



Life inside the castles (and building of migrant cultures), the food that castle residents ate and their dresses.

As we know from previous podcasts, long time ago, in medieval Europe, many important people lived in large stone castles. Inside a castle, life could be busy and exciting. The most important room was the Great Hall. This was where the lord and lady of the castle ate their meals, held meetings, and welcomed visitors. Around the castle were bedrooms, storage rooms, a kitchen, a chapel, and tall towers with good views of the land.

Many different people lived and worked in a castle. The lord and lady lived there with their family. Knights, trained in fighting, protected the castle. Servants cooked food, cleaned rooms, looked after the horses, and helped with daily tasks. Everyone had a role, and the castle was like a small community.

Food in a castle was tasty but very different from what we eat today. Rich people ate a lot of meat, like beef, pork, or game such as deer. They also enjoyed bread, pies, vegetables, and soup. Spices from faraway places were used to make meals special. People drank ale or watered-down wine because clean water could be hard to find. Food had to be stored and preserved for winter, so people used salt or smoke to keep it from spoiling.

Clothing showed your place in castle life. The lord and lady wore colorful clothes made of fine wool, linen, and sometimes silk. Men wore tunics and cloaks, while women wore long dresses and veils. Knights wore heavy armor made of chainmail or metal plates when they trained or went to battle. Servants wore simpler clothes made from rougher fabrics because they needed to move and work easily.

Living in a castle could be fun, but also tough. It was warm by the fire in winter but very cold in the stone hallways. People worked hard, followed strict rules, and depended on each other every day.

Life in a Chinese Palace During the Same Time Period

While people in Europe lived in castles, people in China built beautiful palaces instead of stone fortresses. During the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties (around the same time as medieval Europe), Chinese emperors lived in large palace complexes with many courtyards, red buildings, and golden roofs. These palaces were not built for fighting—they were built to show the emperor's power and to keep life organized.

Inside the palace lived the emperor, his family, government officials, guards, and many servants. Life followed very strict rules. People entered different gates depending on their job or rank. The gardens and halls were arranged carefully to bring peace, harmony, and beauty.

Food in the palace was colorful and varied. People ate rice, noodles, pork, duck, tofu, vegetables, and lots of tea. Meals were served in many small dishes, each with its own flavor. Chefs tried to make meals balanced, healthy, and beautiful to look at.

Clothing was usually made of soft silk. The emperor wore bright yellow robes decorated with dragons. Other people wore robes in different colors and patterns that showed their importance. Servants wore plain robes made of cotton or hemp.

Even though Chinese palaces were very different from European castles, both were homes for important people, filled with work, rules and traditions.

Let's talk about clothing in medieval Europe

The Evolution of Medieval Clothing

Medieval clothing varied greatly across eras, with distinctive characteristics defining each period.

Early Medieval Clothing (4th to 10th century)

In the early Middle Ages, clothing was primarily functional, with minimal emphasis on fashion. Social class distinctions were less pronounced, and garments were designed for durability and utility.

✦ Key Features:

Tunics and ankle-length dresses made of wool or linen.

Simple, natural-colored fabrics without elaborate decoration.

Cloaks fastened with brooches for warmth and protection.

✦ Social Context: Farmers, craftsmen, and even minor nobility wore similar garments, focusing on practicality rather than status display. Discover authentic early medieval clothing in our collection.

High Medieval Clothing (11th to 12th century)

By the high Middle Ages, clothing began to reflect growing social hierarchies. Wealthier classes started to display their status through more elaborate garments, while peasants maintained simpler attire.

✠ Key Features:

Increased use of color and decorative elements, such as embroidery and patterned fabrics.

Layered clothing became more common, including undergarments, tunics, and overgarments.

Nobility began incorporating silk and fur into their wardrobes.

✠ Social Context: Clothing became an early indicator of wealth and power, with merchants and clergy also adopting richer styles. Find elegant high medieval clothing that reflects this era's style.

Late Medieval Clothing (13th to 15th century)

In the late Middle Ages, fashion became more extravagant and less practical, especially among the upper classes. Clothing styles emphasized status and individuality.



✦ Key Features:

Extravagant details such as long trains, batwing sleeves, and elaborate headpieces.

The use of velvet, brocade, and silk with vibrant dyes and intricate embroidery.

Peasants continued to wear simpler, practical garments, while nobility embraced trends that prioritized appearance over functionality.

✦ Social Context: Nobles and clergy wore clothing designed to emphasize their high status, with intricate accessories and luxurious materials. Explore extravagant late medieval clothing for a striking look.

Materials and Fabrics in Medieval Clothing

The materials used in medieval clothing reflected the wearer's social standing and available resources:

Linen and wool: Durable and practical, used by farmers and craftsmen.

Silk and velvet: Luxury fabrics reserved for nobility and clergy.

Natural and dyed fabrics: Early medieval fabrics were often natural-colored, while later periods saw the use of vivid dyes to create vibrant hues.

Few notes about Byzantine fashion Influences

Byzantine Empire (330-1453 AD) was centered in Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul)

Blended Roman, Greek, and Eastern influences, creating a unique aesthetic

Characterized by opulence, with rich colors, luxurious fabrics, and intricate embroidery

Silk was a highly prized material, often used in ceremonial and court dress

Byzantines introduced the use of gold and silver thread in embroidery

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Technique known as "goldwork" became popular throughout Europe

Byzantine court dress influenced the development of royal and aristocratic fashion in medieval Europe

Icons and mosaics provide valuable insights into Byzantine clothing and accessories.



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And now... food!



In medieval Europe, food consumption ranged from everyday sustenance to extravagant feasts.

The diet of the rich and poor was very different. While the upper classes and their households enjoyed fresh and imported foods, the rest of the population had to live off what the local land could produce which, at the end of winter or in times of shortage, might be very little!

Diet wasn't just affected by the seasons, religion also played a part in what people ate. Fridays (and, in the earlier period, Wednesdays and Saturdays) were obligatory weekly fasting or 'fish' days, when it was prohibited to eat meat.

A huge amount of preparation went into the creation of feasts. When the whole royal court assembled, hundreds of people could be sitting down to eat. For the two great feasts at Easter and Christmas, preparations had to start months ahead, when preserves were ordered and made.

Let's prepare some Medieval food together! Here we have recipes for starter, main dish and dessert.

At the end, we have a special surprise...



Starter

'Departed' creamed fish

'Departed' just means that the dish is 'parted in two' different colours. Could have been done with meat or fish. This is a fish option, a good substitute on those days when eating meat was forbidden.



Serves 6 as a starter

Ingredients

- 600g skinned cod fillet
 - A pinch of sea salt
 - 125g ground almonds
 - 2 tsp rice flour or corn flour
 - 3 tbsp deep yellow saffron water or food colouring
 - 1/2 tsp ground ginger
 - 3/4 tsp white sugar
1. Cook the fish in salted water, save some of the liquid, squeeze the fish dry, and flake it.
 2. Soak ground almonds in the saved cooking liquid, then strain to make almond “milk.”
 3. Blend the almond milk with the flaked fish until smooth, adding more liquid if needed.
 4. Cook a small amount of rice flour or cornflour with fish liquid to make a thick “cream,” then mix it into the fish.
 5. Divide the mixture in two: leave one plain and color the other gold with saffron; add ginger to the golden half, then serve both side by side and sprinkle with sugar.

Main dish

Spit-roasted or grilled steak

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 6 fairly thin beef steaks
- Oil or fat for grilling

Basting sauce:

- 2 tsp red wine vinegar
- 1–2 tbsp Seville orange juice
- 4 tbsp red wine
- Pinch each of ground black pepper and ginger

Garnish:

- Sprinkling of ground cinnamon

1. Verjuice was a medieval sour grape juice, but Seville orange juice works well as a substitute.
2. Nick the edges of the steaks and grease them lightly.
3. Mix the sauce ingredients in a jug and adjust the flavors as you like.
4. Grill the steaks and warm the sauce gently.
5. Sprinkle some sauce on the steaks while they cook, then serve with a little cinnamon and the remaining sauce.



Silver drinking cup with lid. 15th century.

Dessert

Rose pudding

Serves 6

Ingredients

- Petals of one white rose
- 4 level tbsp rice flour or cornflour
- 275ml milk
- 50g caster sugar

- 3/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 3/4 tsp ground ginger
- 575ml single cream
- Pinch of salt
- 10 dessert dates, stoned and finely chopped
- 1 tbsp chopped pine nut kernels



Surprise!!

Happiness Energy Cookies!!

"Take equal amounts of nutmeg and cinnamon, along with a few cloves, and grind them into a powder. Then, with this powder, make some flour-based cakes, eat them often, and... your heart will open... your spirit will become happy, your senses will be purified... and you will become strong."

Long time ago, around 1100, in Germany lived a nun who was a writer, musician, composer, philosopher, visionary, and a medical writer and a medical practitioner. She is one of the best-known composers of sacred music. She has been considered the founder of scientific natural history in Germany. She knew so much about wild herbs and their properties.... The name of this special woman is **Hildegard von Bingen**.

Here is a very special recipe from her, straight from Medieval time...

Ingredients

20 g cinnamon
20 g nutmeg
5 g cloves
400 g spelt flour
250 g butter
150 g brown sugar
200 g chopped sweet almonds
2 whole eggs
A pinch of salt
Water as needed

Preparation

Work the butter at room temperature until creamy.

Place the flour on a work surface.

Add the sugar, ground almonds, eggs, spices, and a pinch of salt.

Mix everything together, and when everything is well combined, refrigerate or chill for at least 30 minutes.

Roll out the dough and shape into biscuits about 2 or 3 mm thick.

Bake on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper at 150/170° C
until golden brown, about 20/25 minutes.

These biscuits are suitable for children and students for concentration, nervous system balance, and weakness.

Don't eat more than necessary to avoid adverse effects.

The rule is to eat the right amount! No more than three biscuits a day for children, and no more than five for adults.

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