁸ In addition to spices, many apples and citrus fruits were consumed by the Radcliffe household. Purchased by quantity rather than weight, oranges and lemons cost the earl 7d for ten, whilst olives and dates were 6d per pint and 2s per lb respectively. Cherries, enjoyed infrequently by the Newdigates, appear also to have been an occasional treat for the earl; 6lbs were purchased in London at a cost of 3s.⁶⁹

Expensive spices and exotic fruit were also important to the Cecils; and of the £66 17s 3d spent by the Earl of Salisbury on this category of food over six months, 11.4 per cent was on fruit specifically designated for the table. Such foods were also valuable to the Devonshire lawyer Sir Richard Reynell. In 1628, spices and fruit accounted for 9.5 per cent of his overall food and drink budget. This lawyer's taste and sense of fashion in exotic foods may have been acquired through his networking links in London. Not all lawyers were successful, and many below the levels of benchers and

⁶⁸ Radcliffe, p. 98-99.

⁶⁹ Radcliffe, p. 173.

barristers were poor; but both Newdigate and Reynell prospered. And as the most prosperous could earn up to £400 a term, they may well have had the means and the incentive to acquire sophisticated culinary tastes and blur the social boundary between themselves and the nobility.⁷⁰ When compared to the prices paid by the Newdigates, those paid by the Reynells for spices (table 3:4) indicate that there was little movement between 1627 and 1640.

PRODUCT	PRICE	VALUE OF PURCHASES			
		1628	1629	1630	1631
Sugar	12	801	1332	1422	1618
Currants	5	181	261	107	144
Raisins	3	93	151	26	21
Olives		0	32	0	42
Capers		0	0	42	0
Pepper	24	76	67	63	18
Nutmeg	64	82	16	36	0
Saffron		0	4	7	2
Aniseed		0	3	0	0
Ginger	140	14	0	4	24
Cloves	140	70	63	28	0
Cinnamon	70	36	64	45	0
Mace	168	84	84	35	0
'Spice'		12	12	0	*640
TOTALS		1449	2088	1814	2509

Table 3:4 Prices and the value of spices bought by the Reynells between 1628 and 1631. Prices are per lb; all values are expressed in pence. *640 (£2 12s 0d) was spent on unnamed spices that excluded sugar which was purchased separately. Source: Reynell, pp. 7-105.

Not all spices, however, were still status markers in the early seventeenth century. Pepper, which had been very popular, was now 'in danger of losing its position within the sphere of upper-class taste'.⁷¹ In 1627 the substance could be bought for around 24d per lb. Due to production cost-cutting measures taken to meet demand-driven expansion its price had dipped to this value between 1603 and 1612,

⁷⁰ For the prosperity of lawyers see: W. R. Prest, *The Inns of Court Under Elizabeth I and the Early Stuarts* (London, 1972), pp. 22, 47; W. R. Prest, *Rise of the Barristers: A Social History of the English Bar, 1590-1640* (Oxford, 1986), p. 129.

⁷¹ Freedman, *Out of the East*, p. 43.

having been 46d per lb between 1593 and 1602.⁷² Thus, after 1627, it accounted for a mere 2 per cent of Reynell's spending on spices and only 0.5 per cent of Newdigate's.

Sir Richard Shuttleworth had paid 3d per oz for his pepper in 1583; and although other spices were not untried by him and his family – £4 17s 5d having been spent on them in London in September 1595 – the scope of those consumed by the household increased significantly as their taste in food developed from around 1605.⁷³ Mace at 7s 6d per lb, cinnamon at 4s 0d, nutmegs at 3s 8d, cloves at 1s 10d and saffron are examples of purchases by this family in the early seventeenth century. In 1561 the Earl of Derby, who had over 100 staff, many of whom were gentlemen themselves and would therefore have received meals appropriate to their station, spent £131 13s 4d on spices and fruit.⁷⁴ Although this amounted to an impressive 8 per cent of his overall budget on food and drink, it was still 1.5 per cent less than Reynell spent on spices and fruit relative to his overall food budget 68 years later.

Contemporary with Edward Stanley's expenditure on this type of food was that of the queen's favourite Robert Dudley. The future earl who purchased high-value foods frequently bought many spices and fruits. These included sugar at 1s 4d per lb, pepper at 2s 8d, quinces at 2s 6d, 'Genoway' plums (as opposed to cheaper plums) for an extravagant 10s 0d per lb, and pomegranates for 1s 4d.⁷⁵ And Elizabeth herself, when she was a princess living at Hatfield in 1551-52, spent £119 13s 7½d on such special foods.⁷⁶ Petre's expenditure on spices, however, was rather modest – especially when compared with that of the gentry a century later. In 1543 just £3 16s 2d was spent

⁷² C. H. H. Wake, 'Changing Patterns of Europe's Pepper and Spice Imports ca 1400-1700', *Journal of European Economic History* 8:2 (1979), pp. 361-403; J. Appleby, 'Consumption in early modern social thought' in J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993), pp. 165-66.

⁷³ Shuttleworth, pp. 20, 104. An increase in the frequency of spice purchases is evident from p. 139 onward.

⁷⁴ Stanley, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Dudley, pp. 92-96, 139-48.

⁷⁶ P. C. S. Smythe (ed.), *Household Expenses of The Princess Elizabeth During her Residence at Hatfield* (Camden Society, original series, 55, 1853).

on these foods – an amount that represented 3.44 per cent of all the food and drink accounted for. The spices bought included 6 lbs of pepper at 1s 11d per lb, raisins at 1.5d, cloves at 4s 8d, mace at 6s 8d, and nutmegs, cinnamon and ginger. Also included in this sum was 60 lbs of sugar for a discounted price of 7d per lb.⁷⁷ A bulk discount for sugar, as for many other foods, was not uncommon, for another example shows that in October 1589 half a hundred of sugar (50 lbs) was purchased by gentlewoman Joan Thynne at Longleat for 8d per lb.⁷⁸

The use of sugar appears to have increased in their kitchens. Although sugar was still an expensive luxury at over 1s per lb and had not yet fallen out of fashion amongst the rich, it was almost certainly experienced by servants as an integral component in many dishes. The eventual reduction in the economic value, and thus the retail price of luxury foods – bought about by factors such as direct trading links, development, and oversupply following demand-driven growth – helps to explain the *incentive* behind their widespread procurement at lower levels. It does not, however, elucidate the *reason* for their broader-based desirability. This can be found in the acquisition for their taste whilst being sampled; for although luxury foods were ‘reserved mainly for members of the family’ and others eating at the top table, they were at least occasionally ‘passed to the lower tables and to the poor’.⁷⁹ If the taste for sugar had expanded across a broader base of consumers in the first half of the seventeenth century, one might expect to find that those of high social degree would maintain their identity markers by purchasing sweeteners that had undergone novel or sophisticated preparation. Evidence from the household accounts indicates that this might have happened. Although different types of sugar were now available on the

⁷⁷ Petre, p. 301.

⁷⁸ A. D. Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne 1575-1611* (Wiltshire Record Society, 38, Devizes, 1983), p. 6.

⁷⁹ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 210; Mennell, *All Manners*, p. 56.

market and could have been purchased for a variety of reasons, between 1637 and 1639 the accounting clerk of the Earl of Sussex thought it important enough to distinguish between five grades of the crystalline substance that were bought for the Gorhambury household. These were single refined sugar, double refined sugar, hard sugar, lump sugar and powder sugar. And in the last week of 1640 the Newdigates purchased ‘spiced sugar’ for 10s 8d.⁸⁰

In 1530 John Fitzherbert claimed to ‘have sene bokes of accompte of housholde’ that demonstrated to him that ‘spyces’, along with other ‘delycyous meates and drynkes’, were being consumed in ever-greater quantities by ‘noble me[n]’.⁸¹ The household accounts analysed for this study suggest strongly that this trend continued. But at the homes of the elite such foods and flavourings, like many of the other luxuries discussed above, could only be sampled by low-grade servants if they were invited by their social superiors to partake of them, or if staff acquired them unofficially or covertly.

It was not just the social elite who bought these exotic foods however. Spices, Thomas Mun claimed in a 1621 publication justifying England’s direct trading links in the international arena, had fallen in price since 1600 when the East India Company was founded. This enabled people of middling status to buy them more frequently than they had back in 1555.⁸² In that year such foods were occasionally enjoyed by merchants and their social acquaintances. Merchant tailor Henry Machyn, along with John Venor, his wife and ‘dyvers odur neybors’ were made a supper by a ‘gentyll-woman’; this was a ‘grett tabull of bankett’ with dishes of spices and fruit, marmalade, gingerbread,

⁸⁰ Radcliffe, p. 93; Newdigate, CR 136 v 140, week ending 2 January 1641.

⁸¹ J. Fitzherbert, *Here begynneth a newe tracte ...* (London, 1530), fol. 53.

⁸² T. Mun, *A discourse of trade from England vnto the East-Indies ...* (London, 1621), pp. 33-53.

‘comfetts’, sugar ‘plat’, and ‘dyver odor.’⁸³ Thus, whether exotic fruits were used in cooking or whether they were eaten raw, they were already a status-marker of the upper and middling orders in the mid-sixteenth century. But although their lower prices and increased availability made them more accessible to the middling-sort by 1620, prices were not sufficiently low to allow the poor to buy them. Even so, Mun stated, these people did benefit from the spice trade. The company (for whom Mun was a director) had both given generously to the poor of ‘Black-wall, Lime-house, Ratcliffe and Wapping’, and had employed those in need.⁸⁴ The essence of Mun’s argument was that the consumption of luxury goods by those able to make a statement about their wealth was also beneficial to those who had no such opportunity. It is true that spices meant different things to different people: refined taste, opulence, prestige or the satisfaction of curiosity to the end-consumer; wealth to the merchant; expression of creativity to the cook and work to the sailor. But cultural identity as expressed by spice consumption remained intact – even if, as Freedman has said, some of the spices were used as expensive medicines.⁸⁵

But did those of low social rank have the opportunity to sample foods flavoured with such ingredients? Apparently not the sailors whom the company employed. The fare that they were supplied with on their journey, and of which Mun was proud, included butter, cheese, oatmeal, pork, beef and fish.⁸⁶ The absence of spices for consumption by the sailors cannot be accounted for by excessive cargo loads – a reason that was sometimes given by ship owners for cutting back on sailors’ food rations – as the space required to store these exotic substances was minuscule compared to that for salt-beef. The decision made by the East India Company, which ‘regularly’ marked up

⁸³ J. G. Nichols (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, from A.D. 1550 to A.D. 1563* (Camden Society, original series. 42, 1848), p. 99.

⁸⁴ Mun, *A discourse*, pp. 33-53.

⁸⁵ Freedman, *Out of the East*, pp. 13-14.

⁸⁶ Mun, *A discourse*, pp. 34-35.

a profit of 100 per cent (and 500 per cent in 1617), to exclude sailors from eating luxury foods was made for socioeconomic reasons.⁸⁷ These provisions were similar to those taken on a whaling expedition in Russian waters in 1575, except the latter also included legumes, and wine and mustard seed for consumption by at least some of the crew.⁸⁸ Yet back on land spices and other exotic foods, like venison, could be acquired by other means.

In 1596 Alexander Mallory and Ralph Ferret were allowed the benefit of clergy at Maidstone assizes after being found guilty of stealing one lb of sugar; and at Southwark a quarter of a century later labourer John Biddle was whipped after confessing to the theft of the same amount.⁸⁹ Whilst another case shows that a weaver from Brentwood confessed to stealing currants and raisins three days before Christmas 1609, there are examples of thefts of spices that indicate surreptitious acquisition by more than just a few low-status households.⁹⁰ Grocer Richard Slattery was indicted for stealing eighteen lbs of cloves, six lbs of cinnamon and six lbs of nutmegs from his master's house in September 1559. He and his two alleged accessories, a yeoman's wife and a baker, probably found a black-market for these items that were valued at £10 8s amongst people of similar status. In another case in March 1577 two labourers, James Francis and Thomas Sympson, confessed to breaking into a shop in Bishops Stortford where they stole one lb of pepper, one lb of ginger, two lbs of nutmegs and 'other spices and mace' worth £1. Although this crime was viewed as felony, as the overall value of the spices stolen was £2 4s, the thieves were allowed the benefit of

⁸⁷ R. Tannahill, *Food in History* (London, 1988), p. 225; H. Kamen, *European Society 1500-1700* (London, 1992), p. 75.

⁸⁸ R. Hakluyt, *The principal nauigations* (London, 1599-1600), see chapter on 'Whale killing, the English voyages'

⁸⁹ *Calendar of Assize Records, Kent Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1979), ref. 2361; *Surrey Indictments*, James I (London, 1982), ref. 1328.

⁹⁰ *Calendar of Assize Records, Essex Indictments*, James I (London, 1981), ref. 522.

clergy and thus avoided being hanged.⁹¹ Labourer Francis Silvester of Hertfordshire, however, was not so fortunate; having been accused of stealing pepper, cloves and nutmeg worth 8s 9d, he died before being sentenced.⁹² This evidence, of course, does not suggest widespread consumption of spices at lower levels of English society; it does, however, demonstrate that the middling-sort upward were not the only consumers of exotic imported products. Those of lower status had a sense of luxury that grew partly from being exposed to high-society trends through contact with others. This exposure could spark curiosity and a desire for imitative consumption resulting in a discerning taste for the exotic.

Accurate imitative consumption, however, needed more than simply adding exotic ingredients to dishes; it was also dependent upon the use of the right equipment and the following of certain procedures. It was partly this that enabled the well-to-do to maintain or re-establish their edible identity-markers.

RECIPES AND READY-MADE FOODS

Recipes and preparing special foods

The addition of more exotic ingredients and the use of innovative techniques had the potential to elevate the dish to a new cultural level. Thus, a trend in cooking that appears to be reflected in later prescriptive books on food preparation, afforded those of high social status an opportunity to acquire new culinary tastes and at once restore their edible markers of social status. This, along with the thought that sophisticated food does not equate to improved food, suggests that cookery books (whether the recipes contained therein were followed by their readers or not) both reflected and influenced a desire by the gentry to maintain culinary distance, and a desire by their social inferiors

⁹¹ *Calendar of Assize Records, Kent Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1979), ref. 70; *Hertfordshire Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1975), ref. 106.

⁹² *Calendar of Assize Records, Hertfordshire Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1975), ref. 577.

to bridge the gap. One merchant who aspired to gentle status was John Johnson who rented Glapthorn Manor in Northamptonshire in the mid-sixteenth century. He and his wife Sabine acquired many exotic foods with which to prepare special dishes. In addition to hunting deer by warrant and cooking venison, the Johnsons bought sturgeon and salmon for consumption on 'fish days', and purchased wild birds, a variety of expensive spices, and sub-tropical fruits from London.⁹³

One of Johnson's guests at Glapthorn, a lawyer named Christopher Breen, was served a special meal that had been prepared in the kitchen under the directorship of Sabine. Breen compared favourably the 'delicious' fare at the manor to that which he was accustomed. An apprentice of the Johnsons, however, complained that the meals *he* was provided with, which were supposed to be appropriate to those of his master's occupation, were both insufficient and of poor quality. The reaction of Mrs. Johnson in dealing with the issue, which included writing letters to assure people that her hospitality was actually very good, raises a poignant question. Whether or not the accusation of the apprentice was justified, why did Sabina deem it necessary to go to such lengths to deny the claim? Even though an entrepreneur's success in business in early Elizabethan England could result in a significant accumulation of capital, the creation of wealth was not so much an end in itself as a means by which upward social mobility could be engendered, developed and expressed. Where noble titles could not be bought or would not be bestowed, the 'nouveau-riche' could confuse the distinction between honour and affluence by opting for the more leisurely lifestyle that was associated with the gentry. Thus, the grandeur of the home, a reputation for generosity and, not least, the consumption of luxurious meals, assumed great importance. The concern of Sabine was possibly therefore the thought of the Johnson's hard-earned

⁹³ Winchester, *Tudor Family*, pp. 131, 133, 141-42.

‘gentle’ reputation being slighted; for the family, at eventual ruinous expense, had for now succeeded in narrowing the consumption gap between themselves and their social superiors by broadening that which existed between themselves and less successful people.⁹⁴

This case of the draper-come-merchant-adventurer may not be typical; but, when viewed alongside that of yeomen Henry Best and William Honnywell, it indicates the perceived need by some middling-status families to express their cultural identity through the medium of eating luxurious meals. Although any nourishing foods would suffice to avert hunger, expensively acquired and exquisitely cooked meals were increasingly eaten by the growing ranks of the middling-sort in the service of taste and prestige. It is arguably for this reason that entrepreneur publishers of kitchen manuals were stirred into animation. As the characteristics of a market economy evolved, those responsible for the printing of recipes would have identified opportunities to generate income and thus demonstrated diligence in keeping their books contemporary with fashionable trends.⁹⁵ On the basis of the evidence of this study, it seems that a lag of ‘four decades’ between culinary practice and its representation in cookery books that Stephen Mennell reports Elizabeth David as having claimed is not likely in England circa 1600. The frequency with which some books were republished incorporating ‘new’ fashionable recipes, together with kitchen provisions listed in the household accounts, tend to suggest otherwise. As printed cookery books enlarged ‘the circle of potential participants’ and facilitated ‘the process of social emulation’, these manuals both followed and inspired fashionable cuisine simultaneously.⁹⁶ And although some cookery books and household manuals contained recipes that were not wholly new, innovation is very much in evidence. This innovation parallels changes in the

⁹⁴ Winchester, *Tudor Family*, pp. 129, 131-37.

⁹⁵ K. Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, 2000), p. 22.

⁹⁶ Mennell, *All Maners*, pp. 64-65.

purchasing patterns of those who made the decisions about which foods were bought at the homes of the social elite under investigation.

A kitchen manual published in 1545 included a recipe for baking venison that required nothing more than salt, pepper and lard; even allowing for the price of pepper these were rather modest ingredients for baking a luxury dish. In the same book a recipe for roasting venison called for vinegar, sugar and cinnamon. And in order to make a beef or mutton pie, its readers were told, a commendable process was to add prunes, raisins and dates to the mince, along with salt and pepper.⁹⁷ Although these ingredients were not particularly cheap there were not many of them; and as no equipment more specialised than a chaffing dish was needed in the preparation of the meals, the resulting tastes would, by later standard, have been lacking in complexity. The suggestion here is not that meals eaten prior to the late sixteenth century were uncomplicated, or that cooks then were devoid of creativity and artistic flair, but that cookery books – as potentially lucrative products of a growing print culture – were concerned with that which was likely to sell best. This, we suggest, was fashion-related books that were a matter of import to the swelling ranks of the middling-sort.

By the turn of the seventeenth century the authors (or compilers) of some cookery books were becoming more imaginative in the techniques and ingredients that they advised should be used in their recipes. The lard utilised in the baking of venison had been superseded in at least one recipe by sweet butter; and wine and spices such as ginger were also to be added. For roasting the same meat, a sauce containing pepper, cloves and mace – one of the most expensive spices available – was a recommended enhancement. In another book of the same period, veal was to be stewed with the

⁹⁷ Anon., *A Propre new booke*.

addition of butter, verjuice, sugar and the costly spice saffron.⁹⁸ This development suggests two things. Firstly, kitchen manuals may have had the effect of influencing the culinary practises of some of their purchasers and readers. Indeed the 1594 book referred to here would hardly have been republished three years later if its contents were not of sufficient interest to induce people to buy it. And secondly, although spices were still used medicinally in the seventeenth century, the range of spices contained within a single meal was for flavour – not for health. This is evident because the Galenic properties attributed to spices by (at least) Butts show that no two were the same, therefore a wide range of spices added to one meal could, in theory, cancel each other out.⁹⁹ The sophisticated techniques called for in later printed recipes – allowing for the fact that many dishes were fundamentally similar to those in earlier books – can therefore arguably be taken as mirroring what was happening, or what was imminent in culinary practice. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, to note that whilst both the complex cocktails of additives prescribed in printed recipes and the novel methods that were supposed to be used in their preparation continued to develop, the use of the same ingredients is evident in the household accounts of the gentry.

Towards the mid-seventeenth century, books accredited to Gervase Markham, John Murrell and an anonymous author demonstrate the extent to which the addition of exotic ingredients, and the employment of elaborate procedure, had both increased and combined to raise the culinary level of those with the necessary resources. In 1637 the advice offered by Markham for the spit-roasting of venison entailed covering it with cloves and ultimately serving it with a sauce made from the meat's own juices, vinegar,

⁹⁸ Anon, *A good huswifes handmaide ...* (London, 1594), fols 21,33; T. Dawson, *The good hus-wives iewell ...* (London, 1597), p. 52.

⁹⁹ L. Pollock, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620* (London, 1993), pp. 110-42; Butts, *Dyets dry dinner*, chapter 6.

sugar, cinnamon and ginger.¹⁰⁰ In 1639 even roasting relatively cheap mutton entailed a complex procedure that required the use of at least three dishes and a gridiron. Added to the ‘thin slices’ of meat at various stages of preparation were slices of lemon, claret wine, nutmeg, ginger and wine vinegar.¹⁰¹ A year earlier Murrell brought to the attention of his readers the French techniques of hashing, boiling and roasting mutton. These also called for sophisticated methods using ingredients such as verjuice, sweet cream and sweet butter, capers, ‘raisins of the sun’, dates, wine and a variety of spices. Boiling either mutton or veal ‘on the French fashion’ in sharp broth required also the addition of some very expensive mace. Murrell’s method of hashing venison was even more intricate; the process required the meat to be part-roasted on a spit then boiled in a pipkin, and needed the infusion of flavours from cloves, rosemary, claret wine, cinnamon, ginger, mace, sugar, lemon and caraway.¹⁰² These recipes tend to confirm evidence from household accounts that suggest special meals containing spices were still fashionable in high circles, and indicate that such dishes were sought after by fashion-conscious middle-status consumers who used them to both serve and express their fine taste.

It was not just a few exotic recipes that called for the use of spices in the first half on the seventeenth century; it was most of them. If there was a lack of continuity in the popularity of these luxurious substances after circa 1500, then, as we have seen, there is evidence of a spice revival in late Tudor and early Stuart times. Medieval English cookery books had ‘called for spices in no less than 90 per cent of their recipes’.¹⁰³ But this taste for the financially exclusive and exotic food was equalled, or even surpassed, in the early seventeenth century. The fifth edition of John Murrell’s

¹⁰⁰ G. Markham, *The English House-wife ...* (London, 1637), pp. 88-90.

¹⁰¹ Anon, *ladies cabinet opened*, fol. 3.

¹⁰² J. Murrell, *Murrells two books of cookerie ...* (London, 1638), see for example pp. 15, 16, 57.

¹⁰³ Freedman, *Out of the East*, p. 20.

culinary work, published with ‘new additions’ in 1638, incorporated a second book ‘wherein is set forth the newest and most commendable fashion’ of cooking. Whilst 94 per cent of the recipes call for spices in the first part of the volume, the ‘second book’ advised the use of these substances in 98 per cent of food preparations. Twenty-five of the 28 recipes that were predominantly dairy- or bread-based, the type that modern cookery books call sweets or desserts, required the addition of at least one spice. And whilst 121 of the 125 meat and poultry dishes demanded spices (quite often mace, or sometimes a combination of nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon), all 21 recipes for fish dishes advised that spices should be employed.¹⁰⁴

This publication does not stand alone in its insistence that spiced dishes of many kinds were still fit for ‘Noble-mans or Gentle-mans Table’. Fifteen years later a book attributed to Elizabeth Grey, Countess of Kent, suggested that spices would benefit 167 of the 194 recipes listed in the cookery section. Many of these substances were to enhance sauces in which meat was cooked, and some were to be introduced to the pot *in addition* to an impressive array of herbs that had by now become fashionable.¹⁰⁵ Even in 1655 spices were still perceived by at least one publisher as important enhancers of meals of the middling sort; the publication *The Compleat cook* called for the substances in 92 per cent of its recipes. High-value symbols of affluence like nutmeg, mace and cloves were joined by pepper in cocktails that were to enhance 57 of the 60 mutton, beef and poultry meals. But of the 61 ‘sweet’ dishes that included the addition of spices, nineteen were embellished only with sugar. The table below shows the percentages of recipes that included spices.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Murrell, *Murrels two books*.

¹⁰⁵ Kent, E. Grey, Countess of, *A true gentlewomans delight* (London, 1653).

¹⁰⁶ W. M., *The Compleat cook* (London, 1655).

COOKERY BOOKS	PERCENTAGE OF RECIPES CONTAINING SPICES				
	meat	fish	dairy-based	other	total
Murrell 1638	97%	100%	89%	90%	98%
Kent 1653	85%	80%	93% *	55%	86%
W. M. 1655	95%	83%	94% **	83%	92%

Table 3.5. Percentages of recipes containing spices in cookery books published between 1638 and 1655.

* In 45% of these recipes the only spice was sugar; ** in 31% of these recipes the only spice was sugar. Sources: Murrell, *Murrells two books of cookerie ...* (London, 1638); Kent, E. Grey, *Countess of, A true gentlewomans delight* (London, 1653); W. M., *The Compleat cook* (London, 1655).

Whoever these recipes were really written (or compiled) by, and whether or not they were antiquated, revised, modified or genuinely new, the motive for their publication is clear enough. Books promoting upper-class fashion were targeted mainly at the middling orders, and especially at the would-be gentry ‘who felt that they belonged ultimately not to their present condition but to the rank towards which they aspired’.¹⁰⁷ Because of this, title-page descriptions included phrases such as ‘with new additions’, and ‘newest and most commendable fashion’. It therefore seems likely that any substantial decline in the fashionable status of spices would, for the sakes of commercial viability and reputation, be reflected in printed volumes in the same way that the growth in the popularity of greens was. The concept of using a wide range of herbs and vegetables to flavour dishes was adopted by the upper and middle orders of society. Some of these were ‘novel luxuries’ that had previously been imported from the continent, but were now increasingly being sourced from local ‘specialist’ producers.¹⁰⁸ This fashion was expressed in the same books, but herbs did not

¹⁰⁷ For aspirations to a higher social status see for example: Kamen, *European Society*, p. 144; J. Barry, ‘Bourgeois Collectivism? Urban Association and the Middling Sort’, in J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England 1550-1800* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 84-112.

¹⁰⁸ J. Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture: A History From the Black Death to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1997), p. 36; F. J. Fisher, ‘The Development of the London Food Market’, *Economic History Review* 5:2 (1935), pp. 52-58; Drummond, *Englishman’s Food*, pp. 95-96.

immediately replace spices; the two types of ingredients sometimes ran in parallel in different recipes, but more often converged in the same meals. These were joined increasingly by subtropical and other exotic fruits – a type of food that books on regimen had held in disdain due to its phlegm-producing viscosity, but which was now an identity marker of the upper orders.¹⁰⁹

Difficulty in preparation was also a ‘characteristic of prestige foods’; these foods could be symbolic ‘markers of distance’, and could emit a messages of ‘exclusivity’.¹¹⁰ Thus the appeal of new or revised culinary works incorporating up-to-date fashions is obvious. The dishes that they portrayed – although making possible a wider diffusion of ‘successful culinary practices’ and allowing for improvement – would have been beyond the resources of low-income households to accomplish.¹¹¹ By reinventing meals, the illicit acquisition of some superior foods by the ‘poorer sort’ could be overcome. The diffusion of luxury consumption through social strata ranging from the elite to well-to-do merchants and some yeomen farmers, which ‘significantly marked seventeenth-century England’, is also evident in sixteenth century consumption.¹¹²

This middling-sort consumer demand in the sixteenth century – manifest in the purchasing of high-value foods and based at least in part on social aspiration, or on a desire to imitate of the consuming practices of the elite – may indicate that a growing process of secularisation (a change in attitude away from self-restraint and minimalist consumption towards a materialistic outlook) occurred long before the eighteenth

¹⁰⁹ Albala, *Eating Right*, p. 96.

¹¹⁰ M. van der Veen, ‘When is Food a Luxury?’, *World Archaeology* 34:3 (2003), pp. 411, 415.

¹¹¹ C. A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain* (London, 1973), p. 210; Mennell, *All Manners*, pp. 67, 84.

¹¹² See L. L. Peck, ‘Luxury and War: Reconstructing Luxury Consumption in Seventeenth-century England’, *Albion* 34:1 (2002), pp. 2, 5. See also comments on and examples of social differentiation expressed through food consumption in D. Woodward (ed.), *The Farming and Memorandum Books of Henry Best of Elmswell, 1642* (London, 1984), MB 5; T. Fuller, *The holy state ...The profane state* (Cambridge, 1642); Edelen, *William Harrison*, p. 129;

century.¹¹³ However, such demand in the late sixteenth century could also be initiated by people from middling social groups redefining ‘necessity’ and what it meant to them in the light of their improved economic circumstances. According to one moralistic writer, William Harrison, even artificers in London in 1577 ate very well, consuming ‘nothing inferior to nobility’. What *did* set artisans apart from nobles, he noted, was the manners, or rather the lack of manners, of some of them.¹¹⁴ The significance of conduct at the table, despite or because of its importance to the upper echelons of society since the earliest of times, appears to have sharpened as edible markers of social distinction became less obvious.¹¹⁵ The meals of these craftsmen (or at least that of some of them) – purchased possibly from taverns and cook-shops catering for ‘rich and poore’, both ‘day and night’ – may therefore have included dishes that were heavily flavoured with spices, herbs, and fruit.¹¹⁶ These ingredients were also used to create another type of expensive food with which the well-to-do could identify themselves: confectionery and other dainties.

Sweetmeats and banqueting stuff

It has been noted by C. Anne Wilson that sugared spices, which had originally been used for medicinal purposes, were becoming increasingly popular as banqueting stuff to be enjoyed after dinner or at any other time.¹¹⁷ Comfits and suckets were banqueting stuff; and as these could be made from sugar and a range of exotic ingredients they were expensive confections and edible markers of social distinction. Comfits were held in

¹¹³ J. C. Riley, ‘A widening Market in Consumer Goods’, in E. Cameron (ed.), *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (Oxford, 2001), p. 260.

¹¹⁴ Edelen, *William Harrison*, p. 131-32.

¹¹⁵ For the importance of manners see J. Gillingham, ‘From Civilitas to Civility’, *Royal Historical Society Transactions*, 4th series, 12 (2002), pp. 267-89.

¹¹⁶ J. Stow, *A survey of London ...* (London, 1598).

¹¹⁷ C. A. Wilson, ‘The Evolution of the Banquet Course: Some Medicinal, Culinary and Social Aspects’, in C. A. Wilson (ed.), *Banqueting Stuffe: The Fare and Social Background of the Tudor and Stuart Banquet* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 11-19.

high regard throughout the entire period under investigation here; and although were a delicacy dating back to medieval times, by the late sixteenth century ‘comfit makers appeared as an occupational group’.¹¹⁸ These confectioners were often foreigners living in London and other urban centres; and, despite trading restrictions imposed of aliens, the success attributed to at least some of them was perhaps a measure of both the growing popularity of sweets amongst middle-status people, and of the influence that immigrants had on early modern English diet.¹¹⁹

As befitting an ‘upper-middling gentry’ family the Newdigates purchased sugar candies, candied fruit and an array of comfits – including violet, caraway and orange – throughout the year.¹²⁰ Whilst the price of sugar candies bought at Arbury was 1s 8d per lb, candied oranges and angelica were even more expensive at 2s 6d and 5s 4d respectively. The Radcliffes occasionally bought white sugar candy costing 3s 6d per lb, but there is no mention of such sweets being bought at Quickswood four years earlier. Here however, given the significant quantities of sugar, fruit and spices purchased by the Cecils, the financial value of which amounted to approximately £1 13s 0d per week (3.98 per cent of the entire food budget), it is quite feasible that they were made in-house – possibly in the kitchen under the authority of Lady Catherine.¹²¹ Sweets may also have been home-produced at Forde House on occasions when fruit and large quantities of sugar were purchased.

Before the turn of the seventeenth century there is no mention of candies in the accounts of the Shuttleworths. However by 1610 such items were being purchased by Colonel Richard Shuttleworth, the nephew and heir of Sir Richard and Reverend

¹¹⁸ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, pp. 325-26.

¹¹⁹ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, pp. 325-26; L. Luu, ‘Natural-Born versus Stranger-Born Subjects: Aliens and their Status in Elizabethan London’, in N. Goose and L. Luu, (eds), *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Brighton, 2005), p. 59.

¹²⁰ V. Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: The 17th Century Newdigates of Arbury and their World* (Woodbridge, 1995), p. 17.

¹²¹ For the authoritative and culinary roles of gentlewomen see chapter four.

Laurence, for consumption at Gawthorpe Hall and at his house in Islington. He bought half a lb of brown sugar candy for 1s in October 1610, and eleven months later white sugar candy along with cloves was purchased for 2s 8d.¹²² But if the fashion of eating sweets was novel to the Shuttleworths in the early seventeenth century, it had actually reached Lancashire at least half a century before; for, as noted in chapter four, gift-exchanges between Lord Edward Stanley and Master of the Horse Robert Dudley included comfits.

Comfits made of pineapple or cinnamon costing 1s 2d per lb were expensive enough in the mid-to-late sixteenth century, but those made of cloves or ginger at 4s 6d per lb were luxuries whose purchase was unjustifiable to many. However, all these and ‘succade’ (candied fruit coated with sugar) were purchased by Robert Dudley who, as far as his extant accounts reveal, gives the impression of having consumed at the cutting-edge of self indulgence long before he was granted an earldom by Elizabeth I. Dudley’s expenditures suggest that he had been leading rather than following fashions amongst the English elite and, at least after 1579, he owned a small container specifically for keeping comfits in. Intricately decorated with gold and silver ribbon, this box and its sweet contents would have enhanced his display of opulence that distinguished the earl from those of lesser status.¹²³

Expensive sweets were thus purchased ‘ready-made’ by some of the gentry and nobility, and were probably made in the kitchens of others. Yet their high financial price was just one aspect of the overall cost of acquiring them, for the expenses incurred in producing confectionery were beyond the means of many people in another way. Although the processes used in the making of candies, marmalade and other delicacies known as ‘banqueting stuffes’ were simple enough, cookery books of the early

¹²² Shuttleworth, pp. 191, 196.

¹²³ This sweet box can be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, catalogue no. M.665-1910.

seventeenth century advised that they required specialised equipment and a cooking time often lasting many hours. Typical essentials included a deep earthenware pot, a pewter lid, fine paper, a padded mat, several ‘wires’, a straining cloth, and a silver spoon – depending on the particular recipe.¹²⁴

But if this criterion could be circumvented with improvisation and the purchasing of pots of ready-conserved fruit that C. Anne Wilson has noted were imported from southern Europe, there were still the issues of the labour time involved and the motivation.¹²⁵ As Thomas Fuller wrote, ‘dainties will cost more [than substantial food] and content lesse, to those that are not criticall enough to distinguish them’.¹²⁶ Those deemed critical enough were middling-status women and their men-folk. During the late sixteenth century and in the seventeenth century, many writers (or publishers) specifically directed their cookery books at women. This was because their household management roles, their sourcing of provisions – including buying exotic foods with which to make dainties, and their culinary skills, were well known. One of these writers, as Kim Hall notes, was Sir Hugh Plat.¹²⁷ A meal including such dainties may well have been sampled by the Swiss physician and traveller Thomas Platter when he took up the invitation to dine with the Mayor of London in October 1599. Before indulging in ‘lavish dishes’ that were served one after the other with ‘delightful sauces’, delicate entrées were provided; these were all followed by sweetmeats, pastries, tarts and a selection of wines.¹²⁸ Thus it was not just the gentry that enjoyed these sweet luxuries, for here we have an example of the privileges that were associated with

¹²⁴ See for example G. Markham, *Countrie Contentments ...* (London, 1623), pp. 70-71; J. Murrell, *A daily exercise for ladies and gentlewomen ...* (London, 1617), recipes 26-38; Anon, *A closet for ladies and gentlewomen ...* (London, 1608), pp. 7-14.

¹²⁵ Wilson, *The Evolution of the Banquet Course*, p. 21.

¹²⁶ Fuller, *The holy state*, p. 154..

¹²⁷ K. F. Hall, ‘Culinary Spaces, Colonial Spaces: The Gendering of Sugar in the Seventeenth Century’, in V. Traub, M. L. Kaplan and D. Callaghan (eds), *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 168-69.

¹²⁸ C. Williams (ed.), *Thomas Platter's Travels in England 1599* (London, 1937), pp. 158-59.

middle-ranking civic office-holders and their exclusive circle of guests. And at least some of them, as we will see in chapter four, had the opportunity on occasions to consume a variety of luxury foods. This is not to suggest that comfits and suckets were unattainable luxuries to low-level employees of the elite or to others of humble rank. Candies, if not appropriated by other means, could have been sampled by these people at the invitation of their social superiors who were predisposed to accommodate them within their communal sphere – at least on a temporary basis for diverse reasons.

Other banqueting stuff available to those with sufficient income included ‘waters’ made with fruits and herbs. Although some household manuals emphasised the medicinal use of such concoctions, others – especially those printed towards the mid-seventeenth century – accentuated their culinary use. One of the latter books is Gervase Markham’s *The English house-wife*. Split into sections covering ‘medicines for health of the household’ and ‘skill in cookery’, ‘waters’ feature under the subsection ‘banquetting stuffe of all kinds’ in the book’s cookery chapter.¹²⁹ The culinary use for waters has been emphasised by C. Anne Wilson. She points out that the quantities of rosewater made indicates that it must have gone into many foods.¹³⁰ But whether they were added to foods for use as flavourings or drunk in their own right, ‘waters’ could be made by infusing the main ingredient and several spices in sack. As sack on its own typically cost 7d per pint in the year that Markham’s compilation was published (more costly than white wine or claret, and costing as much as two gallons of ale), flavoured waters were expensive to make or to buy. At Arbury nine different flavoured waters that included camomile, mint, black cherry, angelica, fennel, and the household’s apparent favourite – red rose water – were purchased on no less than 29 occasions. Rose water was also bought by the earl of Northumberland in April 1591, and by Robert

¹²⁹ Markham, *English house-wife*, pp. 122-31.

¹³⁰ Wilson, *The Evolution of the Banquet Course*, p. 26.

Dudley in 1559.¹³¹ But although these cordials may not feature in many sets of accounts, they could have been, and probably were, produced ‘in house’ as the need for them arose.

For others who could afford to buy them, waters were available from distillers for between 5s and 8s a pottle in the early seventeenth century.¹³² However, it is possible that flavoured waters, like other high-value luxuries, were sporadically accessible to the less well-off through black-market trading. One such instance occurred in 1616. Recognizances were entered at Kingston assizes to give evidence against Sarah Boulds who had allegedly received these drinks as stolen goods from Henry Ball. Ball himself was indicted for stealing aniseed water, clove water, lemon water, orange water, juniper water and cinnamon water from James Hindle, distiller, of Kingston upon Thames in Surrey.¹³³ Such acquisition could disseminate widely markers of refined taste, and in so doing could provide the impetus for further experimentation by people who felt the need to be at the cutting-edge of fastidious consumption. Some people who bought these waters on the black market may have used them to flavour basic meals; but for those who were relatively wealthy, waters were added to both exotic sweet and savoury pastry dishes. Two examples given in a 1638 cookery book attributed to John Murrell were a ‘tart of pippins’ and a ‘swan or goose pudding’.¹³⁴ And for those who could afford to pay the difference, such pastries were purchased ready-made.

¹³¹ Percy, p. 14; Dudley, p. 136.

¹³² A pottle was a container with a capacity of four pints (= approx. 2.3 litres).

¹³³ *Calendar of Assize Records, Surrey Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1982), ref, 816.

¹³⁴ Murrell, *Murrells two books of cookerie*, pp. 25, 45.

Pastries and ready-made foods

Unlike banqueting stuff that was made with exotic ingredients, pies, pasties and tarts were processed foods whose outer layers were made from grain. But these pastry cases – whatever they contained – could be produced from a variety of cereals and were thus subject to hierarchical differentiation. As Henry Best was proud to announce, his pastry was made with ‘best wheat’ whilst that of his servants’ was made of ‘massledine’ (a blend of wheat and rye).¹³⁵

Although pies, puddings, tarts and pasties could be bought ready-made, they do not feature in any of the household accounts until 1636. From this time they were purchased at Arbury on many occasions. The making of basic puddings was a relatively simple and inexpensive task for cooks in poor households, for this could often be accomplished by using cheap ingredients and unsophisticated culinary equipment.¹³⁶ Both the fillings and the level of sophistication needed to produce pies and pasties, however, could be a different matter. Those containing highly spiced expensive meats may generally have been beyond the reach of low-income families, but for gentlemen like Sir Robert Harley, who was Master of the Mint in the 1620s, eating pastries with a variety of exotic fillings was a common experience.¹³⁷

The kitchen staff at Arbury made pastry dishes most Fridays, and each one cost between ½d to 1d to produce. But in addition to these, many more with an impressive assortment of fillings were purchased ready-made and delivered to the estate (see table 3:6). Although they could have been bought for a variety of reasons, purchasing ready-made dishes when one had the wherewithal to make them more cheaply in-house could transmit clear messages to guests about affluence. Thus, displays of extravagance at the

¹³⁵ Woodward (ed.), *Farming and Memorandum*, FB 172.

¹³⁶ Wilson, *Food and Drink*, pp. 316-17.

¹³⁷ T. T. Lewis (ed.), *Letters of The Lady Brilliana Harley, Wife of Sir Robert Harley of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath* (Camden Society, original series, 58, 1853), pp. 3, 10-11, 29, 31, 44, 53, 59, 70.

table could have been made in the service of ‘vanitie’, as Philip Stubbes had put it, or to portray the preferred identity of a member of a successful family.¹³⁸ The purchase of pastries appears to have been seasonal with pasties costing 3d and pies ranging in price from 3d to 1s being bought mainly in the spring and autumn; puddings being bought in the spring, autumn and winter; and tarts being bought for 1s during every month of the year except September. Whilst table 3:6 shows the types of pastry products purchased by the Newdigates and the money spent on them between 1636 and 1640, table 3:7 shows the months during which they featured as purchases.

PRODUCT	AMOUNT SPENT EACH YEAR				
	1636*	1637**	1638	1639	1640
‘Pies’	51	136	97	45	124
Mince pies	6	0	0	0	0
Pear pies	0	3	64	40	6
Apple pies	32	16	6	29	10
Orange pie	0	0	0	0	15
Lamb pie	0	0	22	10	0
Calf foot pie	0	8	0	0	8
Oyster pie	0	0	36	0	0
Eel pie	0	0	8	0	0
‘Pasties’	0	18	28	0	0
‘Puddings’	185	241	242	101	125
‘Tarts’	180	384	372	384	318

Table 3:6. Overall values of the more popular ‘ready-made’ foods purchased at Arbury in Warwickshire between 1636 and 1640.

*Values are expressed in pence and indicate the amount spent on each item. *28 weeks; ** 33 weeks. Source: Newdigate, 1636-40.*

¹³⁸ Stubbes, *An Anatomie of Abuses*, see chapter ‘Gluttonie and drunkenesse’.

PRODUCT	USUAL MONTH OF PURCHASE											
PIES												
MINCE		•										
PEAR										•	•	•
APPLE			•	•			•	•		•		
ORANGE		•										
LAMB						•	•			•		
FOOT		•								•		
OYSTER		•	•									
EEL			•									
'PIES'.	•	•	•	•	•	•				•	•	•
PASTIES			•	•				•				
PUDDINGS	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	•
TARTS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

Table 3:7. Monthly patterns of the purchasing of pies, pasties, tarts and puddings at Arbury in Warwickshire between 1636 and 1640.

Source: Newdigate, 1636-40.

The Newdigates also bought many other ready-made dishes including Naples biscuits, 'biscuit cakes', macaroons, oatcakes, custards, cheesecakes and unspecified 'cakes'. Whilst Naples biscuits, 'biscuit cakes' and macaroons have no obvious seasonal connection and were bought for between 1s 8d and 2s per lb, up to twelve times the price of a loaf of bread of the same weight, oatcakes were purchased more often, but never during the summer season. Cheesecakes and custards, on the other hand, were bought on 22 occasions, but never in the winter. Like homemade pastries and cakes given as gifts (discussed in the next chapter), those purchased from external suppliers so that they could be eaten at home were equally special. Whether they were purchased during the spring or the autumn, they were expensive luxuries that were 'necessary' only in the sense that they fulfilled a role of enhancement. This role could be to heighten pleasure, to augment dietary variation, to embellish the table in order to signal opulence to guests, or to establish or improve self-esteem.

In this sense ready-made processed foods were no different to any other special luxuries – either those that were expensive or those that were rare or novel. But for

those people who could not afford to buy or make special foods, the consumption of imitation or substitute luxuries not only increased the scope of tastes available – and perhaps misled a few into thinking that dishes made with them resembled authentic ingredients – but it could also foster a sense of greater self-regard.

Fake luxuries

People without sufficient financial or material means could approximate meals that featured in cookery books by tailoring the fashionable dishes. Some recipes, as we have seen, called for specialised culinary equipment with which to produce meals of distinction. In this respect improvisation was sometimes possible by utilising or adapting basic utensils. But when it came to substituting expensive or difficult-to-obtain exotic ingredients, some kitchen manuals offered advice on using alternative foods that, when cooked in a specific way, were supposed to resemble luxuries. These counterfeit luxuries facilitated the imitation of those who could acquire and eat the real thing. Venison was not easily obtainable; it was neither for sale in the marketplace nor readily procurable in other ways, at least not overtly. Mutton, on the other hand, was usually available under normal supply and trading conditions and was reasonably priced. Mutton, like beef, was not excised from the diet as its popularity in England increased amongst labourers. It was eaten by earls like the Percys, and by yeomen and merchants, as people of high and middling status could circumvent symbolic debasement by adding expensive supplementary ingredients.¹³⁹ If baked in a particular way and surrounded by pastry, this meat could allegedly be made to resemble venison; and when it was served at the table and eaten, the dish could arguably bestow a sense of luxurious living and a feeling of social betterment.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Drummond, *Englishman's Food*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁴⁰ Anon, *A good huswifes handmaide*, p. 17.

The eating of offal transgressed both ‘old’ and ‘new’ concepts of regimen: its properties could have a ‘nauseating effect’, and its association with the impoverished meant that its consumption could be construed as an ‘act of debasement’.¹⁴¹ Even so, sausages and a wide range of animal by-products, when suitably prepared, became popular in the late sixteenth century. ‘Umble pye’ – itself made from the internal organs of deer – could, according to a recipe published in 1615, be simulated by the contents of a lamb’s head. Although a lamb’s head and its contents could cost up to 12d by this time, it had one crucial advantage over deer offal – its availability. The expense of a head might well have been perceived as cost-effective by some middling-status readers of cookery books, for the recipe stated that ‘it will eat so like unto Umbels as that you shall hardly by taste discern it from right Umbels’.¹⁴²

Easily obtainable meat did not need to be encased in pastry in order to produce a fake luxury that could induce a sense of lavish consumption. Baking a leg of beef like that of a red deer, or baking a pig like a young, tender fawn – which required the addition of pepper, cloves, mace, claret wine, verjuice, rosewater, cinnamon, ginger and sugar – could impart a sense of social amelioration that, in the mind of its consumers, possibly blurred one element of distinction between themselves and their social superiors.¹⁴³ In addition to venison, other game too was subject to fakery. In 1573 *The treasury of commodious conceits* explained how a capon could be baked in a way that made it resemble a game bird; after cooking the fowl, one was to ‘serve it forth for a pheasant’.¹⁴⁴ Fakery was hardly novel to the early modern period; in France in 1390 a cookery book had claimed that ‘poussins can be made to look like partridges’ and that

¹⁴¹ Albala, *Eating Right*, pp. 96, 191, 192-93.

¹⁴² J. Murrell, *A new booke of cookerie* ... (London, 1615), fol. 22.

¹⁴³ T. Dawson, *The second part of the good hus-wiues iewell* ... (London, 1597), p. 13; A. W., *A booke of cookrye Very necessary*... (London, 1591), p. 21.

¹⁴⁴ Partridge, *treasury of commodious conceits*, chap. 2.

‘beef can be made to look like venison’.¹⁴⁵ There was still, however, a market for books that, in part, described how to cheat at cooking in England in our period. We do not know whether these prescriptive recipes were referred to and used, but there is reason to believe that they may have been; for they were considered to be appealing enough to the intended middle-class readership to justify their publication and to generate profitable returns on the publishers’ investments. Indeed fakery in recipes was not confined to the imitation of high-value meats. In *Skill in Banqueting stufte* – a chapter that features in Gervase Markham’s *The English house-wife* – readers were told how to fashion artificial cinnamon sticks. Cinnamon was a luxury spice that cost 6d per oz at the time of the book’s publication. In real terms (the purchasing power of a given unit of income or wealth) this was twice as expensive as it had been two centuries earlier, for a skilled craftsman would have had to work approximately seven days in order to purchase 1lb of the substance.¹⁴⁶ Yet a close approximation could allegedly be made by pounding a small amount of genuine cinnamon, adding to it a few other ingredients, and reshaping the paste into sticks.¹⁴⁷

Such substitutes bought ‘luxuries’ to a wider consumer base. The value of eating fake luxuries lay at least partly in vanity. Not only did they expand the range of tastes available to many, they also served cultural identity issues by allowing for a perceived narrowing of the gap between their consumers and the wealthier or more powerful people who were able to acquire the genuine articles. These foods were special to their consumers and were expressive of their chosen identity at the time of consumption. Fulfilling a desire to imitate the eating habits of their social superiors could engender a feeling of ‘getting close’ to those who were immediately above them on the hierarchical ladder. Like the other special foods discussed in this chapter, they

¹⁴⁵ Freedman, *Out of the East*, p. 47.

¹⁴⁶ See table 2:6 for an explanation.

¹⁴⁷ Markham, *English house-wife*.

held the potential to link the consumption of luxuries to ideas of self and otherness, and, as we have seen, sometimes did so.

CONCLUSION

The fare that the well-to-do enjoyed extended beyond high-priced variants of staples and the other choice foods discussed in chapter two. Young and tender produce such as veal, caponets and flower buds; socially exclusive game like venison and pheasant; and various imported exotic foods also played their part in defining the cultural identity of social elite. But these foods were sometimes available to people of middling and lower status. The consumption of a broadening range of luxuries, therefore, helped to re-establish and strengthen boundaries between the wealthy and powerful on the one hand, and their social inferiors who were supposedly marked by their consumption of cheap, basic fare. It was not only the foods themselves that helped to mark the statuses of their consumers however; the elaborate ways in which they were cooked could transform ordinary foods into special dishes that would circumvent the problem of emulation or imitation by those of lower rank. But the cookery books that facilitated this transformation also explained to those with limited resources how to simulate such dishes. These meals included pastries, special meats and other exotic foods; and many of these were given as gifts and featured at special events. In considering food's role as an identity symbol, it is gifts and events that we discuss next.

CHAPTER FOUR

GIFT-FOODS AND FOODS AT SPECIAL OCCASIONS

The concern of chapters two and three has been with aspects of the acquisition and consumption of luxury foods such as their prices, frequency of purchases, rarity and novelty. This chapter considers a category that is more directly linked to human relationships – the giving and receiving of gift-foods and consumption at special occasions. The first section considers the gifting of foods, looking at examples of those exchanged between individuals and households, within the family, and the hospitality that was extended by the gentry to each other and to workers and tenants. Much of this hospitality – which was a form of gifting – occurred on special occasions. The second section considers some of these events. After looking at the foods eaten at Lent we analyse feasting at Christmas, life-cycle celebrations, civic functions and assize feasts before examining criticisms of feasting. We will see that the gifting of food and participation or non-participation in festive occasions could be used to project desired identities and consolidate or alter relationships in a number of ways.

GIFTS OF FOOD

The gifting of food was an important aspect of social life; and this, like commensality, could have occurred for a variety of reasons. One reason was to foster or strengthen relationships that were mutually beneficial to the parties involved; another reason, as Ilana K. Ben-Amos and Felicity Heal have posited, might have been to emulate others and to compete through displays of conspicuous giving.¹ But in addition to the positive nature of gift-giving, foods could be bestowed in order to provoke a desired response – and not necessarily a concordant one.

¹ I. K. Ben-Amos, 'Gifts and Favors: Informal Support in Early Modern England', *Journal of Modern History* 72:2 (2000) p.156-80, 309-30; F. Heal, 'Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England', *Past and Present* 199 (2008), pp. 41-70.

Whilst many household accounts, diaries and letters identify some of the foods that were given, some correspondences refer to the relationships that the gifts expressed. In analysing these sources, consideration is given to the motive for giving. These could range from a selfless act to benefit the recipient, a gesture made for expected reciprocal hospitality, or a means of networking to further social inclusion and self-advancement. Accounts show that on many occasions offerings of food were made by ‘poor’ people to their social superiors. As custom required a fitting response, the possibilities that gifts were presented by them with the expectation of reward, or to gain favour – perhaps in the form of ‘patronage and influence’ as Felicity Heal noted, or in order to foster a symbiotic relationship – is investigated.² Foods held in high regard by the recipient were often given rather than those considered daily necessities; and because a luxurious gift could convey a message that showed qualities such as affection, loyalty, honour or respect, it will be seen that the true reason for giving could be concealed. We will show that occasionally these gifts were discarded – either diverted by the recipient to a third party, or returned to the bestower in order to signify rejection of affection or loyalty, thereby enunciating disassociation rather than ‘articulating shared identity’.³ Gift-foods therefore not only held the capacity to indicate dietary association between themselves and the giver and receiver, but, because they were influenced by relationships, they potentially reflect social thought and action.

Between individuals and households

Household accounts show that food was overwhelmingly the most popular choice for gifting by the Newdigates of Arbury between 1614 and 1625. The items listed – which were mainly poultry, pigs, apples, cakes and wine – were assigned monetary value; thus

² Heal, ‘Food Gifts’ pp. 41-70.

³ Heal, ‘Food Gifts’, pp. 41-70.

gifts were considered to be part of the fabric of economic, as well as social life. But by supplementing this sort of evidence with that from diaries and correspondences enables not only the exchange of gifts, but also attendant attitudes and relationships between the participating individuals and households to be analysed. Such reflections and communications, however, may have been written for a variety of reasons that should be taken into account. The expectation of eventual publication may have affected tone and content, as expressions were carefully contrived, and works that were expected to remain private were coloured by the views and emotions of their authors. Despite these potential pitfalls that have been highlighted by scholars in recent times, such works remain ‘an immensely useful source’ to cultural and social historians.⁴ The subtexts of letters and diaries often convey currents and agendas regarding their meaning; and, as the more notable aspects of life tend to be recorded rather than mundane experiences, such sources lend themselves particularly to the subjects of gifting and special occasions.

On at least two occasions the natural philosopher John Dee considered the gifts of venison that he had received from the Lord Treasurer to be noteworthy. Dee’s diary entries may not have been the report of a selfless act, but rather an account of sixteenth century networking. To mention these events in his journal, which was kept primarily for recording business meetings, indicates the significance attached by Dee not just to receiving this prestigious meat, but to his relationship with William Cecil. This relationship was underpinned by the gift after the Lord Treasurer had first invited him ‘to dynner at Mr. Maynards at Mortlak, where Sir Thomas Cisell and his lady wer also’.⁵ Beneficial relationships could thus be established or consolidated through the

⁴ See for example E. McKay, ‘English Diarists: Gender, Geography and Occupation, 1500-1700’, *History* 90:298 (2005), pp. 191-92.

⁵ J. O. Halliwell-Phillips (ed.), *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee, and the Catalogue of his Manuscripts* (Camden Society, original series, 19, 1842), entry for 9th August 1592.

medium of gift-foods, and foods that were appropriate to the social status of those involved could assert or emphasise that standing. If this scenario was marked by its continuity between 1540 and 1640 it also applied to those of diverse social rank; and although one might suppose that the difference would be found in the quality and prestige of the foods that were associated with the givers and recipients, this was not always the case. An inversion of that which might be expected is sometimes revealed. The luxury gifts sometimes given by poor people to the social elite for patronage or favour were located towards one end of the gift-food spectrum. Near to the other end was a gift presented to John Dee by an acquaintance Harry Savil, who was an antiquarian from Lichfield in Staffordshire. Dee, who worked and socialised with government officials and foreign ambassadors, and who was used to eating such foods as toasted buttered cake sprinkled with sugar and nutmeg, received from Savil a ‘rather prosaic present’ of two lings and two haberdines during a stay in Manchester.⁶ Although he considered this gift to be dull, unimaginative and hardly luxurious – perhaps like a cheese and some butter that was presented to affluent yeoman Honnywell, and like a side of bacon that was gifted to gentleman lawyer Matthew Smyth – it appears that the fish was accepted.⁷

This contrasts with a similar present that was received by a cousin of barrister John Manningham. In 1601 the cousin was sent a gift of ‘some fishe’ from a Joane Bachellor, ‘which she sent back again’.⁸ Although no explanation was given for the rejection, the barrister’s reaction to the occurrence indicates that his cousin was not averse to participating in altercations; she may therefore have found value in returning

⁶ S. Bond, ‘John Dee and Christopher Saxton’s Survey of Manchester (1596)’, *Northern History* 42:2 (2005), p. 277, 288.

⁷ F. J. Snell (ed), ‘A Devonshire Yeoman’s Diary’, *Antiquary* 26 (1892), p. 258; A. Bantock, *The Earlier Smyths of Ashton Court from their letters 1545-1741* (Malago Society, Bristol, 1982), p. 41.

⁸ J. Bruce (ed.), *Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple, and of Bradbourne, Kent, barrister-at-Law, 1602-1603* (Camden Society, original series, 99, 1868), p. 22.

the gift-food in order to express social detachment. The importance of gift-foods to association, or in this case dissociation between the giver and the receiver, is highlighted by the fact that Manningham considered this behaviour noteworthy.

Some gifts of fish that were gratefully received included luxurious high-value species. During the week ending 22 October 1634, a week when only saltfish was bought by Cecil, he received from Lord Baldock a pike and ten perch and tench.⁹ Six years earlier salmon was twice received by the Reynells as gift-foods – once from ‘my Lord Bishop’ and once from ‘a woman’ in Exeter to whom 1s 6d was ‘given’.¹⁰ There is no indication of the status of the woman, nor do we know if the fish was gifted in expectation of future patronage or financial reward; but the 1s 6d would have been enough money to purchase approximately eight lbs of beef in Devon at that time. The response of tipping with money undoubtedly encouraged the continuance of gifting gentlemen with luxuries perceived as befitting their station; despite this, the well-to-do were sometimes ‘given’ low-value foods such as apples or pears by either ‘a poor man’ or ‘a poor woman’. Perhaps luxury fish, like other luxury foods, were qualitatively beyond the givers’ usual diet and were quantitatively insufficient to feed their families; but such foods, however they were obtained, could be ‘traded’ for sufficient cash to enable those less fortunate to buy a meaningful quantity of basic foodstuffs. Thus both the wealthy recipient and the gift-giver benefited enabling the status quo regarding social rank and its edible markers to remain intact.

Felicity Heal has shown that the capon was also a significant gift-food, and Newdigate’s accounts verify this; however, the Arbury accounts show that many gallinaceous and other domestically-bred birds featured extensively as presents both

⁹ Cecil, pp. 13, 20-21.

¹⁰ Reynell, pp. 28, 31,

given and received.¹¹ A significant number of entries show that pullets, hens, partridges and pigeons were given frequently to friends and visitors throughout the year, and that these – but especially poultry – were presented to employees at Christmas. Gifts received included an undisclosed number of pigeons from ‘a woman’ – for which she was remunerated with 1s. Partridges were also ‘given’ to the Reynells in November 1627 by Gilbert Gall; in return for these special birds Gall received 3s.¹² As the market value of a partridge was around 6d in South Devon at that time, the 3s – which was enough to pay for twelve chickens – may have been more useful than the partridges to Gall. Reynell on the other hand was possibly pleased with receiving the esteemed game-birds.

Both of turkeys and geese were popular gift-foods over the century. Sabine, the wife of successful merchant John Johnson, often sent to friends and relations a goose as a ‘remembrance’ during the mid-sixteenth century.¹³ And whilst turkeys, geese and ducks were gifted regularly by the Newdigates in the 1620s, in 1638 1s 6d was given by the by the Arbury household to an anonymous man ‘that bought a turkey and a goose’.¹⁴ In the same year a reward of 1s was ‘given’ by Edward Radcliffe to Lasbies daughter for ‘bringing a turkie’, and 2s was given to a messenger that presented the earl with ‘a turkie, a pullet and two ducks’.¹⁵ As the cost of turkeys and geese in Warwickshire at the time was around 3s 6d and 2s 4d respectively, Newdigate was not ‘buying’ them in the normal sense – paying a poulterer the market price. Nor was it a carriage cost; for 1s a week was paid to the porter who delivered all of the household’s groceries on this and most other weeks. The 1s 6d was financial reward for receipt of a gift. Thus whilst Sabine’s gift was ‘freely’ given to express affection to friends of similar rank, and

¹¹ Heal, ‘Food Gifts’, pp. 41-70; Newdigate, CR 136 a 37, fols 51-89.

¹² Reynell, p. 3.

¹³ B. Winchester, *Tudor Family Portrait* (London, 1955), p. 136.

¹⁴ Newdigate, CR 136 v 140, see extraordinary expenses for 1638 at the end of the accounts book.

¹⁵ Radcliffe, p. 167.

would probably require reciprocation of equal value, the gift / reward interchange between the gentlemen and their inferiors appears to have been incommensurate and may also have involved non-pecuniary elements not ‘picked up’ by finance clerks.

Swans were occasionally gifted to Sir George Vernon who usually gave 1s in reward for each one received. But although this bird was still sporadically consumed at the houses of the social elite in the seventeenth century, it appears that the swan was becoming less fashionable. Whilst acknowledging Felicity Heal’s observation that ‘vast disparities’ between accounting methods and the lack of concern shown by some clerks for the accurate recording of gifts received do not help in making comparisons, archaeology verifies the evidence of household accounts in respect of the swan’s diminishing status as a gift-food.¹⁶ The number of medieval sites in southern England at which the remains of swans have been found is no fewer than those where woodcocks and partridges have been located.¹⁷ After 1570, however, they are mentioned much less frequently as gifts in household accounts, and this apparent lack of enthusiasm is substantiated by bird assemblages that indicate the swan was losing its position as a status symbol with the social elite.¹⁸ Despite this, the bird was still deemed sought-after enough by some people in 1634 – a year during which William Cecil acquired two swans as a gift – to warrant the fixing of its maximum market price at an expensive 7s (2s more than it had been 80 years earlier).¹⁹ Perhaps beyond the financial reach of craftspeople and labourers, but not of merchants and other professionals, its decline in popularity at the highest levels of society was because it was no longer in vogue with them.

¹⁶ Heal, ‘Food Gifts’, pp. 41-70.

¹⁷ D. Serjeantson, ‘Birds: Food and a Mark of Status’, in C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson and T. Waldron (eds), *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition* (Oxford, 2006), p.132.

¹⁸ N. Sykes, ‘The Dynamics of Status Symbols: Wildfowl Exploitation in England AD 410-1550’, *Archaeological Journal* 161 (2004), p. 92.

¹⁹ Cecil, pp, 35, 72; *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (Oxford, 1983), pp. 408-11; England and Wales, Henry VIII, *A proclamation ordained and made by the kinges highnes ...* (London, 1544).

Quite often the birds discussed here, like fish, venison and other meats, were encased in pastry and gifted in the form of pies and pasties; and their preparation, which at least sometimes included the addition of spices, could be quite elaborate if published recipes were followed. Although Sara Pennell has found that ‘home-made’ foods held little significance in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and has shown that they were void of the expressive meaning that modern observers attach to them, processed foods travelled well and were sent to recipients to express favourable regard on many occasions during the period under investigation here.²⁰ One example shows that a lamprel pie was received by Cecil in January 1634(5).²¹ Other examples, as we shall see, show that fruit pies and various pasties were often given as gifts, both by and to the nobility and those of middling status. But there were many other prepared dishes and ‘dainties’ that were made with sugar and spices and were given as gifts. Comfits valued at 9s 2d were presented by Robert Dudley to the Earl of Derby in 1558, and in the same year Dudley himself rewarded a stranger who presented him with a cake.²² Cakes and puddings were popular gifts throughout the period with Newdigate giving 6d reward for each one received at Arbury in the late 1630s, and Radcliffe giving 1s for each cake at around the same time.²³ Unlike the gifts of venison and capons that Felicity Heal has shown were objects of politics of exchange, cakes and puddings could be lovingly made using the most valuable of all ingredients – time. It is thus possible that a recipient’s perception in such an instant may have been one of altruistic benevolence and a shared social, if not cultural, identity. This explanation for the gifting of ready-made foods is particularly valid for those exchanged within the family.

²⁰ S. Pennell, *The Material Culture of Food in Early Modern England, circa 1650-1750* (unpublished D. Phil thesis, Oxford, 1997), p. 267.

²¹ Cecil, p. 39.

²² Dudley, p. 93.

²³ Newdigate, CR 136 v 140, see extraordinary expenses at the end of the accounts book; Radcliffe, see for example p. 165.

Within the family

Lady Brilliana, the puritan wife of Sir Robert Harley of Brampton Bryan in Herefordshire, sent many gifts of food to her husband who was Master of the Mint, and to her son Edward who was at studying at Oxford. In October 1627 a large and exotic ‘partriche pye, which has two pea chikeins in it’ was sent by courier to Sir Robert.²⁴ Thirteen months later Lady Brilliana sent a cake to Edward with an accompanying letter cautioning him to be careful to about choosing his company at university, for ‘piche will not easely be tuched without leaufeing some spot’. Concerned about her son identifying himself with students of uncertain pedigree, clearly the gift was not intended to be shared with those of lesser status.²⁵ Gifts of cakes and exotic pies undoubtedly broadened the limited range of foods eaten by recipient students and their select circle of friends. A letter sent to ‘Ned’ by his mother reveals that the tender flesh of young goat was probably only eaten at the institution when it was received as a gift: ‘I beleeeue you haue not that meate ordinaryly at Oxford’ said the note accompanying ‘a kide pye’. Sent as an unmistakable mark of affection, the baking of this pie had been thoughtfully contemplated by Lady Brilliana and ingeniously effected by her male chef: half of it was ‘seasned with on kinde of seasening, and the other with another’.²⁶ As at other institutions, the dietary provisions for university students were far from indulgent according to Thomas Cogan; but these could be supplemented with luxurious gifts.²⁷ In

²⁴ T. T. Lewis (ed.), *Letters, Wife of Sir Robert Harley of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath* (Camden Society, original series, 58, 1853), p. 3.

²⁵ Lewis (ed.), *Letters*, pp. 10-11.

²⁶ Lewis (ed.), *Letters*, p. 53 (see also p. 70 for evidence that Lady Brilliana’s chef was male).

²⁷ T. Cogan, *The haven of health chiefly made for the comfort of students, and consequently for all those that haue a care of their health ...* (London, 1588), chapter 2.

the case of Edward Harley these included both ready-made foods, such as pigeon pie and violet cakes, and other luxurious fare.²⁸

As head of daily affairs at the home of the Harleys, Lady Brilliana enjoyed charge over her male chef; this is alluded to when she told her son that his loin of veal ‘should be well’ if the cook ‘haue down his part’.²⁹ That she also had control over matters relating to the estate’s deer park during her husband’s absence is also clear. Enjoying latitude to dispense the much-valued animals, in July 1639 she sent a gift of a large fat deer to her cousin ‘which should come very sweet’.³⁰ And in North Yorkshire Margaret Hoby, who lived Hackness Hall, was another lady who maintained control of her estate following her marriage. Like Lady Brilliana she evidently managed the deer park and sent a gift of some venison to one of her cousins in July 1600.³¹ Venison occasionally features as a gift between husband and wife; but even this high-value meat could be rejected as an expression of inharmonious relationships. Anne Clifford, the wife of Richard Sackville – who himself was the grandson of Thomas, 1st Earl of Dorset – refused to accept half a buck that she had received from her husband because of the spirit in which it was perceived to have been given. The apparent ‘indifference’ that Richard exhibited in an accompanying letter motivated Anne into promptly diverting the gift-food to her cousin, Sir Edward George, and noting the occurrence in her diary.³²

Whilst gifts of fish could also be dismissed in a show of disaffection – such as that discarded by John Manningham’s cousin – the gifting of fresh fish, as we have seen, could express respect or devotion, or could facilitate networking between individuals or households. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that fresh sturgeon

²⁸ Lewis (ed.), *Letters*, pp. 29, 31.

²⁹ Lewis (ed.), *Letters*, p. 70.

³⁰ Lewis (ed.), *Letters*, pp. 59.

³¹ J. Moody (ed.), *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605* (Stroud, 1998), see entry for 31 July 1600.

³² K. O. Acheson, *The Diary of Anne Clifford: a Critical Edition 1616-1619* (New York, 1995), p. 86.

featured as a gift-food exchanged between family members. A keg of it was sent from London by John Thynne to his wife Joan whom, in July 1601, was in charge of looking after the recently acquired family home of Caus Castle in his absence.³³ Forty-three years earlier Robert Dudley rewarded a servant of Sir Ambrose Cave, who was related to the future earl by marriage, with 3s 4d for bringing to him some sturgeon.³⁴ This significant reward underlines both the appreciation of valuable relationships and of the high esteem in which this fish was held by Dudley in the mid-sixteenth century.

Hospitality

Socialising could occur on a variety of occasions in addition to the special events discussed below. And when hospitality was being extended, luxury foods were sometimes offered to guests. Cream, for example, cost four times as much as milk and was a rich alternative that could be added to dishes in order to luxuriate them, and to display opulence to the assembled company. Both at Arbury Hall in 1640, at Henry Best's estate at Elmswell in the 1620s, and at the Willoughby residence during the previous century, cream was enjoyed as an integral component of celebratory events such as Christmas, Harvest time, and when important visitors were being entertained.³⁵ Bread too could either be made or purchased especially refined or enhanced to suit hospitable occasions. In this way a banal 'diet-food' could be transformed to create an impression that was in accord with the host's chosen identity. Thus, on 30 June 1549 Sir George Vernon's clerk made a point noting that white bread was bought by his master for the entertainment of guests at Haddon Hall. Seven weeks later Vernon again

³³ A. D. Wall (ed.), *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne 1575-1611* (Wiltshire Record Society, 38, Devizes, 1983), p. 20.

³⁴ Dudley, p. 65.

³⁵ D. Woodward (ed.), *The Farming and Memorandum Books of Henry Best of Elmswell, 1642* (London, 1984), FB157; M. Dawson, *Plenti and Grase: Food and Drink in a Sixteenth-Century Household* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007), p. 103.

bought ‘whyet breyde’ for the visit of Mr. Corbet and his wife.³⁶ By inference the usual type of bread eaten at the Derbyshire estate was of a coarser variety. And in the 1630s manchet was eaten as a matter of course by Sir William Cecil and his important guests at Quickswood, whilst his lesser servants and those of his guests were, by and large, fed with inferior household bread.³⁷

Whether entertaining at home or dining out with others of similar status, the foods eaten by both men and women appear to have been commensurate with their social standing. Anne Clifford socialised with others of similar status – both male and female. This was often carried out independently of her husband and with a significant amount of travelling involved. On 4 November 1617 Anne met with friends and relations and had ‘an extream great feast’. Details of the food eaten are not given; but it is known that Anne was no stranger to venison and sweetbread, having eaten the former with a ‘great company of neighbours’ at Christmas 1617 and the latter in the form of dowsetts (buck’s testicles) given to her as a gift earlier in the year.³⁸ The social arrangements and food consumption of Anne Clifford in Kent in 1617 closely matched those of Margaret Hoby in North Yorkshire at the turn of the seventeenth century. Margaret, the wife of protestant activist Sir Thomas Posthumous Hoby, had successfully managed for years – independently of a husband – a large mansion house that had been bequeathed to her.³⁹ Like many other household mistresses of the time who were responsible for the preparation of meals, and who often delegated cooking and baking to servants, she held authority over the workmen and servants that she employed.⁴⁰ Yet

³⁶ Vernon, pp. 67, 69.

³⁷ Flour quality ratios produced from the wheat purchased each week, and the number and status of visitors to Quickswood indicate that this was usually the case.

³⁸ Acheson, *Diary of Anne Clifford*, esp. pp. 86, 94, 96.

³⁹ Moody (ed.), *Private Life*, pp. xvi-xvii.

⁴⁰ Moody (ed.), *Private Life*, see entry for 17 October 1601. See also, for example: A Flather, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 60-61; B. Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), p. 36.

despite this, she took to the kitchen on occasions and personally prepared special foods such as sweetmeats and gingerbread.⁴¹

At celebratory times the Hobys, like many other well-to-do families, dined and entertained some of their tenants. Tenants, as Felicity Heal has noted, were often ‘important beneficiaries’ of the Christmas feasting discussed below. Both Sir William Petre and Henry Willoughby, for example, gave a feast for their lessees whom, along with the household, consumed vast quantities of food.⁴² But as we will see later, there was concern about a decline in hospitality; and at Hackness Hall the hospitality extended by the puritan Hoby family was selective. Margaret’s memoirs specifically state that ‘som tenantes’ were entertained.⁴³ We are not told which tenants attended, but the inference is that others were excluded from the communal sphere in which the Hobys were the nucleus. Exclusion could of course occur for a variety of reasons; important householders were in a strong position to decide who qualified as accepted members of their circle and who could be treated as outsiders – to be debarred from the gift of hospitality. This could have a negative effect on community relationships. When fine foods that made up part of the celebrations were denied to those excluded, they could feel alienated – removed from the fellowship and repositioned outside the sphere of common interest. As has been noted by Felicity Heal, these exclusions from celebratory meals could attract complaints and even accusations of witchcraft from the disenfranchised party.⁴⁴ But exclusion could also be self-imposed by those who greatly valued their independence, or who did not wish to be identified with the inviters on a more-than-necessary basis. The Hobys’ belligerence with their neighbours, the Chomleys, suggests that either of these scenarios is a distinct possibility. On a higher

⁴¹ Moody (ed.), *Private Life*, see entries for: 10 October 1599, 18 December 1599 and 6 August 1600.

⁴² Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), p. 68; Dawson, *Plenti and Grase*, pp. 267-69.

⁴³ Moody (ed.), *Private Life*, see entries for December 1599.

⁴⁴ Heal, *Hospitality*, p. 384.

social level, Margaret Hoby, like Anne Clifford, networked extensively in the absence of her husband. She travelled to meet and dine with friends and high-calibre acquaintances, such as the Chomleys of Whitby – presumably before their acrimonious dispute in the summer of 1600 – and she entertained them at her home at Hackness Hall.

This female commensality in Tudor and early Stuart England appears to have been routine. The freedom of independence or semi-independence of both married and single women from all levels of society to travel around the country, to socialise with whomsoever they wished, and to procure, consume, sell or gift food independently, was not at all uncommon. If she was reasonably well-to-do, her economic activities in the wider community conferred on her ‘a degree of autonomy and agency’; and if she was poor, court and council records show that she could be no stranger to roving around the country, to receiving gifts, and to obtaining luxury foods for special occasions.⁴⁵ Thomas Platter observed the clear difference between theoretical etiquette and practical reality when he wrote in 1599 that English women enjoyed more freedom than those ‘in other lands’.⁴⁶ The special occasions at which they and their menfolk ate luxurious foods whilst consolidating or establishing social ties could include a range of religious festivities, life-cycle events and other feasts. Just a few of these are discussed below.

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

In 1979 Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood wrote that food can be used in the ranking of events because there is a relationship between the frequency of consumption of items and ‘the value of the marking service that they confer’. Quality differences between

⁴⁵ See: C. Peters, ‘Single Women in Early Modern England: Attitudes and Expectations’, *Continuity and Change* 12:3 (1997), pp. 325-26, 340; E. Longfellow, ‘Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England’, *Journal of British Studies* 45:2 (2006), pp. 313-34. For examples of council and court records showing that relatively poor women procured food and drink, either for themselves or others, see chapter 3.

⁴⁶ C. Williams, (ed.), *Thomas Platter’s Travels in England 1599* (London, 1937), p. 182.

goods, they wrote, can be markers of the rank of events, as well as the rank of persons; whilst ‘necessities’ can signal the cultural aspect of ‘low-esteem, high frequency events’, luxuries are more associated with ‘highly esteemed events’.⁴⁷ Although food categories ‘encoding social events’ can be used to identify special occasions on a fine scale (such as Sunday lunch or evening dinner with friends), we offer examples of just a few selected special occasions to show that high-value foods consumed at some annual and life-cycle events in the early modern period defined the communities with which they were associated.⁴⁸ Apparently fostering a sense of social inclusion, commensality could impart a feeling of belonging and could encompass communities of those desired, or at least accepted within its bounds. But commensality, even *within* events, could also be used to exclude socially those who were not considered part of the coterie.

Commensality has been described by anthropologist/historian Margaret Visser as an ‘essential’ means of ‘binding families to one another and knitting society together in general’, with reciprocation ‘usually’ being promised. But the expression of togetherness and harmony that she portrays is not always the case. Although the maintenance of order and the preservation of neighbourliness could be achieved through annual and life-cycle festivities, as Phil Withington has noted, eating together can carry alternative meanings to ‘proving loyalty to that group’ and ‘signifying willingness to serve its interests’.⁴⁹ Not only was commensality ‘a result and manifestation of a pre-existing social group’ with the ‘limits of the group’ and ‘internal hierarchies’ defined

⁴⁷ M. Douglas and B. Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (London, 1979), p. 83; J. Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 31.

⁴⁸ M. Douglas, *Implicit Meanings* (London, 1975), pp. 249-51.

⁴⁹ M. Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities and Meaning of Table Manners* (London, 1992), p. 84; P. Withington, ‘Company and Sociability in Early Modern England’, *Social History* 32:3 (2007), p. 294.

and redrawn, but relationships between those dining in the same hall could assume nuanced characteristics.⁵⁰

Relationships between those feasting together could be less than amicable, either before or as a result of the event; and feasts themselves could be engineered for a variety of reasons and managed in a way that encouraged alliance or affinity, or had an adverse effect on relationships.⁵¹ Poisoning at both private and communal events, for example, appears to have been a real concern to some people; whilst food could be seen as an ‘idiom’ for ‘expressing ideas about community’, poisoners – whether they were witches or other malevolent people – inverted that idiom. Thus, rather than standing for ‘inclusion, order and security’, those who used food as a medium to impair health stood for exclusion and disorder.⁵² Edward Stanley laid down clear rules to prevent unauthorised access to his food, and Elizabeth I, at least at social gatherings, employed a ‘lady-taster’. ‘For fear of any poison’, her job was to give a mouthful of food from each dish to the guards bringing them into the hall, and the guards themselves had been ‘carefully selected for this service’.⁵³ But with servants having access to keys and an ‘intimate knowledge’ of security arrangements, and with strangers sometimes being able to enter the house unchallenged, poisoning was a clear possibility. This crime could be, and was, perpetrated by both women and men.⁵⁴ And when one considers that four per cent of *known* murders in Kent between 1570 and 1619 were effected by the administration of toxic substances, and that many more deaths remained unexplained,

⁵⁰ C. Grignon, ‘Commensality and Social Morphology: An Essay of Typology’, in P. Scholliers (ed.), *Food Drink and Identity* (Oxford, 2001), p. 24.

⁵¹ See J. MacClancy, *Consuming Culture* (Oxford, 2001), p. 108-09.

⁵² W. B. Smith, ‘Food and Deception in the Discourse on Heresy and Witchcraft in Bamberg’, in T. J. Tomasik and J. M. Vitulio (eds), *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout, Antwerp, 2007), p. 109.

⁵³ F. R. Raines (ed.), *The Stanley Papers, 2: The Derby Household Books* (Chetham Society, old series, 31, 1853), pp. 8-9; P. Hentzner, ‘Journey Into England’ (1598), in W. B. Rye (ed.), *England as seen by Foreigners* (London, 1865), p. 106.

⁵⁴ Flather, *Gender and Space*, pp. 51, 62.

fears about malevolent intentions at commensal occasions were not without foundation.⁵⁵

Another threat to harmony that could be carried by the process of hospitality was abuse. Far from ‘knitting together’ the North Yorkshire families of the Chomleys and the Hobys, a commensal occasion in August 1600 drove them apart in a spectacular way. When Sir Thomas Hoby and his wife Margaret entertained their neighbour Richard Chomley at Hackness Hall, the calculated abuse extended to the host family resulted in an expensive and divisive Star Chamber settlement and the pursuance of ‘a relentless vendetta’ against the Chomleys by the Hobys.⁵⁶ Here we look at just some of the festive occasions during which the sharing of luxury foods could either alter or affirm community relationships. They are Christmas, life-cycle events, civic feasts, and the feasts of assize judges and barristers. But first we consider the foods eaten by gentle and noble households during Lent.

Lent

Although luxurious foods were appropriate markers of life-cycle stages, and could also enhance solidarity on religious and social occasions, the forty-day period leading up to Easter was a time of penitence and abstinence. Whilst this tradition had been observed by many in pre-reformation England, in Elizabethan and early Stuart times household accounts of the gentry and nobility suggest that observation of Lent was neither total nor uniform along the lines of the Catholic/Protestant divide.

The consumption of fish was more associated with fasting-days when abstaining from eating animal flesh was expected by secular and ecclesiastical authorities. But

⁵⁵ J. S. Cockburn, ‘Patterns of Violence in English Society: Homicide in Kent 1560-1985’, *Past and Present* 130 (1991), p. 80.

⁵⁶ J. Binns (ed.), *The Memoirs and Memorials of Sir Hugh Chomley of Whitby 1600-1657* (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 153, 2000), pp. 4-5.

although household accounts suggest that this practice was indeed widespread, the observation of abstinence was by no means universal. Neither the Ninth Earl of Northumberland (who was associated with the gunpowder plot), nor the household of Sir Richard Newdigate (who has been described as a puritan), followed closely the relevant proclamations that forbade the eating of flesh on certain days.⁵⁷ These proclamations appear to have been ignored by many, for they were repeated time and again; and in order to encourage the consumption of fish, butchers who sold meat on fish-days were threatened with the confiscation of their meat and its distribution to the poor.⁵⁸ Despite this, fish did occasionally appear on special-events menus, and Lent could be an opportune time for consuming highly-valued fish.

The Newdigates did not increase their consumption of either low- or high-value fish in the weeks preceding Easter, and they seem to have eaten as much beef, mutton and veal as usual during this period. There was, however, a contrast between this family's fish consumption during Lent and that of the Radcliffes in 1639. Whilst most of the Gorhambury household's diet seems to have remained generally unaltered over period, the quantity of fish eaten increased sharply. As for the Radcliffes, the quantity of fish purchased by the Cecils increased significantly over Lent. The household of the Earl of Salisbury purchased twenty-six varieties of aquatic food during the Lenten period in 1634(5), and these including eel, fresh salmon, lobsters and carp.⁵⁹ Although 'basic' meats were eaten during this period of abstinence by all three of the above households, rabbits – the price of which plunged dramatically over lent – was generally avoided (see chart 4:2).

⁵⁷ For a brief overview of religious alignments see Introduction.

⁵⁸ Three typical proclamations are: England and Wales, Elizabeth I, *By the Queene the Queenes Maiestie considering the euil disposition of sundry her subjects, to keepe the ancient orders for abstinence from eating of flesh, aswell in the time of Lent, as vpon other vsuall fasting days ...* (London, 1597); England and Wales, James I, *By the King a proclamation for restraint of killing, dressing, and eating of flesh in Lent, or on fish dayes ...* (London, 1626); England and Wales, Charles I, *By the King. A proclamation commanding a due execution of lawes, concerning Lent and fasting dayes ...* (London, 1632).

⁵⁹ Cecil, pp. 55-61.

Given the quantity of fish consumed by the Reynells at Forde in Devon, one might expect that it was also eaten by them on special occasions. The ledgers reveal, however, that here – as at most other gentry and noble estates – fish was not particularly popular at such times. When it did appear at the festive table it was usually either salmon or eel. The household's consumption of fish did increase marginally during the Lenten periods between 1627 and 1631; during these times the main differences were in the extra saltfish, cod and pilchards purchased.

A few years earlier, despite the sporadic nature to the purchase of seafood at The Smithills and Gawthorpe Hall, the Shuttleworth household between 1582 and 1617 saw Lent as a time for consuming fish in large quantities. During the Lent season they purchased cockles and mussels at around 5d a peck, herrings at around 18s 6d a barrel and more expensive fish such as salmon. And at Ingatestone Hall in the mid-sixteenth century, although both fresh and salted fish were purchased weekly, the quantity bought peaked sharply during Lent. Here the Petres observed the dietary requirements of Lent and other non-flesh days more rigorously than other families.

Whilst the substitution of meat by fish at Lent, as on non-flesh days, was far from universal at the estates to which our accounts pertain, a similar situation prevailed at the homes of other well-to-do families. In the same February that the Radcliffes and the Newdigates ate lamb, veal and offal, Lady Brilliana Harley reminded her son at Oxford that too much fish 'is not so good for you'. She enclosed with the letter 'a turkey pye and 6 [other] pyes' to enjoy during Lent.⁶⁰ Household accounts show that, apart from fish, some of the more popular food eaten at Lent included poultry, dairy products and dried fruit.⁶¹ Due to its relative 'shelf-life', the latter was a type of food particularly suited to gifting on occasions when recipients were likely to observe dietary

⁶⁰ Lewis (ed.), *Letters*, p. 44.

⁶¹ This was also observed by Dawson in his study of the Willoughby household.

limitations imposed by the authorities. With this perhaps in mind, Brilliana Harley sent her son's university tutor a 'Lenten token' of dried plums.⁶²

When Lent coincided with a festive occasion, dietary abstinence and the eating of luxurious foods did not need to impede each other. Assize court judges Walmsley and Fenner who rode the western circuit in the 1590s found a clever way to express their identities through the medium of luxurious consumption and at once demonstrate self-denial. The 'inconvenience' of consuming only fish and dairy products on fasting days was overcome by eating fish at *either* dinner *or* supper, and consuming a large quantity of high-value meats at the other meal.⁶³ The eating of high-value meats and other luxurious foods, however, was customary and widespread at Christmas.

Christmas

The importance, or at least the existence, of Whitsun and Michaelmas – two periods when revelries supposedly continued to occur despite the Reformation – were acknowledged in Newdigate's accounts; but only Christmas and, to a lesser extent, Easter were celebrated with appreciable dietary change.⁶⁴ Like other gentry families, both the Newdigates and the Reynells increased their spending in the last fortnight of December and in the first week in January by up to three times the annual weekly average. Although this could be explained in part by generosity and the enduring tradition of hospitality, meals at which visitors were present – of which there were

⁶² Lewis (ed.), *Letters*, p. 31.

⁶³ W. D. Cooper (ed.), *The Expenses of the Judges of Assize Riding the Western and the Oxford Circuits, temp. Elizabeth, 1596-1601, from the MS account book of Thomas Walmsley, one of the justices of the Common Pleas* (Camden Society, miscellany, original series, 73, 1858), p. 6.

⁶⁴ For annual festive occasions see: R. Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 244-48, 348-51; D. Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 6-9.

usually many – also provided occasions for the projection of self-identity that could include nuanced images ranging from power and opulence to devotion and care.⁶⁵

It was not uncommon for the overall quantity of meat purchased during the third week of December to greatly exceed the annual average, but purchasing patterns within that category changed. Although military rations and contemporary commentary indicate that salt-pork was still a staple of the lower orders in the first half of the seventeenth century, some household accounts indicate that fresh pork, possibly young piglets, had become more popular as a festive food at the manor after 1630. Joan Thirsk can find no hint to suggest that the pig was a poor man's food; and with regard to fresh pig meat, our evidence indicates the same.⁶⁶ At Arbury the accounts show that the quantity of fresh pork bought in the run-up to Christmas 1636 and 1640 was roughly equivalent to the quantity bought during the whole of the rest of the year. At Gorhambury and Quickswood too purchases of pork increased vastly during the festive season. The quantities bought were relatively low compared to beef or mutton; this may indicate a limited distribution within the household and therefore underline the meat's relative status. Whilst at Arbury 17s was spent on pork over the festive season of 1636-37, the earls of Sussex and Salisbury spent £3 10s and £4 5s respectively.⁶⁷ At around 4s 2d for a quarter of a porker (a pig that had been fattened), this amount of meat consumed over the twelve days of Christmas would hardly have been sufficient to feast all of the many servants. Pork was also bought for other festive occasions; the Newdigates purchased additional amounts in the form of joints and whole pigs for Michaelmas Day 1639 and for Easter six months later.

⁶⁵ For the importance of generosity and hospitality see: J. Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England: Phases, Fads, Fashions 1500-1760* (London, 2007), p. 210; Heal, *Hospitality*, pp. 70-74; F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales 1500-1700* (London, 1994), p. 288.

⁶⁶ Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*, p. 241.

⁶⁷ Newdigate CR 136 v 140, 17 December 1636 to 5 January 1637; Radcliffe, pp. 90-94; Cecil, pp. 29-35.

Rabbit prices were subject to inflation in the run-up to Christmas before dipping to well below average during Lent (see chart 4:1). As this is indicative of a special-occasions food, we should not be surprised to find that the purchasing of rabbits at the houses of the well-to-do was upwardly adjusted in recognition of popular celebratory occasions. This was the case at Ingatestone Hall in 1551-52 where rabbits figured prominently both at dinner and supper over the Christmas and New Year period, and it was still the case almost a century later.⁶⁸ Between October and March the financial outlay on rabbits made by three families, and presented below for each of the twenty-four weeks, clearly illustrates the importance attached to the meat of this animal at festive times (see chart 4:2). Even when the figures are adjusted to take account of seasonal price fluctuations, the quantity bought at Christmas was significantly higher than usual.

This may indicate that rabbits were purchased in larger quantities than usual at Christmas so that the household head could treat his or her staff; but such generosity may not have been expressed at Forde in Devon. During the week ending 10 October 1628, whilst he was staying at Exeter, Sir Richard Reynell's purchase of rabbits was quantitatively similar to the norm at Forde House. Over the same period not a single rabbit appears in the purchase ledgers at Forde for consumption by the servants remaining at home.⁶⁹ We cannot, however, claim that this South Devon family was typical of the gentry and nobility over England; and it is likely that rabbit had become popular with many low status people after having been sampled by relatives and friends of paid employees at the estates of the wealthy.⁷⁰ But the animal could retain its exclusivity by chefs utilising novel techniques and adding exotic ingredients called for

⁶⁸ Petre, pp. 144-45.

⁶⁹ Reynell, pp. 27-28.

⁷⁰ J. Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture: A History From the Black Death to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1997), p. 10-11.

in fashionable cookery books. Such specialised procedures included those supposedly in vogue on the continent, an example of which was rabbit roasted ‘on the French fashion’ described in *A new booke of cookerie*.⁷¹

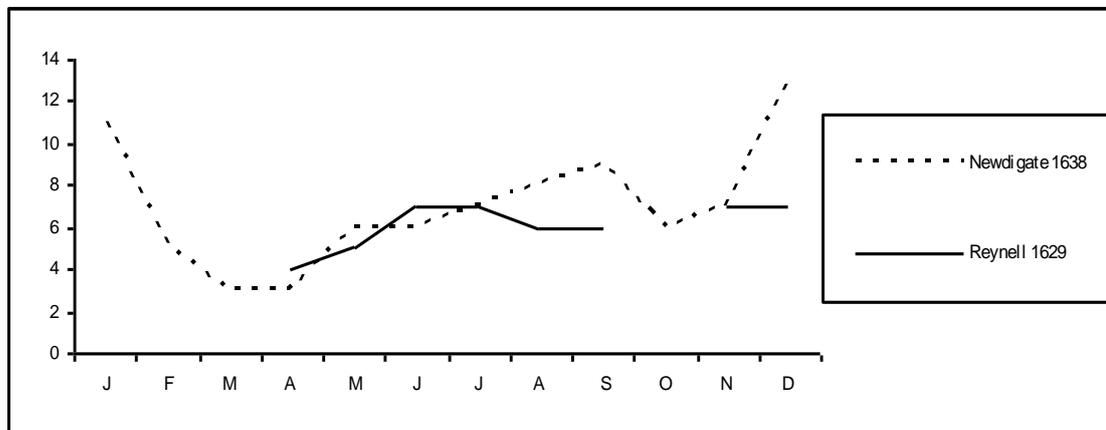


Chart 4.1. Average monthly prices of rabbits at Forde in 1629 and at Arbury in 1638. Values are expressed in pence. Sources: Newdigate, 1638; Reynell, pp. 35-58.

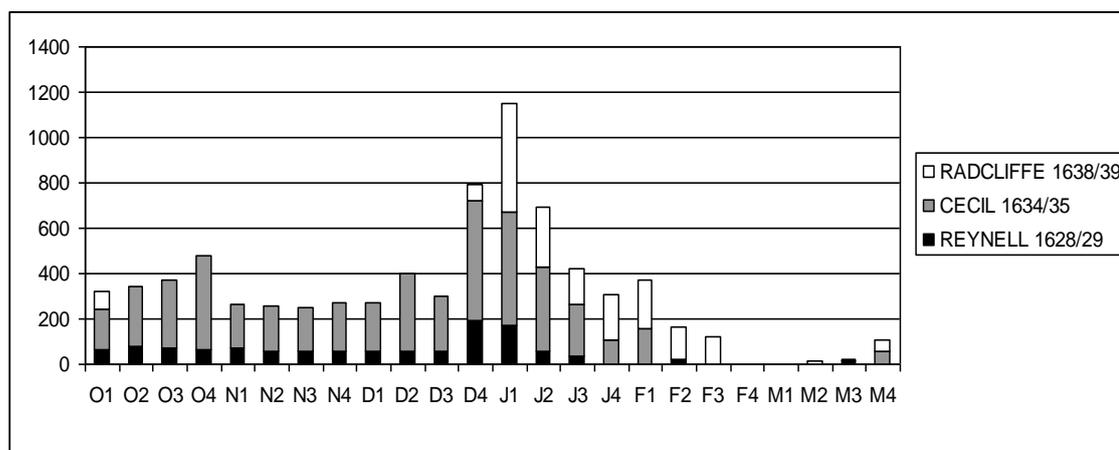


Chart 4.2. Trends in the weekly purchasing of rabbit at three households between 1628 and 1639. Financial outlay during each week between October and March; values are expressed in pence. Sources: Radcliffe, pp. 79-158; Cecil, pp. 5-62; Reynell, pp. 7-59.

The internal organs of animals had formerly been associated with the poor; yet in chapter two we saw how the financial values assigned to offal products suggest that by the late sixteenth century they had become fashionable. This change in status was aided by the authors of kitchen manuals advising their readers how to prepare and cook

⁷¹ J. Murrell, *A new booke of cookerie*... (London, 1615), fol. 9.

feet, tongues, intestines and heads using special techniques and exotic ingredients.⁷² The validity of the suggestion that offal was becoming a special-status food is also indicated by its consumption at celebratory times of the year.

Tripe did not feature in the Arbury accounts before October 1637, but from then on it was bought with increasing frequency each year. In 1639 more was purchased at Christmas than during the rest of the year; and in 1640 tripe was listed as a kitchen expense on seven occasions at a total cost of 19s 9d. Fifty-one per cent of this outlay was made during the week ending 2 January 1641.⁷³ The Newdigates also purchased an udder during this week. At the same time, sweetbread and other offal products were consumed in very small quantities by the Earl of Sussex. But in the first week of January 1638 the quantity of heads, feet and tongue purchased at Gorhambury increased to an extent that suggests that Radcliffe's servants also ate offal as a festive food.⁷⁴

Six years earlier, however, just four neats' tongues, two lambs' heads and one lb of sausage had been bought during the festive winter fortnight by Sir William Cecil.⁷⁵ Depending on how it was cooked, this offal may not have been sufficient to feed the earl's family, his three guests and their servants, and the entire household of at least 16 servants receiving board-wages at that time. Although as ingredients within larger meals these foods could stretch a long way, if they had been prepared with exotic additives using methods described in the cookery books discussed above, they may have been served at the top table as dishes in their own right.

During the late 1620s in South Devon, calves' heads and neats' tongues featured as purchases at festive times, and the only occasion on which tripe was bought was at Christmas 1630. Although there is no evidence of udders being purchased by this

⁷² For example: Anon, *A good huswifes handmaide ...* (London, 1594), fols 15, 22, 33; Murrell, *A nevv booke*, fol. 7; Anon, *The ladies cabinet opened ..* (London, 1639), fol. 3.

⁷³ Newdigate, CR 136 v 140, see especially weeks ending 21 December 1639 and 2 January 1641.

⁷⁴ Radcliffe, pp. 94-97.

⁷⁵ Cecil, pp. 29-35.

family until May 1630, from that time onwards they were purchased frequently, and especially just before Christmas.⁷⁶ Sausage was also consumed at special occasions; this and other animal by-products had been a late fifteenth-century feature of festive fare at Merton College.⁷⁷ Our household accounts reveal that such foods, suitably prepared, were also becoming more popular with the gentry at Christmas and the New Year when celebrations following Advent included luxurious consumption. But the growth in its popularity was not uniform over the country. In vogue in London and the Home Counties before the seventeenth century, the chart below shows that this type of food was purchased in Devon by the Reynells more in 1631 than it had been three years earlier with approximately the same number of servants at the house. It was possibly eaten as a luxury, by virtue of its preparation, because of a perceived necessity to expand the scope of what constituted status-marking exclusive fare.

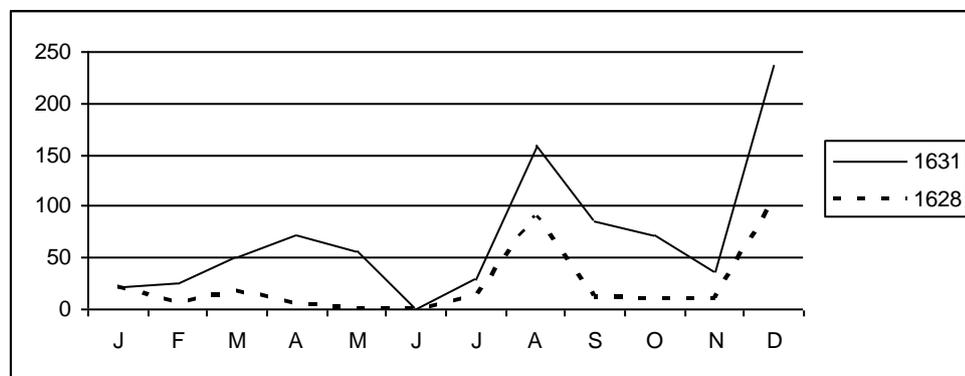


Chart 4.3. A comparison between the monthly purchases of offal made by the Reynell household in 1628 and 1631.

Values are expressed in pence. Source: Reynell, pp. 7-35, 83-105.

In the fortnight preceding Christmas the cost of purchasing chickens at Arbury, like that of many other foods at this location, increased before dipping again in mid-

⁷⁶ Reynell, p. 83.

⁷⁷ C. M. Woolgar, 'Meat and Dairy Products in Late Medieval England', in C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson and T. Waldron (eds), *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 93-94.

January. Normally bought for between 7d and 10d, in December 1639 each chicken cost the Newdigates 12d as suppliers cashed in on fashionable festive foods.⁷⁸ Capons were also acquired in large numbers by the Newdigates at Christmas, and a premium was paid for young tasty caponets. This bird was the most popular of all domestic fowl consumed by both the Newdigates and the Radcliffes over the festive season of 1637/38. Acquired in bulk at Gorhambury during the first week of the New Year, eighteen were paid for along with seven turkeys, three geese, forty-six partridges, and many other species of birds. During this exceptionally high-spend time for Radcliffe, £14 11s 2d – amounting to 21 per cent of the overall expenditure on food and drink – was spent on birds.⁷⁹ An analysis of the stable expenses over the same week indicates that the family entertained few visitors, for only three extra horses received food and bedding. We may thus deduce that the quantities purchased enabled at least some of the servants to partake of these foods. In contrast to the Newdigates and Radcliffes, the Cecils in 1634 and the Sackvilles in 1603 both favoured pullets.⁸⁰

Consumption of wild birds, like some domestic poultry, was usually seasonal; and spending patterns at festive times reveal the type of birds that were held in high regard by the upper strata of society. The relative popularity of diverse species and the quantities of each type consumed varied due to reasons that could have included personal taste, geographical location and availability. Woodcocks, like rabbits and chickens, were subject to a higher valuation during the festive winter season. Although its usual market price for the Newdigates was 9d, in the week between Christmas and the New Year 1639 they cost 12d each. Another wild bird that was subject to temporary price inflation each year, and from which Newdigate's suppliers profited by taking advantage of market forces at high-demand times, was the lark. Usually purchased by

⁷⁸ Newdigate, CR/136v140, see week ending 4 Jan 1639.

⁷⁹ Newdigate, CR 136 v 140, week ending 30 December 1637; Radcliffe, p. 96.

⁸⁰ Sackville, U269/A2/1, Christmas and New Year 1603-04; pp. Cecil, pp. 31-35.

the dozen, its price typically increased six fold for Christmas, from the equivalent of 0.3d each in October to 1.8d each at the end of December. Larks were also a popular festive acquisition at Gorhambury, with 230 being bought for an inflated price of just under 2d each in the first week of January. During this week £8 10s 1d was paid out on an assortment of wild birds that included the common plover – an occasional purchase at 3d each, and six coastal-dwelling grey plovers valued at 12s.⁸¹ If falconry was in decline at this time, as has been suggested, then any reduction in this method of catching birds does not seem to reflect a decline in their acquisition and consumption, which, in the 1630s, amounted to 10 per cent of all meat purchased during the festive season by Cecil and 32 per cent by Radcliffe.⁸²

Prior to the 1620s the woodcock was the most numerous of a wide variety of wild birds mentioned in the accounts of the Vernons in Derbyshire during the mid sixteenth century, and of the Shuttleworths in Lancashire in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In 1588 Francis Willoughby of South Nottinghamshire also acquired woodcocks; but the 75 consumed by some within his household was eclipsed by the 432 larks, 113 snipes and other small birds that represented an estimated 200lbs of edible meat.⁸³

Most root vegetables such as turnips and parsnips were acquired during the winter at Arbury. These were followed by asparagus in the spring, artichokes in the early summer and cauliflowers from June onwards; the latter became cheaper to buy in October when they were in relatively plentiful supply. But potatoes, viewed as a ‘rare and exotic luxury’ according to Roger Schlesinger, were gaining in favour.⁸⁴ Purchased

⁸¹ Radcliffe, p. 97.

⁸² R. Grassby, ‘The Decline of Falconry in Early Modern England’, *Past and Present* 157 (1997), pp. 37-62.

⁸³ Dawson, *Plenti and Grase*, p. 90.

⁸⁴ R. Schlesinger, *In the Wake of Columbus: The Impact of the New World on Europe, 1492-1650* (Wheeling, Illinois, 1996), p. 94.

by the Newdigates in May in 1636 and 1637, they were also bought for the household's Christmas and New Year festivities in the winter of 1639-40.⁸⁵ The emergence of this tuber as a sought-after food is thus evidenced not only by the seasonal fluctuations in its price at Arbury – 5d per lb rising to between 8d and 16d, but also by spending patterns over the year.⁸⁶ These patterns are shown in Chart 4:4 along with their average prices over the course of twelve months. Although no potatoes are recorded as being purchased at Gorhambury during the first week of January 1639, cauliflowers were. This relatively recent introduction to the English kitchen was a feature of the festive dinner table here, as it was at Arbury; and £2 9s 3d was spent on this, beets and 'roots and herbs' over the New Year period.⁸⁷

The choice of vegetables purchased for the festive season at these two locations suggests not only that this type of food in general becoming more sought-after by the gentry, but also of the continued evolution of a hierarchy within this type of food. Neither fresh nor dried legumes, a basic diet food over the rest of the year, were bought at Radcliffes or Newdigates homes over Christmas or New Year. And it is perhaps significant that the only occasion on which salad items are mentioned in the household accounts outside their normal English growing season was in the week between Christmas and New Year 1640. During this week 2s 4d was spent on 'sallets'.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Newdigate, CR 136 v 140, weeks ending 28 December 1639 and 4 January 1640.

⁸⁶ Newdigate, CR/136v140, see weeks ending 28 December 1639 and 4 January 1640.

⁸⁷ Radcliffe, p. 97

⁸⁸ Newdigate, CR/136v140, week ending 2 January 1641.

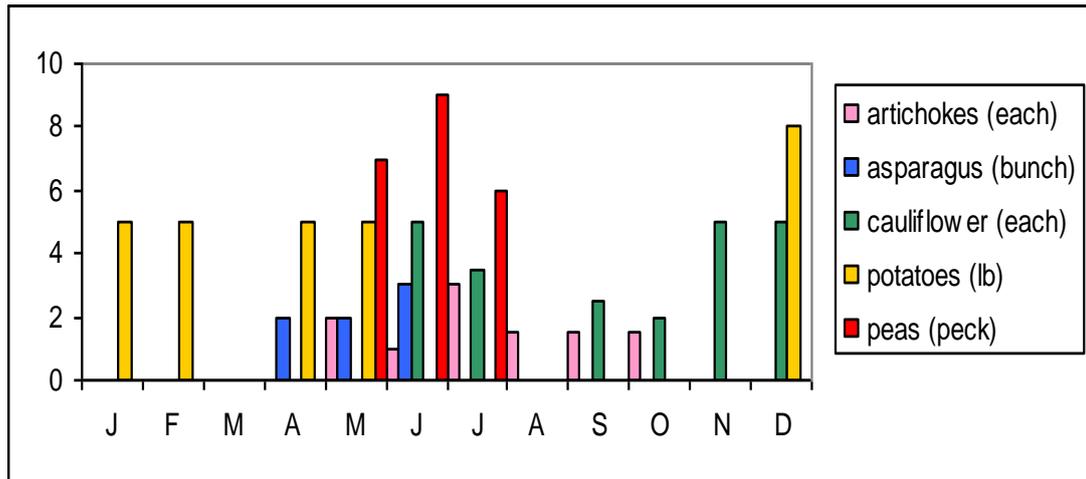


Chart 4:4. Monthly purchasing patterns of vegetables at Arbury in 1639 and 1640.
Seasonal spending patterns and monthly average prices of vegetables purchased by the Newdigates in 1639 and 1640; values are expressed in pence. Source: Newdigate, 1639-40.

Sweetmeats and banqueting stuff, as we have seen, were special foods; and it was not unusual for households' expenditure on sugar, spices and candies to increase sharply during the fortnight preceding Christmas. During the festive season of 1640 the Newdigates spent 10s 8d on sugar infused with fruit and spices – and this was in addition to buying ready-made candies.⁸⁹ Although no comfits or candies were bought by the Reynells in the period preceding Christmas 1631, entries in the Forde accounts show that £5 worth of sugar, spice and fruit were purchased. At least some of these could have been for the production of luxurious sweets at this seasonal time.⁹⁰ This year was not atypical; and the table below shows that Sir Richard Reynell's spending sugar and other spices during the Christmas periods each year formed a considerable percentage of the overall total. It also reveals that some spices were more associated with winter festivities than others. Whilst sugar, pepper and ginger were deemed to be special foods across the calendar year, cloves, cinnamon and mace appear to have assumed greater festive significance.

⁸⁹ Newdigate, CR/136v140, see the single entry for the fortnight ending 2 Jan 1641.

⁹⁰ Reynell, p. 103.

PRODUCT	TOTAL SPENDING ON PRODUCT		%
	Over 5 years	Over 5 Christmases	
Sugar	5599	1415	25
Nutmeg	134	82	61
Mace	203	168	83
Pepper	224	44	20
Saffron	11	0	0
Ginger	42	14	33
Cloves	161	133	83
Cinnamon	145	100	69
Unspecified	1072	1048	98

Table 4.1. Relationship between spices bought at Christmas and those bought during the rest of the year by the Reynells.

Sir Richard Reynell's spending on sugar and spices between 1627 and 1631. % = Christmas spending as a percentage of total spending (to the nearest 1 per cent). Values are expressed in pence. Source, Reynell, pp. 1-105.

At Gorhambury much spice was bought for consumption over the festive season, and this included ½ oz of saffron. This was a considerable quantity of the expensive foodstuff, and it is possible that those eating at lower tables availed themselves of an opportunity to sample part of Sir Edward's meal. Here, olives and dates were bought only for the festive season; and, as at other households, Christmas was a time for cooking with currants and raisins. Although these dried fruits were around 5d per lb in the late 1630s, pound for pound they were still twice the price of beef and mutton. Thus, eating meals cooked with these exotic ingredients could mark the status of the upper- and middle-classes. This is not to say that they were not occasionally available to labourers and the poor, for we have seen that a weaver from Brentwood was convicted for stealing currants and raisins just before Christmas⁹¹

Other luxuries could have been eaten by the poor at Christmas. Venison, a socially exclusive food eaten during the festive season by well-to-do gentlemen such as Sir William Petre, was also a target for thieves.⁹² As we saw in chapter three, a vagrant was convicted for stealing the luxurious meat from a house in Salisbury at Christmas 1605. Whether it was for her own enjoyment or for selling on the black-market, the

⁹¹ See chapter three.

⁹² Petre, p. 308.

meat was available as a festive treat to anyone who could acquire it. This meat, as we will now see, also figured prominently in the life-cycle feasts of the gentry and aristocracy.

Life-cycle feasts

The sharing of luxury foods facilitated community bonding at many life-cycle events. Childbed feasts of wealthy women were exclusive events at which luxuries such as wine and sugar were shared. But whatever the social status of the mother, entertainment was normally reserved for a select circle of acquaintances that were predominantly, but not always exclusively, female.⁹³ Expenditure on luxurious fare on these occasions must generally have been disproportionate to the statuses of the participants, for, as David Cressy has shown, both Chester and Leicester councils attempted to regulate the ‘excessive’ costs associated with them.⁹⁴ Christening feasts too were life-cycle events at which neighbours, midwife, gossips, extended family and eminent locals sometimes attended.⁹⁵ These could be marked by luxurious displays – especially at christenings within gentry and aristocratic households. In drawing on several sources Cressy shows that the well-to-do celebrated with ‘diverse banquetting dishes’ such as sugar, comfits, marmalade and biscuits.⁹⁶ Food-sharing celebrations such as these, and weddings that were marked by ‘superfluous eating’, could be used to encompass the wanted and reject outsiders.⁹⁷ But here we consider luxury foods and social identity at one type of life-cycle feast – the funeral.

⁹³ D. Cressy, ‘Purification, thanksgiving and the churcing of women in post-Reformation England’, *Past & Present* 141 (1993), pp. 113-14; A. Rowlands, ‘The Conditions of Life for the Masses’, in E. Cameron (ed.), *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 39-40.

⁹⁴ D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 84-85.

⁹⁵ P. Clark, *British Clubs and Societies c. 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 29-30.

⁹⁶ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, pp. 166-67.

⁹⁷ For examples of excessive eating at weddings see: Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, pp. 352-55.

People who attended the funeral feasts of the well-to-do and their wives could, as members of a broad social unit with at least one common interest, expect to be fed with high-value fare. The funeral of the Duke of Norfolk in October 1554 was, according to reporter Henry Machyn, a special event in London at which luxury foods such as veal, venison, capons, rabbits, pigeons, pike, cranes and swans were enjoyed. And in addition to the more luxurious foods there was also beef, mutton, bread and beer ‘as great plenty as ever had been known, both for ryche and pore’.⁹⁸ Although Machyn, a merchant tailor with a keen interest in civic ceremonies, was possibly prone to exaggeration – using as he did superlatives such as ‘greatest ever seen’ on many occasions – it seems that the poor were not always excluded from eating at the feast itself.⁹⁹ At the funeral of ‘Ser Umffrey’ on 12 April 1555, for example, not only did the needy benefit from the dole that was customary at such events, but also from inclusion at a great dinner that was open ‘both to ryche and the powre’.¹⁰⁰ David Cressy has shown that some major funerals ended with two feasts: ‘a dinner for the up-scale participants and a rowdier picnic for the poor’. It is possible that this was the case here; but even if the lowly attendants failed to sample the highest valued foods, their presence at one of the event, and the food that they did eat, developed a sense of social inclusion.¹⁰¹

The poor were not welcome participants at all of the festivities however. Following the funeral of the wife of London alderman Thomas Luwen, there was a ‘grett dener for as mony as wold cum’; in addition, spiced bread was sent to ‘evere howse and about the cette’. But Machyn noted that on this occasion the intended

⁹⁸ J. G. Nichols (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, from A.D. 1550 to A.D. 1563* (Camden Society, original series. 42, 1848), p. 70.

⁹⁹ Nichols (ed.), *Diary of Henry Machyn*. See, for example, pp. 5-6, 25, 70.

¹⁰⁰ Nichols (ed.), *Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 17. Machyn does not mention Sir Humphrey’s last name.

¹⁰¹ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 444.

recipients were specifically ‘worshephulle’ men and women.¹⁰² After the solemnities of the funerals of gentlemen or their wives, there was usually some kind of food to be had by those of low social rank. But at funeral dinners, whether the deceased was the head male of the household or his wife, the food served was exclusive to invited guests and was expressive of the social status of the family unit. Because of the importance attached to the social role of food in serving not just individual, but also communal identity, it needed to meet quantitative and qualitative standards. It has been noted elsewhere that funerary food assisted the ‘reintegration of the community’ and helped to offset destructive impulses which could ‘threaten the cohesion and solidarity of the group’. Thus, up to 50 per cent of the cost incurred at such events was catering expenses.¹⁰³ The social role of food-sharing at funerals, then, was similar to that at festivals and other ritual events; at those organised by parish elders one of the aims was to affirm and underpin the established hierarchical order of the community thereby discouraging fragmentation.¹⁰⁴ But despite the obvious advantages of fostering communal cohesion, contemporary observation suggests that the sharing of luxury foods at large-scale socially-inclusive events was in decline. By 1580 less money was being spent on the funerals of the aristocracy, and in 1631 it was noted that this was also the case for the gentry.¹⁰⁵

This declination matched the falling off of ‘hospitalitie and the reliefe of the poore’ at Christmas that was noted by governmental representatives in repeated

¹⁰² Nichols (ed.), *Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 295.

¹⁰³ C. Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London, 1984), pp. 154-59.

¹⁰⁴ E. Goldring, ‘The Funeral of Sir Philip Sidney and the Politics of Elizabethan Festival’, in J. R.

Mulryne and E. Goldring (eds), *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 204-06.

¹⁰⁵ L. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1965), p. 577; Goldring, ‘Funeral of Sir Philip’, p. 204; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 445; Heal and Holmes, *Gentry*, p. 140; examples of orders that indicate diminishing hospitality include *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (London, 1969), pp. 171-72; *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. II (London, 1983), p. 169.

proclamations and has been commented upon by Felicity Heal.¹⁰⁶ The type of goodwill that had customarily been extended by gentlemen such as Sir William Petre, where food and conviviality was supplied to the less fortunate in luxurious surroundings, was apparently undergoing a process of erosion. The diminishment of goodwill occurred because of the gentry's alleged pursuit of individualistic pleasures and conspicuous consumption in London and Westminster during a 'season' that lasted from autumn until June.¹⁰⁷ On 8 February 1638(9) Lady Brilliana Harley, in referring to a proclamation requiring gentlemen to leave London and return to their country seats, considered the instruction to be an imposition – the adherence to which, she complained, would be a hindrance to her family's pursuits in the capital.¹⁰⁸ As the edict of 20 January (probably the one to which the lady alluded) was on this occasion concerned more with the defence of the realm than with parochial patron/client hospitality, prioritisation in the mind and words of this country gentlewoman is particularly illuminating.¹⁰⁹

The life-cycle event of the funeral, then, had in common with the annual festival of Christmas, the consumption and sharing of exotic foods. But whereas even relatively poor people traditionally received gift-foods and financial assistance on occasions such as these, other special events were marked by their exclusivity.

¹⁰⁶ See for example: England and Wales, James I, *By the King. A proclamation commanding the repaire of noblemen and gentlemen into their seuerall countreys ...* (London, 1614). See also: Heal, *Hospitality*, pp. 143-44.

¹⁰⁷ F. J. Fisher, 'The Development of London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4th series, 30 (1948), pp. 40, 43, 46.

¹⁰⁸ Lewis (ed.), *Letters*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁹ England and Wales, Charles I, *By the King. A proclamation commanding the repair of noblemen, knights, and gentlemen ...* (London, 1629).

Civic feasts

If feasts are excellent contexts of luxury food consumption ‘often used to enhance or establish social relations’, at Marijke van der Veen has posited, then those held by civic dignitaries are important indicators of hierarchical identity.¹¹⁰ The Lord Mayor of York ‘and his brederyn’ received from the Earl of Cumberland a stag and a buck on the 29 August 1542.¹¹¹ Apparently this was not an isolated occurrence, for on the 3 February 1578(9) an order was made prohibiting the consumption of ‘any venyson’ at the Lord Mayor’s ‘great feast’ or ‘at his entri into his office’.¹¹² Despite this legislative endeavour ‘two bucks’ were bestowed upon the Lord Mayor of York and his aldermen by the Lord President, the Earl of Huntingdon, three years later. The venison was to be enjoyed by ‘the sheriffs, [the council of] xxiiij, the Chamberlaynes and all their ladies and wives’ at a feast held at the house of Francis Hynch.¹¹³ Council records suggest that the gifting of luxury foods by nobles to those of lower social rank was not uncommon, and constituted part of a process of reciprocal favour through which lords acquired services or products from civic leaders.¹¹⁴

Of further significance is the revelation that town councillors were not the only recipients of such food on special occasions. The coterie expressly included women; those invited could associate themselves with, and were identifiable as members of a privileged club within which the consumption of luxury food served to distinguish its membership from outsiders. York was not alone in this respect. Following their inauguration on 30 September 1552 the mayor, aldermen and new sheriffs of London held a great feast that was attended by gentlemen and ladies alike. The grandeur of the

¹¹⁰ M. van der Veen, ‘When is Food a Luxury?’, *World Archaeology* 34:3 (2003), p. 413.

¹¹¹ *York Civic Records*, vol. 4 (ed.), A. Raine (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1946), p. 79

¹¹² *York Civic Records*, vol. 8 (ed.), A. Raine (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1952), p. 26.

¹¹³ *York Civic Records*, vol. 8, p. 59.

¹¹⁴ The Earl of Cumberland had previously received presents from the Council of York ‘allowyd of the common charge’.

occasion was not lost on Henry Machyn, for he observed that it was ‘a grett dener as youe have sene; for ther wher mony gentyll men and women’.¹¹⁵ The peripheries of these fellowships, although elastic enough to temporarily accommodate the ‘ladies and wives’ of the councillors, were impervious to unwelcome outsiders. And the venison that was enjoyed at their special occasions, ordinarily only available to those of noble status and their privileged acquaintances, was a social marker that simultaneously identified its consumers as being different from outsiders and, as Felicity Heal has pointed out, helped to ‘develop and reinforce patronage networks’.¹¹⁶ Another exclusive special event, one at which venison and other luxury foods featured prominently, was the Master of the Company Feast.

Usually held in the summer, these were high profile events at which the participants enjoyed sumptuous fare. The Merchant Tailor’s Feast that was held on St. Paul’s Day in 1557 was attended by the lord mayor, his sheriffs and other ‘worshipful’ men. Not only was venison was consumed in great quantity by the participants, but two bucks were also given to ‘the parysh’ to ‘make mere’.¹¹⁷ Who exactly were supposed to make merry on that day in 1557 is not clear; but as it is unlikely that the meat of two bucks would have fed a heavily populated parish in London, ‘the parish’ may well have meant the parish elders – the ‘better sort’ of inhabitants – rather than the entire parochial community. Two years later, on 29 August in 1559, the feast again included venison ‘be-syd al odur mettes’.¹¹⁸ If this special occasion was by and large exclusive to a select clique with shared interests, and to local government officials who could further those interests, then the Master of the Company of Skinners’ feast held in June 1560 was apparently less so. The Committee of the Fellowship were joined by many worshipful

¹¹⁵ Nichols (ed.), *Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 25.

¹¹⁶ Heal, ‘Food Gifts’, pp. 41-70.

¹¹⁷ Nichols (ed.), *Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 141.

¹¹⁸ Nichols (ed.), *Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 208.

men at the dinner and at the subsequent banquet. At this event where ‘all was welcome’, the ‘grett plenty’ [of delicacies] included spiced bread, marmalade, suckets, comfits and fruit – a popular fashion-food that included cherries, strawberries, pippins and Portuguese oranges. And at the following year’s feast three stags and eight bucks were consumed at the pre-banquet lunch. On the same day that the Company of Skinners’ held their annual feast, the Master Grocers held theirs. The local dignitaries in attendance at the grocers’ feast included the Lord Mayor of London, his aldermen and sheriffs, worshipful gentlemen, and many ladies and gentlewomen. Their dinner on 16 June 1561 included more than thirty bucks and stags.¹¹⁹ These opulent festivities of trading and craftspeople that both expressed fellowship and at once aggrandised the social standing of participants continued unabated into the next century.

Ben-Amos has shown that at the blacksmiths’ feasts of the early seventeenth century, held like many others in London in midsummer, ‘large quantities’ of venison pasties, capons, geese, fresh salmon, sugarloaf and wine were offered to the members.¹²⁰ The poor, she writes, sometimes benefited from urban guild feasts, through donations in times of dearth and plague, and through the organising and funding of some guild-sponsored almshouse festivities.¹²¹ But we feel that these gestures, as generous as they might have been, served to remind poor recipients of their exclusion from the ‘main event’ and of their inferior and dependent position. The nature of at least some of the feasts themselves appears to have changed in the seventeenth century, for it has been noted that socially inclusive events attended by council leaders eventually became more exclusive and restrictive ‘rather than fraternal

¹¹⁹ Nichols (ed.), *Diary of Henry Machyn*, pp. 237-38, 260.

¹²⁰ I. K. Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 170-71.

¹²¹ Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*, p.174.

and all-embracing'.¹²² This trend towards exclusivity reflects both the individualistic and the belonging aspects of identity prevalent in seventeenth century society. As circles contracted, those encompassed within them were increasingly marked by conformity to type. But council leaders drawn from the professions such as commerce and finance – like Lord Mayor William Harpur who had attended the Master Grocers' feast in 1561 – continued not only to be recipients of luxury foods at special occasions, but also presented such foods to acquaintances and elite dignitaries whilst entertaining privately and at semi-public events.

John Smyth, a successful merchant who owned his own ship and was twice Mayor of Bristol in the late sixteenth century, entertained 'his merchant friends' at Ashton Court. Figuring amongst the convivial luxuries were wines, and possibly hippocras – a fashionable cordial that was not dissimilar to the modern-day German drink *gluehwein* – a recipe for which he wrote in his ledger.¹²³ On occasions that were more ceremonious, banquets presented in honour of elite guests could be spectacular. The monarch, for example, regularly attended feasts and received gifts of luxury foods when travelling around his or her realm. The feast served to King Charles I when he visited Forde House in 1625 featured a vast array of luxury foods including many exotic birds and animals.¹²⁴ Yet even this was eclipsed by an example of excessive resplendence in the form of a banquet given in honour of Charles by his 'favourite', George Villiers, in November the following year. Costing £4000 the feast was 'let down in a sheet upon the table, no man seeing how it came'; and 'sweet water', which alone was bought at a price of £200, cascaded 'as a shower from heaven'.¹²⁵

¹²² Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*, pp. 176-77.

¹²³ Bantock, *Earlier Smyths*, pp. 8, 14-15.

¹²⁴ A list of food items thought to have been included in this banquet may be found in T. Gray, *Devon Household Accounts, 1627-59, Part 1* (Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1995), p. xxxvi.

¹²⁵ G. Roberts (ed.), *Diary of Walter Yonge Esq., Justice of the Peace and M.P. for Honiton: Written at Colyton and Axminster, Co. Devon, from 1604 to 1628* (Camden Society, original series, 41, 1848), p. 98.

This banquet was by no means unique in its splendour. Another example of luxurious feasting by the privileged minority is evident when Charles I visited the Mayor of London, master grocer Thomas Moulson, in 1634. On 13 February the King invited himself, the Queen and twenty-nine members of each of the four main Inns of Court to dinner at his house. Not only did this cost the mayor (or rather the London public purse) £3000, but ‘diverse houses between his house and the marchan-tailors Hall’ were ordered by the civic leader to be pulled down ‘to make way for the king to pass through’.¹²⁶ Such feasts, as we have shown, were special occasions that underpinned the symbiotic relationship between patrician and client, and excluded outsiders. Yet as impressive as these banquets were, either following or at actually at them, royals and hereditary peers were also presented with ‘take-away’ luxury gift-foods. These were supplied by the inner-circle of town or parish elders.

In 1541, on behalf of the City of York, high-value foods were given by the council to Henry VIII during his visit there. It is unlikely that the gift met with the approval of all of York’s taxpayers given the apparent recusancy in that county following the Reformation.¹²⁷ Ostensibly for reasons of affinity, respect and courtesy, but also perhaps for reasons of personal ambition or expected favour, six fat pikes, six gallons of ‘fyne yprocas’, one dozen ‘byskets and caroweys’, twelve lbs of ‘fyne suctets’, twelve lbs of green ginger, one dozen ‘marmellads’, ‘sex loffs of fyne sugar’, a bushel of fyne perys’ and a bushel of ‘fylberts were presented to him. Ten years later, on 2 November 1551, the Queen of Scots on visiting London was given gift-foods by the Mayor, aldermen and ‘dyvers men’ of that city. They included various meats, wild

¹²⁶ W. Whiteway, *William Whiteway of Dorchester: His Diary, 1618-1635* (Dorset Record Society, 12, 1991), pp. 138-39.

¹²⁷ C. Haigh, ‘The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation’, *Past and Present* 93 (1981), pp. 40-44.

foul and quail, sturgeon, salmon, wine and spices.¹²⁸ Royalty and nobility, however, were just some of the recipients of luxury gift-foods and hospitality that were presented by town officials and high-ranking local people.

Feasts of assize judges and barristers

Judges received substantial quantities of luxury foods from dignitaries in the towns holding assizes, and this seems to have left them with little to purchase. Although the charge of entertaining these upholders of the law may have been ‘a source of anxiety to sheriffs’, as Felicity Heal has noted, they appear to have been adequately helped by other ‘principle gentlemen’ living in the locality – and by publicly-funded luxury gifts being ‘given’.¹²⁹ In 1588(9) at Wymondham near Norwich ‘my lorde juge’ received ‘2 gallons of wyne and one pownd of suger’ which had been charged to the town.¹³⁰ The extension of generosity to judges (or the buying of their favour) by gifting luxurious foods was by no means restricted to the east of England, however. Typical of the gift-foods presented at each town in Devon by local gentlemen were those received by Thomas Walmsley and Edward Fenner, two ‘country gentlemen’ judges who rode the Western Circuit between July 1596 and March 1601. For assizes normally lasting two or three days the following list of gifts were not atypical: bucks (sometimes up to three), veal, mutton and rabbits; birds such as turkeys, goslings, quails, grouse, pheasants, partridges, gulls and puffins; pies and pasties of venison or offal; artichokes; and a variety of expensive fish that included dory, sturgeon, lobsters, carp, bream, fresh salmon and salmon peal.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Nichols, *Diary of Henry Machyn*, p. 11.

¹²⁹ Heal, ‘Food Gifts’, pp. 41-70.

¹³⁰ J. Wilson (ed.), ‘The Wymondham Town Book 1585-1620’, in J. Wilson, P. Howard and A. Hickey (eds), *Country and City* (Norfolk Record Society 70 2006), p. 43.

¹³¹ Cooper (ed.), *The Expenses of the Judges*, pp. 4, 6. See also the lists of gifts given to the judges throughout the set of accounts.

They also drank copious quantities of strong beer, with small beer being ‘carefully avoided’. To supplement these extravagant gifts of food and drink the judges purchased crabs, capers and olives, strawberries and cherries, herbs and radishes, dairy produce, and a relatively small quantity of bread – usually to the value of 1s.¹³² Conspicuous by its virtual absence was beef, a meat thought by Henry Butts at that time to be suitable for manual labourers.¹³³ This dietary extravagance occurred during a period of dearth and high food price; and whilst the two eminent gentlemen were enjoying a wide-ranging assortment of luxuries, the Privy Council of England was busying itself with combating a general food deficiency. Their actions included introducing remedial measures to lessen the impact of the severe grain shortage affecting Devon (which formed part of the Western Circuit), and attempted to restrict the brewing of strong ales nationwide in order to conserve stocks of barley. The Council also forcefully voiced concerns about a ‘general increase in luxury’; by this they meant the ‘ryotous consumption’ that contributed to other people’s hardship because of ‘excesse in dyett’.¹³⁴

Extravagant gifts of food received by the judges were, on one level, ‘a graceful recognition of different orders of being’.¹³⁵ On another plane, there was quite another reason. In the West Country during the late 1590s luxury foods were given to the champions of law and order by those bedecked with knighthoods and peerages; these included the Earl of Pembroke, Sir William Eyres, the Marquis of Winchester and the Lord Bishop. That the law was intended to protect this ‘sort’ of people is indicated by the favours afforded to the law’s upholders. But from whom were they to be protected?

¹³² Cooper (ed.), *The Expenses of the Judges*, pp. 11-14.

¹³³ H. Butts, *Dyets dry dinner ...* (London, 1599), chapter 3.

¹³⁴ *Acts of the Privy Council of England, 1596-1597*, vol. 26 (London, 1974), pp. 149, 323, 327, 335, 383-86, 429.

¹³⁵ M. Pelling, *The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (London, 1998), p. 41.

On 30 June 1597, a time of considerable general hardship, the judges and their officers at Dorchester Assizes received substantial food gifts from the local community elders. They included, amongst other foods, two bucks, half of a veal, two lambs, twenty rabbits, two dishes of trout, fresh salmon, two goslings, two ducks, five lobsters and five crabs. On the same day at Brentwood Assizes Judges Francis Gawdy and Thomas Owen sentenced to death a ‘labourer’, Joseph Collyn, for stealing a fitch of bacon and 2s worth of cheese.¹³⁶ *These* were the people whom the elite felt the need to be protected from; the ‘poorer sort’ of people who stepped outside the bounds of accepted behaviour as defined by the community (or rather by the ‘chief inhabitants’ who represented its members). Such food-thieving felons could thus be subject to the ultimate sanction whilst at least some ‘country gentlemen’ enjoyed a luxurious diet.

But many poor people were law-abiding. Whilst a bond between the elders of a locality and their judicial representatives, strengthened by the gifting of luxury foods, helped to underpin a stratified society that was marked by consuming patterns and was policed accordingly, social compliance on the rulers’ terms was a nexus between themselves and their inferiors. People who qualified as members of the deserving poor within their administrative areas, including those who were law-abiding, were eligible for help when food prices were high. Whilst the Devon bench in 1597 helped to alleviate hunger by ordering householders to provide daily meals for up to three poor people, the eminent gentlemen Messrs Walmsley and Fenner also played their part. They customarily gave 20d to be shared between the needy of each town – an amount that increased to a whole 2s by 1601.¹³⁷

Like Walmsley and Fenner before them, some associates of the legal profession in the 1630s, as members of the gentry, apparently felt the need to exhibit opulence

¹³⁶ *Calendar of Assize Records: Essex Indictments*, Elizabeth I (London, 1978), ref. 2837.

¹³⁷ Cooper (ed.), *Expenses of the Judges*, p. 13.

befitting their economic and social status. This was expressed at least partly through the medium of food consumption. John Greene, a barrister and a judge of the Sheriff's Court, noted in August 1635 that he and his colleagues, whilst dining in the hall of Lincoln's Inn, had recently eaten on 'every flesh day' 'venizon and some other dish, besides either pullets, veal, tongs, pigeons, ducks or the like'; and on fish days they ate 'hortichocke pie and sturgeon'. His experiences of luxury foods were not limited to the dining hall of Lincolns Inn; for on Saturday 17 August Greene was a participant at a 'Venizon feast at the bownlin green'.¹³⁸ The noteworthiness of these details, and the admission that 'our exceedings all this reading have been very great', in a diary preoccupied with legal matters, indicate that this extravagant fare may have been atypical. Yet the entries show that high-value prestigious foods were at least occasionally available to those residing at Inns of Court where professional identities that included constituents of civility and gentility could be fashioned.¹³⁹ Indeed the consumption of such food could itself qualify as a special occasion – perhaps the sort that Dalechamp claimed had become overly frequent.¹⁴⁰

It ought not to surprise us that Greene and others in the legal profession ate such foods both conspicuously and inconspicuously – possibly within exclusive or socially restricted surroundings. Like meals eaten by lords in their manor houses, those taken in the dining hall at Lincolns Inn were not for public viewing. The feast at The Bowling Green, on the other hand, possibly was. When consumed conspicuously and in an appropriate setting, luxury foods held the potential to define their consumers' social position or to make a statement about their chosen identity; this could be in front of

¹³⁸ E. M. Symonds (ed.), 'The diary of John Greene (1635-57)', *English Historical Review* 43 (1928), pp.386, 388-89.

¹³⁹ M. O'Callaghan, 'Tavern Societies, the Inns of Court and the Culture of Conviviality in Early Seventeenth-Century London', in A. Smyth (ed.), *A Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 37-38.

¹⁴⁰ C. Dalechamp, *Christian hospitality handled common-place-wise ...* (Cambridge, 1632), pp. 59-61.

clients, peers, employees or servants. However, when consumed inconspicuously the value of luxuries did not diminish. The reassurance and satisfaction that the fare was congruous to its partaker was of substantial import to the process of self-identity. But if the barristers in question, as gentlemen or aspiring gentlemen, had acquired or were acquiring the taste for venison, sturgeon ‘or the like’ (eating it simply because they liked it), then we should note that refined taste was itself a hallmark of the cultured classes. Either way, consumption of high-value foods by professional people signified their status. They expected to eat well and they ate that which was expected of them. Thus lawyers, when they acted as assize judges, received from the community elders and the town officials they represented, the kind of luxury foods that were appropriate to feasting at these special occasions. Such hospitality held the potential to create and reinforce harmonious relationships. But what benefactions could the poor expect in terms of food on an official level at the time these barristers were feasting on venison, sturgeon ‘or the like’?

Salisbury councillor John Ivie, in a letter to his colleague Henry Sherfield in 1628, outlined his plan to save the council money and at the same time curtail beggary. He suggested that a store should be set up for the relief of the poor that only accepted council-issued tokens as payment for food provisions. The food, perhaps not surprisingly given the evidence produced in chapter two, was to be ‘bread, butter, cheese and fish’ with ‘butchers appointed’ to sell flesh ‘if need be’.¹⁴¹ The attitude of this puritan councillor towards the less fortunate and their dietary intake was unambiguous. As shown below in *Criticisms of feasting*, quantitative gluttony and the excessive use of alcohol were not the only consumption concerns of religious moralists; and issues of epicurean consumption and the types of food deemed appropriate to social

¹⁴¹ P. Slack (ed.), *Poverty in Early-Stuart Salisbury* (Wiltshire Record Society, 31, 1975), p. 11. See also chapter two of this paper for details of the food provisions supplied to those reliant upon public institutions.

status were as important to this councillor as they were to some clerics. ‘The poor’, Ivie insisted, ‘should have such diet as is fit for them’.¹⁴² Thus, official help that was granted to those eligible for relief (as opposed to those in need), sometimes taking the form of gifts of food, was more than a source of sustenance and more than a tool with which to regulate behaviour. It was also a reflector of the recipient’s identity as perceived by his or her superiors.

But the poor had many ways and means of supplementing a meagre parish pension. The use of alehouses provided ‘valuable resources for vagrants’; another approach was acquiring gift-foods from family and neighbours, and yet another tactic was begging. The latter was commonly for carried out in order to receive money, but sometimes the indigent also begged for food. This they could sometimes expect to receive at charitable institutions and at the gate of the manor house, often in the form of bread or beef.¹⁴³ There was, however, a social price to pay for being allowed to beg on the streets. Before the turn of the century, and sometimes preceding ‘formal welfare provision’, the indigent who qualified as accepted members of the community by fulfilling certain criteria were allowed to beg for alms; but in order to do so they were stigmatised by having to wear badges as ‘marks of inclusion’.¹⁴⁴ Even as early as 1568 in Leicester, the council ordered that just one poor man, attired in black with a badge upon his sleeve, was allowed to beg around the town for ‘charitable almes towards the vniuersal releffe of the poore people’. All money was to be placed in the locked box

¹⁴² Slack (ed.), *Poverty in Early-Stuart Salisbury*, p. 11.

¹⁴³ L. A. Botelho, *Old Age and The English Poor Law, 1500-1700*, (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 148-150; A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640* (London, 1985), pp. 79-81. Loaves of bread valued a 1d each were doled out by Lord Leycester’s Hospital in the late sixteenth-century, see Warwickshire County Record Office, CR 1600 / LH / 42. For beef as alms see chapter two, *Servants in wealthy households*.

¹⁴⁴ See for example S. Hindle, ‘Civility, Honesty and Identification of the Deserving Poor in Seventeenth-Century England’, in H. French and J. Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 50. This theme is also addressed in S. Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro-politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c. 1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 67, 68, 71, 105-06; and in S. Hindle, ‘Dependency, Shame and Belonging: Badging the Deserving Poor, c.1550-1750’, *Cultural and Social History* 1:1 (2004), pp. 11-13.

that he carried so that it could be distributed to ‘impotent persons’ – with which they could buy food – as and when the mayor saw fit.¹⁴⁵ Thus, whilst the elite and their representatives such as assize judges and barristers enjoyed luxury gift-foods and banquets to mark their status, those at the opposite end of the hierarchical scale – when not in receipt of doles at important annual or lifecycle events – were to be clearly identified as being poor in order to receive the meagre food rations that they were associated with.

Criticisms of feasting

This polarity was not acceptable to all. Commentators from both secular and religious spheres criticised the way in which some people ate luxuriously – especially at times of dearth and high prices. The insensitive expression of unbridled opulence conveyed by the unpopular duke George Villiers at his £4000 banquet in 1626, which was understandably considered by some as offensive, came at a time when others found themselves in severe hardship.¹⁴⁶ Just months before Buckingham’s splendid feast, the citizens of Dorchester collected £40 for the relief of Exeter ‘which was in great distress’ – not only with people dying of plague, but also of want.¹⁴⁷ The diarist Walter Yonge, whose eldest son had participated in and was knighted at the sumptuous feast at Forde House fourteen months earlier, noted of Buckingham’s banquet that such ‘pompous vanities’ came at a time when the country was in poverty. The wasteful expenditure of this money, he wrote, could have been spent on ‘more necessary occasions’.¹⁴⁸ There is an apparent irony in the fact that it was the same duke, George Villiers, who was in charge of the ill-fated naval mission to Cadiz a few months before the banquet. Upon

¹⁴⁵ M. Bateson, *Records of the Borough of Leicester: Being a Series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Leicester*, vol. 3, 1506-1603 (Cambridge, 1905), p. 122.

¹⁴⁶ Roberts (ed.), *Diary*, p. 98.

¹⁴⁷ Whiteway, *William Whiteway*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁸ Roberts (ed.), *Diary*, p. 98.

the return of the fleet, we will recall from chapter two, the sailors complained bitterly about the quality of their food that they had had to endure.¹⁴⁹ But rather than being viewed as ironic, we would argue that the apparent contradiction was in fact two sides of the same cultural coin. It was struck by the ruling elite, and upon it their attitude towards hierarchical order and cultural identity was clearly stamped.

Expressing one's superior standing by feasting lavishly when others went hungry was bound to attract concern. And, as church was considered by secular authorities as both a spiritual institution and a channel for directing policy, governmental concerns and attempts to control or regulate consumption were sometimes transmitted via the pulpit. Thus, on Christmas Day 1596, the Privy Council ordered the Archbishops of York and Canterbury to administer to the public, via the parish church, instructions for people to moderate their eating habits.¹⁵⁰ Some clerics, however, hardly needed prompting. In the same year, but predating the governmental order, a similar concern came from a Devonshire vicar. Reverend Radford Mavericke published a sermon in which he warned of dietary excess. The fourth of the eight golden links of St. Peter's chain, he said, was temperance. It was 'a virtue which doth moderate the appetites and desires of meate, drink, and other things'; and the lack of this moderation, the minister added, was 'luxuriousnes'. This included but was not limited to gluttony – a reoccurring concern in contemporary sermons. Primarily aimed at 'nobles and ladies', this advice, the title page implies, was relevant to everyone.¹⁵¹

The eating of candies and other 'banqueting stuff' also came under fire from both moderate Anglicans and those with puritanical leanings in the early modern period. So far as food consumption was concerned, it was not just the cardinal sin of gluttony – eating quantitatively in excess of that which was necessary whilst others starved – that

¹⁴⁹ Roberts (ed.), *Diary*, p. 89.

¹⁵⁰ *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, vol. 26 (London, 1902), 25 December 1596.

¹⁵¹ R. Mavericke, *Saint Peters chaine consisting of eight golden linckes ...* (London, 1596), pp. 105-08.

could effect eternal damnation. This indeed was a major concern of puritans, as food historians have pointed out;¹⁵² but despite their claims to the contrary, so too was epicurean tastes in food – the eating of delicate, dainty treats in order to serve the senses rather than simply to sustain the body. Denouncement of this aspect of consumption occurred in the sixteenth century, but increased in scope and strength in the seventeenth century. In 1566 Church of England minister Thomas Becon told his congregation that they should content themselves with eating to repress hunger and preserve the health; for ‘deintie fare can not agree with all men’. Those who rightfully eat such foods, he said, ‘haue the more cause to tha[n]ke God for it’.¹⁵³ Eleven years later John Caldwell, parson of Winwick in Lancashire, reproached those who both ate too much and ate ‘daintie meates’. Amongst those in the congregation who heard that ‘we make our bellyes our God, and our kitchens our religyon’ was Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby.¹⁵⁴

After the turn of the century, a sermon was published by Lancelot Andrewes that instructed its readership ‘not to pray for dainty meate, but such as is fit to relieve our hunger’.¹⁵⁵ And in 1615 a sermon written by Thomas Adams was more specific about the types of dainty meats that were to be avoided. Adams described the ‘epicure’ as a ‘Belly-god’ – a lover of pleasure more than of God. The epicure, he wrote, believes that ‘feasts, suckets & marmulads are very delectable’ and ‘fittest for the belly’.¹⁵⁶ ‘Epicurisme’, the puritan minister Nicholas Byfield said in 1623, was the fourth of five lusts that were to be avoided by Christians. Those who desired ‘delicious or excessiue fare, or vaine apparell’, he claimed, were particularly guilty in this respect.¹⁵⁷ And John Harris, preaching to Members of Parliament at Westminster in 1629, stated that ‘some

¹⁵² See for example the claim made by Mennell, *All Manners*, pp. 104-05; and see also P. Singer and J. Mason, *Eating: What We Eat and Why it Matters* (London, 2006), p. 3.

¹⁵³ T. Becon, *A new postil containyng most godly and learned sermons ...* (London, 1566), p. 59.

¹⁵⁴ J. Caldwell, *A sermon preached before the right honorable Earle of Darbie ...* (London, 1577).

¹⁵⁵ L. Andrewes, *Scala coeli Nineteen sermons concerning prayer ...* (London, 1611), p. 170.

¹⁵⁶ T. Adams, *Mystical bedlam, or the vworld of mad-men ...* (London, 1615), p. 48.

¹⁵⁷ N. Byfield, *A commentary: or, sermons vpon the second chapter of the first epistle of Saint Peter ...* (London, 1623), p. 406.

among vs' are no worse than the 'gluttons' and 'epicures' of biblical times when it came to 'the delicious rellish of meats and drinckes'.¹⁵⁸

At least some people with puritanical ethics attempted to live up to these high moral standards. During the following year a group of puritans set sail for New England. The group included diarist John Winthrop who, on 8 September 1612, confessed to feeling remorse after eating excessively. It was not just the quantity of food eaten that he regretted, but also 'the variety of meats' that caused him to repent. His diary entry on 3 February 1616(7) expressed his belief that 'a spare diet and abstinence from worldly delights, is a great means of keeping both body and mind fit and lively to holy duties'. The diet that made him 'cheerful' was 'ordinarily but bread and beer'.¹⁵⁹ Thus if luxurious consumption per sé was a concern of devout Christians, then consuming luxury food and drinks was also an identity marker to them; it distinguished the ungodly from the righteous. But was clerical advice, designed to combat hardship by tackling luxurious food consumption – presumably made with people like assize judges and their benefactors partly in mind, followed by the clergymen themselves?

As those inhabiting the ecclesiastical sphere were drawn from corresponding levels within the wider community, and as the progeny of nobles found training opportunities in the households of leading bishops, clergymen's values regarding food consumption probably paralleled secular standards.¹⁶⁰ A variable response was thus likely. Depending on their status relatively senior ministers, like the gentry, appear to have eaten well themselves. And although compulsory taxes designed to help the poor could result in a negative attitude towards charitable giving, and despite some clerics

¹⁵⁸ J. Harris, *The destruction of Sodome ...* (London, 1629), p. 37.

¹⁵⁹ J. Winthrop, *Experiencia*, <http://www.millersville.edu/~winthrop/jwexp.html> (03/09/2009).

¹⁶⁰ B. Coward, *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672: The Origins, Wealth and Power of a Landowning Family* (Manchester, 1983), p. 85.

prioritising the ‘entertainment of men of influence’ above hospitality towards the needy, the soul-searching of some preachers and their audiences could effect a personal policy that matched Mavericke’s vision. John Whitgift, one of the two archbishops who received the Christmas Day letter from the Privy Council regarding the ‘general increase in luxury’, kept a ‘particularly open house’ on at least one special occasion a year – that of Christmas.¹⁶¹ But however individual godly people reacted to the governmental orders, barristers and judges, almost contemptuously, remained aloof in their consumption practices.

Despite admonishments uttered by church ministers and government officials, it seems that any curtailment of ‘riotous’ food consumption and its replacement with food doles was temporary. In 1632 the minister of Trinity College Cambridge, Caleb Dalechamp, felt it necessary to repeat earlier concerns regarding overindulgence. Scorning the excesses in banqueting and feasting that were now ‘commonly seen’, both the quantities of food consumed and in the number of delicacies served, he claimed, were inappropriate to the social position of many ‘feasters’. The minister complained that rich tenants and country farmers were acting like kings and sovereigns by going ‘farre beyond their degree and calling’ – exceeding, as they were, in ‘quantity of provision’. For some ‘banquetters and feasters’, Dalechamp added, ‘no dainties are good enough unless they are deare bought and farre fetcht’. In indulging in this immoderate and luxurious behaviour, he asserted, ‘we suffer the poore to starve, who might well be fed with the superfluitie thereof’.¹⁶² But ‘rich tenants and country farmers’ were not the only offenders. As we have seen, the inclination towards refining

¹⁶¹ J. C. Drummond, *The Englishman’s Food* (London, 1957), pp. 59-60; F. Heal, ‘The Archbishops of Canterbury and the Practice of Hospitality’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), pp. 560-61. For charitable giving see: Ben-Amos, ‘Gifts and Favors’, p. 331; I. K. Ben-Amos, ‘“Good Works” and Social Ties: Helping the Migrant Poor in Early Modern England’, in M. C. McClendon, J. P. Ward and M. MacDonald (eds), *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society and Self-Fashioning in Post-Reformation England* (Stanford, 1999), pp. 125-26, 139.

¹⁶² Dalechamp, *Christian hospitality*, pp. 59-61.

one's diet was widespread throughout society, and this was driven in part by a desire to project a preferred identity based on aspirations of upward social mobility.

CONCLUSION

We have shown that it was not just the foods consumed that helped to mark identity, but the sharing and non-sharing of food at special occasions helped to establish social relationships of inclusion and exclusion. Festivals such as Christmas, and feasts associated with life-cycle and other events, provided ideal opportunities for these relationships to be expressed through the medium of food consumption. Gifts of food served a similar purpose. They could be presented in order to forge links and maintain relationships, or to provoke particular responses from the recipients. Luxury foods identified in chapters two and three – such as venison, fresh salmon, partridge, and pastries baked by or under the supervision of gentlewomen, were not the only ones enjoyed at special occasions and given as gifts. High-value foods did often feature at celebratory events, and high-profile banquets could attract criticism – especially during times of general hardship. But, as diaries make clear, ‘rather prosaic’ presents could also be given for a variety of reasons – both positive and negative.

Whilst those of lesser status occasionally ‘gave’ both luxuries and staple foods to their superiors – either as an adroit economic tactic or to action other agenda – the hospitality at socially-inclusive functions that many of them had once experienced was undergoing a process of diminishment. This was in stark contrast to the continued consumption of luxury foods at special events that define those of high status, and those of middling status who aspired to, or imitated, their lifestyle.

CONCLUSION

DIET, LUXURY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

Food consumption, because of its centrality as a life-necessity and as a vehicle for establishing, influencing and expressing human relationships, has been used as a topic to investigate social status and perceptions of cultural identity in England between 1540 and 1640. In order to build on previous scholarly findings that have concentrated either on either food consumption or on social relationships, the approach of this study has been to investigate patterns of food acquisition and consumption by examining newly transcribed household accounts, and comparing these with contemporary comment relating to foodways over the period. A method for doing this was specifically constructed for this thesis. It entailed retrieving data from sets of household accounts belonging to the nobility and gentry, and producing a new accounting system that could accommodate all of the details within a single common format. This model, as we explained in the introduction, enabled information that had been extracted from diverse systems to be effectively compared and analysed.

The information gained from the analysis of twelve sets of accounts has provided a wealth of knowledge relating to consumption patterns. This has been used in conjunction with other genres of evidence, particularly those associated with human relationships, to discern examples of luxurious consumption and reaction to it, and to highlight issues of image projection in which people presented themselves in relationship to others. By approaching the study in this way we have furthered the scholarly debate with regard to social and cultural identity by answering both the principal and auxiliary questions about the extent to which the people under investigation saw a connection between food consumption and perceptions of self and otherness.

Some areas have not been explored in detail, and topics for future research might include an exhaustive gender-related study of food and identity, vegetarianism – a subject that aroused passions in the mid-seventeenth century,¹ and foods eaten by babies and young children. Analysis of further sets of accounts, and of other genres of historical sources, may also add to our findings. The latter might include a broad range of literary works or artistic depictions in the form of paintings or drawing, either of which would be a worthy study in its own right. But despite the limitations of this study, we have moved the debate on diet and identity in Tudor and early Stuart England forward on many levels, and have demonstrated that a study conducted in this way provides a strong investigative approach to analysing social and cultural issues in history. After defining ‘luxury’, and determining what ‘necessity’ meant to people, the study was divided into three sections in which we analysed the diets of various social groups, special foods and their preparation, and festive events and the gifting of foods.

SUMMARY

Individual circumstances of labourers and poor people varied considerably; and although their resources were relatively limited, their actual diets were arguably more varied than contemporary commentators suggested. But the foods with which they were identified – those that marked their social standing – were, on the whole, the cheapest and the most commonly available. Household accounts show that low-ranking servants were also associated with this sort of fare; but on occasions some may have been able to sample foods that were both diverse and of superior quality. The diet of yeomen was, on the basis of our evidence, more varied; and they occasionally enjoyed luxury foods that the gentry and aristocracy ate comparatively regularly. Expressing their social identity through the consumption of food was important to both yeomen and the gentry;

¹ R. Crab, *The English hermite, or, Wonder of this age* (London, 1655), pp. 1-14.

but concern regarding the type of foods that they ate formed only a part of the self's mental attitude regarding diet and identity. Self-identity needed others with whom to draw comparisons. Throughout this study we have offered examples to show that the well-to-do conveyed ideas about the fare others should eat clearly and distinctly. We have shown that the gentry and nobility enjoyed a strikingly similar diet to each other. They ate expensive luxuries that included high-quality variants of staples and exclusive foods used sparingly. These luxuries were viewed by them as necessities, and were necessary because they defined their status.

Staple foods continued to be sourced at the homes of the social elite in significant quantities throughout the century, and this indicates that much of it was eaten by their many employees. But for the well-to-do themselves the number of foods that they ate, and which could be described as luxuries, increased significantly throughout the century. In addition to game and exotic foods, young and tender produce also went into tasty dishes, and many ways were found to reclaim 'basic' foods by cooking them in special ways. Spices were still used in sophisticated recipes at the end of our period, and these were increasingly joined by an impressive array of herbs and exotic vegetables and fruit. Commentators like William Harrison thought that the edible markers of social distinction were being eroded, and that those of middling and lower status were consuming nothing inferior to gentlemen. This increased sophistication in the culinary practices of the wealthy and powerful may therefore have been an attempt at re-establishing the status quo. But as cookery books called for an ever-increasing level of refinement in their recipes, this was arguably their effect. Some kitchen manuals, however, articulated ways in which their readers could cook and prepare fake luxuries. These recipes were formulated in order to assist the books' readers in imitating those who were able to eat the real thing. Such simulated delicacies

helped to instil a sense of luxurious living and a feeling of social betterment, and they suggest to us that food had more than a functional role even at lower levels of society during the Elizabethan period.

Although some of these recipes gave advice on how to make basic meat look and taste like venison, game could sometimes be acquired by those of low social rank. The unauthorised hunting of deer was proscribed and its meat could not officially be bought on the open market; but despite this, we have identified many examples of venison being obtained and eaten by people at every level of society. The objective that those of low status had in mind when they consumed high-value game could range from curiosity or imitation of the social elite to emulation with ambitious intent. But the contempt in which unauthorised consumers were held in by the nobility and their governmental representatives at was unambiguous. The ferocity of verbal attacks on illicit hunters and traders who, as we noted in chapter three, were described as ‘lewd’, ‘delinquent’ and ‘vulgar’, leads us to conclude that nobles viewed the acquisition of game, at least partly, as an attempt at undermining their distinctive cultural identity.

By citing many examples we have shown that it was not just high-value foods consumed on a daily basis that helped to mark identity, but that special occasions were used to establish and reinforce hierarchical structures and promote symbiotic relationships whilst simultaneously excluding the unwanted. The life-cycle and annual festivities considered here have included Christmas, funerals, civic feasts and feasts enjoyed by barristers and judges. As we have seen, some of the more lavish banquets were criticised when it was thought that the money spent on them could have been better spent on relieving the poor. The giving and receiving of gift-foods served a similar social purpose to the sharing of foods at special occasions. High-value foods and ready-made dishes were sometimes given as gifts – especially between family

members; but gifts of low value were also sometime given. Gifts of food were often exchanged between the well-to-do and their social inferiors; but whether they were exchanged between unequals or people of similar status, the reasons for giving, we have demonstrated, was not always to establish relationships or to receive some kind of beneficial reward, but sometimes it was to provoke a particular response.

Throughout this thesis it has been argued that between 1540 and 1640 there was a hierarchy of foods with which diverse 'sorts' of people could and did relate. Thus, in 1577, William Harrison acknowledged the link that existed between 'sorts' of people and the types of food and foodways that each were associated with. Although his writings were those of a moralistic protestant and displayed a level of temporal inertia, they portrayed a clearly stereotypical image with which dispassionate evidence can be gauged.² Harrison was not alone in expressing such ideas; others, including Thomas Fuller at the end of our period, also made these observations.³ Analysis of household accounts, when corroborated with supplementary evidence, leaves little doubt about the fare that the powerful and the wealthy thought fit for their own consumption. These foods, generally speaking, were of the type suggested by Harrison and other writers; but by the end of the century the scope of the luxuries that they were eating had expanded.

The diets of people of low to middling rank, as we have shown, were dependent upon many overlapping factors – not least of which were wealth, social mobility, and their understanding of 'community'. But this did not deter contemporaries from formulating and expressing ideas based on their own expectation with regard to the consuming practices of their social inferiors. Half a century after Harrison had assigned a basic, repetitious and nominally-priced diet to 'the poorer sort', the language and tone

² G. Edelen (ed.), *William Harrison: The Description of England (1577)* (Ithaca, 1968), pp. 123-39.

³ T. Fuller, *The holy state ...The profane state* (Cambridge, 1642), pp. 113-21, 153-54.

of an officer who held responsibility for the welfare of his dependants demonstrates that he was unequivocal on the subject of food vis-à-vis social status. The type of fare that a puritanical councillor of Salisbury deemed appropriate to the poor of his city, we saw in chapter four, was plainly expressed in a letter addressed to one of his like-minded colleagues. The low-value, basic and monotonous foods suggested by Ivie were, he wrote, ‘fit for them’.⁴

However, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests strongly that not only did professionals such as lawyers, merchants and company masters sometimes aspire to the status immediately above their own – and ate accordingly, but also that some of the ‘poorer sort’ emulated or imitated their superiors too. These people found ways of expressing their chosen identity through the acquisition and consumption of foods describable as relatively luxurious by the standards of the time. In chapter three we offered many examples of people, including masterless Elizabeth Sherwood and labouring John Biddle, stealing food such as trout, venison and spices. Although these may or may not have been for their own consumption, such foods were available to people of low status.

Although the ‘normal’ diet of manual workers undoubtedly varied, the fare that some of them chose to eat may have matched that assigned to them in the writings of their superiors. Certain basic foods could provide a cohesive structure to mealtimes, and this was noted by caterers and commentators throughout the century. In chapter two for example we saw that in 1545, although army personnel of Henry VIII were able to negotiate the deletion of at least one unwanted element of their provisions, they appear to have accepted the bulk of their food as being appropriate.⁵ And in 1634 a navy admiral and governor of the Providence Island Company, who himself had been a

⁴ P. Slack (ed.), *Poverty in Early-Stuart Salisbury* (Wiltshire Record Society, 31, 1975), p. 11.

⁵ Muller, J. A (ed.), *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 145.

common sailor, wrote that English seamen would not accept a relatively healthy Mediterranean-style diet because they would not be ‘weaned from their customary diet’.⁶

Although our evidence indicates that this was partly true, and that those of low status, like their superiors, felt that the food they ate had a role in defining their cultural identity, it also suggests that stereotypical images relating to food and the hierarchical order were important characteristics of the early modern mindset. This somewhat standardised conception or image of the types of foods that were appropriate to status also found expression in books on regimen. As society polarised towards the end of the sixteenth century, foods that were fashionable with the upper orders were also seen as being beneficial to their health. And conversely, coarse foods – and especially those that were economically affordable and readily available to manual workers – were to be avoided by the leisured classes on ‘health’ grounds.

Provisions afforded to people who were reliant on institutions (either on a long- or short-term basis), food doles at the gates of manor houses, and the contrasting fare enjoyed at the feasts and even the daily meals of the well-to-do, testify to the thinking that influenced the ‘choice’ in food supply and consumption. This thinking, our evidence suggests, was that foods, like the other basic necessities of clothes and shelter, were subject to refinement and improvement. They could thus be substituted by superior alternatives with which images of the self could be portrayed. But these depictions were changeable. An individual’s collective of identities, as much in the sixteenth century as today, could be managed in order to bring to the fore specific characteristics and thus project an image befitting the occasion. As this process could be tailored appropriately, the selection of certain categories of food – where selection

⁶ W. G. Perrin, (ed.), *Boteler’s Dialogues* (Navy Record Society, 65, 1929), p. 65.

was possible – facilitated individuality or conformity to type. The allocation of food by social superiors to their subordinates also enabled the former to distinguish themselves from the ‘others’ who were beneath them on the hierarchical ladder; and, as our investigation has demonstrated, stereotyping aided that process.

APPENDIX

CALCULATING PURCHASES AND ENTERING THEM ON A SPREADSHEET

Two entries in the Arbury kitchen expenses book on Saturday 18 February 1637 read:

‘beefe 11st 6po £1 2s 6d’

‘2 neets tonges 3s 4d’

It is apparent from studying the accounts that in Warwickshire, in 1637, one stone was equivalent to eight lbs. This is evident from purchases made at the Arbury estate where prices paid were sometimes for food bought by the stone, and sometimes for food bought by the stone *and* pound. One example (of many) shows that whilst 5 stones of beef (5 x 8 = 40 lbs) was purchased for 10s (120d) on Saturday 23 January 1636, 5 stone 2 lbs of beef was bought for 10s 6d seven days later. As the price of beef was static over this month, it is clear not only that 1lb cost 3d (120 / 40 = 3), but also that 5st 2lbs was 42 lbs. In the example above, therefore, on Saturday 18 February 1637, 94lbs of beef were purchased ((11 x 8) + 6). As 1 shilling = 12d, and twenty shillings = £1, the financial value of £1 2s 6d expressed in pennies was 270d. By dividing 270 by 94 we see that the price of beef on that day was 2.87d per lb. The two neats’ tongues cost 20d each. These values were entered onto the ‘prices’ spreadsheet, and then onto the Newdigate ‘spending’ spreadsheet in the manner shown below.

		<u>MEAT</u>									
		beef	neet's tongue	marrowbone	veal	calf's head	calf's feet	mutton	lamb	pork	rabbit
<u>WEEK ENDING</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>										
<u>SATURDAY</u>	<u>SPENT</u>										
11 FEB 1637	867.5		20		156			209		28	55
18 FEB 1637	1573.0	270	40	9	72			454	48	28	14
25 FEB 1637	469.0							108			14
04 MAR 1637	343.5				76	24		84			

A small section of the Newdigate spreadsheet that lists 217 different types of food purchased over 206 weeks.

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