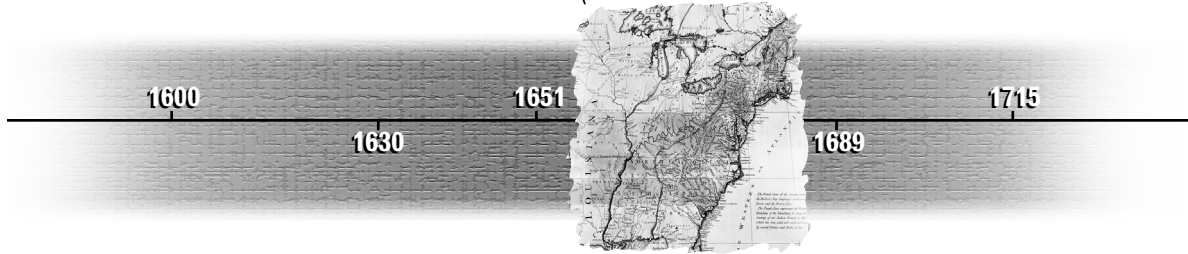


SIXTH COURSE



Thanksgiving, *Hutsepot*, and *Haute Cuisine*: 17th-Century America, the Netherlands, Russia, France

COLONIAL AMERICA

The Chesapeake: The Starving Time

England's colonies in North America did not get off to a good start. After one, Roanoke, completely disappeared (historians still don't know what happened to it), British settlers came to Chesapeake Bay in 1607. They named the colony Virginia in honor of Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen; they called the capital Jamestown after King James; and they expected to get rich quick—except that the natives refused to be their slaves. In the winter of 1609–10, when not enough food had been grown, harvested, or preserved, almost all five hundred colonists died during what became known as “the starving time.” Captain John Smith later wrote what he had heard about how the colonists were reduced to eating nuts, berries, acorns, horsehide, and worse:

And one amongst the rest did kill his wife, powdered [salted] her, and had eaten part of her before it was known, for which he was executed, as he well deserved. Now whether she was better roasted, boiled, or carbonadoed [broiled], I know not; but of such a dish as powdered wife I never heard of.¹

SIXTH COURSE ➤ THANKSGIVING, *HUTSEBOT*, AND *HAUTE CUISINE*

It was not the last time cannibalism would be resorted to in America.

Later Virginians wanted to grow a profitable crop; they tried sugar but the climate was too cold. They settled on tobacco. Soon tobacco was bringing in so much money that people planted it on any available land—they ripped up their gardens, even grew it between graves. But who would hoe and harvest these thousands of acres of tobacco? The Native Americans who didn't die of Old World diseases refused to do it. African slaves were too expensive, although some arrived in 1619. England had the perfect labor force: a surplus of poor, desperate young men in their late teens and early twenties. They signed an indenture—a contract—giving them a free trip to America and free room and board in exchange for four to six years of work. Then they were supposed to get their freedom, tools, corn, and land of their own—something they had zero chance of getting in England. The person who hired the indentured servant and paid for his trip received free labor and fifty acres of land. It was a sweetheart deal all around. Except . . .

Most of these young men didn't live four years after they got to America. They died from dysentery, typhoid, malaria. The ones who did live found that there was only one woman for every six men. And soon the best land was in huge plantations owned by a few wealthy men who also had all the political power. In 1676, when former indentured servants couldn't get land, women, or the vote, they went on a rampage. Bacon's Rebellion ended with Jamestown burned and more than 20 former indentured servants hanged. Planters wanted a labor force they could control, not these Englishmen who used violence to get their rights. In 1698, when England ended the Royal African Company's monopoly on the slave trade, anyone with a ship could get into the slave trade. With competition, the price of slaves dropped. Now it was affordable to own Africans and profitable to sell them.

The Carolinas and Rice

At about the same time, the English established a colony south of Virginia—Carolina, named after King Charles II. Many of the settlers were from Barbados. They intended to grow food for the Caribbean sugar plantations and to export more expensive items, but after failing at wine, olive oil, and silk, they decided on rice as their staple crop. Rice requires skilled labor; Africans had this skill. They were also immune to malaria, and weren't Christian, so according to the Christian world at that time, they could be enslaved for the rest of their lives. The settlers also imported the Barbados slave code, with punishments

❖ Colonial America

that escalated from whipping to facial mutilation and sometimes death, which the code said was the slave's fault for forcing his master to discipline him. Charleston, South Carolina, became the primary port through which slaves entered the United States. By 1710, black slaves outnumbered white settlers in the coastal regions of the area that became South Carolina.

In spite of the conditions under which the slaves were brought to America, some of their African cuisine and culture survived. This influenced how cooking developed in the American South, since they were the cooks. Along with their knowledge of rice cultivation, cooking, and storage, they brought yams, okra, watermelon, and their love of fried food. They also brought back foodstuffs that had been taken from the New World to Africa, like the chile pepper and the peanut, and their word for it—*goober*. They brought the banjo and the drum and the music that would become jazz.

New England: "Almost Beyond Believing"²

In 1620, Pilgrims—Protestants who wanted to be allowed to worship without being persecuted—landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts. Before they went ashore, the men on the ship entered into an agreement. The Mayflower Compact was the first constitution in America. Only one paragraph long, it sets forth an important principle: that all would be equal and work together as a community.

The Pilgrims, and the Puritans who settled the Massachusetts Bay Colony in Boston ten years later, had their work cut out for them. These were people used to living in towns. They didn't know how to hunt or fish or farm. But they didn't like many of the strange plants and animals in North America anyway—those huge quahog clams, the slimy steamers. And the codfish and lobsters were bigger than they were, sometimes six feet long. They wouldn't eat them at first, even after the Indians showed them how. But with the help of the native tribes, the Pilgrims survived their first year and had a celebration.

Thanksgiving Foods

"The turkey is certainly one of the most delightful presents which the New World has made to the Old."

—*Brillat-Savarin*³

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FOOD FABLE

❧ SQUANTO AND FISH FERTILIZER ❧

Contrary to what American myth has long held, it is quite unlikely that alewives or other fish were used as fertilizer in Indian fields, notwithstanding the legendary role of the Pilgrims' friend Squanto in teaching colonists this practice. Squanto probably learned the technique while being held captive in Europe, and if any Indians used it in New England, they did so in an extremely limited area. Having no easy way to transport large amounts of fish from river to field, and preferring quite sensibly to avoid such back-breaking work, Indians simply abandoned their fields when the soil lost its fertility. . . . Fertilizing fields with fish, as the English eventually did, seemed to Indians a wholly unnecessary labor.⁴

Most of the foods Americans eat at Thanksgiving dinner now are native to the Americas: turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn-bread stuffing, pumpkin pie. In French the word for turkey is *dinde*, short for *poulet d'inde*, which means "chicken from India," because the French, like other Europeans, thought the turkey was from the Indies. Geese, ducks, and other wild fowl were abundant only during certain seasons in the New World, but turkeys don't migrate, so they were available all year. And they had an instinct that helped humans: when one turkey was shot, the others froze in place. It was easy to kill a dozen turkeys in a morning. Nobody ever called anybody a turkey and meant it as a compliment.

Cranberries and blueberries, both members of the heather family and both native to New England, were more than food in sauce and pies. Mashed and mixed with sour milk, they were used as paint. That is why the colors most often associated with colonial American buildings are muted cranberry and milky purple-gray.

Although pumpkin was widely used in the colonies, recipes for pumpkin pie didn't appear in print until the first American cookbook, written by Amelia Simmons in 1796. She called it "pompkin" and gave two different versions. Both had pumpkin, ginger, and eggs, but one used cream and sugar, the other milk and molasses. One used the Old World spices mace and nutmeg, the other New World allspice.⁵

The Codfish

The staple "crop" in the Massachusetts Bay Colony was the codfish, *Gadus morhua*. What sugar was to the Caribbean and tobacco was to the

HOLIDAY HISTORY

❖ THANKSGIVING ❖

The first Thanksgiving was in 1621. Fifty-one Pilgrim men, women, and children hosted ninety men of the Wampanoag tribe and their chief, Massasoit. It was in the fall, to celebrate the good harvest of corn (wheat and barley weren't as successful). The celebration lasted three days. There were "wild fowl" and five deer.

The idea of a national day of thanks was raised in the late 1700s with the first president, George Washington, who proposed November 26 as the date. Nothing came of it until the 1850s, when magazine journalist Sarah Josepha Hale rallied the women of America to pressure the president for a national holiday. In 1863, the third year of the Civil War, President Lincoln declared that the last Thursday in November should be a day of giving thanks. It was the same year that Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing the slaves, and made his speech at the battlefield in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in which he said these famous words: "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

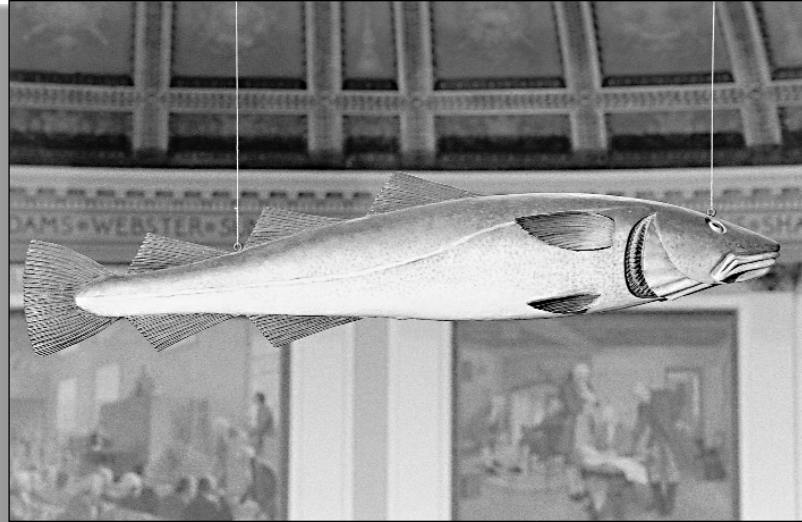
In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wanted to extend the Christmas shopping season to give the economy a boost and help it recover from the depression. He moved Thanksgiving one week earlier. Congress objected. The president and Congress did a tug-of-war over the date until 1941, when it was settled: Thanksgiving is the fourth Thursday in November.

In 1970, Wampanoag leader Wamsutta (Anglo name: Frank James) was invited to speak at the Thanksgiving celebration at Plymouth, Massachusetts. When word got out that his speech was about the oppression of Native Americans, the invitation was revoked. He gave his speech anyway, in front of the statue of Massasoit, overlooking the replica of the *Mayflower*. That was the first Native American National Day of Mourning for the culture, the religion, and the lives and lands of their ancestors.

(To find out more about Thanksgiving, log onto www.plimoth.org.)

Chesapeake, cod was to Massachusetts. There were millions off the coast, north to Newfoundland and Labrador. Once it was salted and dried, cod was stiff as a board and could be stacked and shipped like lumber. It was also almost 80 percent protein. In this form it made its way to Europe: *bacalà* in Italy, *bacalao* in Spain, *bacalhau* in Portugal. According to historian Mark Kurlansky, by the middle of the 16th century, "60 percent of all fish eaten in Europe was cod."⁶ It was the perfect food for Lent. The best grade was sent to Spain; the worst fed the slaves in the West Indies.⁷ It could also be bartered for slaves in Africa. Shipbuilders got rich because of cod, too. The cod was so important to the economy of Massachusetts that a large carved wooden cod hangs in the statehouse in Boston. See page 132 for an example of what it looks like.

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*The "sacred" cod over the state house door in Boston, Massachusetts.
Courtesy the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Art Commission*

Maple Syrup: Tapping the Sap of the Sugar Tree

"Maple Moon" was what Native Americans called the time in the spring when the sap started to flow in the sugar maple tree, *Acer saccharum*. Just as the grapevine was a symbol of resurrection for the ancient Greeks, so the maple was for Native Americans. Flowing sap meant the end of winter and the rebirth of nature. The Iroquois performed a religious ritual, a maple dance, to pray for warm weather and plenty of sap. According to legend, an Iroquois chief pulled his tomahawk out of a tree where he had thrown it the night before and went off to hunt. In the meantime, the weather turned warm and sap oozed into a container left by accident at the base of the tree. On her way to get water for cooking, his wife saw the container of liquid and used that instead; everyone agreed it was much better than water.⁸

Seventeenth-century European writers give Native Americans full credit for knowing how to make maple syrup and sugar, but in the 18th century, Europeans started to claim that they taught the Indians. As historians Helen and Scott Nearing have pointed out, language is on the side of the tribes. All their words for maple syrup translate as "drawn from wood," "sap flows fast," "our own tree," while they called white sugar "French snow"—a clear indication of its origin.⁹

Maple sugar was a primary food in Native American cooking;

❖ Colonial America

among some tribes it was the only condiment. It replaced salt, which they did not like, and it was used to season dried cornmeal porridge, mixed with bear fat as a sauce for roasted venison, sprinkled on boiled fish, and eaten with berries or all by itself, a pound a day.¹⁰ It was reconstituted into a sweet drink that was used in ceremonies, along with tobacco smoked in the peace pipe. Women boiled the sap from maple, walnut, hickory, box elder, butternut, birch, and sycamore trees down to sugar crystals, which was difficult because before Europeans came, they had no metal pots. Their vessels were made of birch bark or gourds which held between one and two gallons and could not be placed directly over fire. Instead, they dropped heated stones into the liquid until it boiled, which involved continuously taking out cool stones and replacing them with hot ones. These small amounts of liquid were then poured into hundred-gallon moose-skin vats. It is not surprising that the Indians began to trade for metal pots and utensils as soon as the Europeans introduced them. Another way to process the syrup was to let it freeze at night, then scrape the ice off the top. This required several nights until just syrup was left. Maple sugar that was to be used for gifts was poured into molds that one European described as shaped like “bear’s paws, flowers, stars, small animals, and other figures, just like our gingerbread-bakers at fairs.”¹¹

The American Culinary Tradition: Pocket Soup and Johnnycake

American cooking developed along two parallel lines. In the South, where slave labor did the kitchen work, cooking could take more time. Labor-intensive cooking, such as barbecue, could be done by slaves. Barbecue needed a great deal of preparation. Either beef or pork had to be properly butchered and marinated. Then the fire had to reach just the right temperature, and the meat had to be added. The fire had to be carefully watched and the temperature maintained. This required a great deal of labor. However, pit cooking developed differently in New England, in the form of the clambake. There, a fire was allowed to burn down in a pit; then clams, lobsters, and corn were buried under wet seaweed and left to steam for several hours. No labor was necessary to prepare the food before or after it was placed in the pit, except to dig it out.

American cooking in the North arose from the middle-class necessity of doing a great deal of work as quickly as possible. They invented shortcuts and new ways to preserve foods. Two examples are pocket soup and johnnycake. Travel was not easy in the colonies. Roads were

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poor or nonexistent, and there was no guarantee that travelers would be able to find food when they needed it. Sailors, too, appreciated a bit of home. Pocket soup, also known as portable soup, was the solution. This was an early bouillon cube—soup cooked down until it was a condensed gelatinous mass, then cut into small cubes and dried for ten days. Dropped into a cup of water, it reconstituted into soup. Johnnycake or journey cake was a cornmeal cake that would keep without becoming moldy or disintegrating.

Another example of New England fast food was hasty pudding, made famous in the song “Yankee Doodle” (and in the name of a Harvard University club). This was commmeal—called Indian or “Injun” meal—or rye meal cooked on top of the stove, not baked, so it was ready in half an hour. This is a long time by today’s microwave standards, but the baking times for regular cornmeal pudding recipes in *American Cookery* range from one and a half hours to two and a half hours. Sara Josepha Hale’s recipes for cornmeal pudding require three to four hours of cooking, even those that are boiled. What makes hasty pudding hasty is that the meal is soaked first and added a bit at a time, and the pudding is boiled and stirred constantly. In this cooking technique, it resembles polenta.

Cobbler, Slump, Grunt, Dumpling, Crumble, and Crisp

Just as regional cooking developed according to the kind of produce and labor available in each area, different areas had different names for the same food. For example, in most of the country, a cobbler is chopped, sweetened fruit with a sweet biscuit dough baked on top. The exception is New England, where it is called a slump, with the further exception of Cape Cod, where it is called a grunt. Other combinations of fruit and dough are a dumpling, pieces of fruit or a whole fruit, like an apple, wrapped in a pastry square and baked. A crumble is a mixture of flour, butter, sugar, and seasonings like cinnamon and nutmeg crumbled over chopped fruit and then baked. A crumble is different from a crisp because a crisp has more butter, which makes the topping . . . crisper. The topping on a crisp sometimes includes oats.

Brown Betty, Sally Lunn, and Anadama

Women, perhaps cooks, have left their names on various foods but not much other information. Brown Betty is a thrifty New England

RECIPE

B

UONA FORCHETTA'S ANADAMA BREAD

Courtesy of Suzanne Dunaway

1 large or 2 small loaves
 2 cups water
 1½ teaspoons salt
 ½ cup stone-ground yellow cornmeal
 3 tablespoons melted unsalted butter or olive oil
 ¼ cup honey or dark molasses
 2 tablespoons active dry yeast
 ½ cup lukewarm water (85° to 95°F)
 5 to 6 cups unbleached bread flour

In a large pot, bring the water and salt to a boil over medium-high heat. With a wire whisk, slowly stir the cornmeal into the water, making sure it does not lump. When it has thickened, remove it from the heat and stir in oil or butter and honey or molasses. Transfer to a large mixing bowl and let cool completely.

Dissolve the yeast in the lukewarm water. Stir into the cornmeal mixture. Stir in the flour, a cup or so at a time, mixing well as you go to incorporate it. This will form a firm dough that should not be too dry. When the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl, stir well a few more times, rub oil on your hands, and transfer the dough to a clean oiled bowl.

Same-day method: Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let the dough rise in a warm place until doubled in volume, about 1 hour. Proceed with the shaping instructions.

Overnight method: Cover the bowl and refrigerate overnight. The dough will rise in the refrigerator and acquire flavor from the slower yeast action. Remove the dough 3 hours before shaping and let stand, covered, in a warm place. Proceed with shaping instructions.

To shape into loaves: Preheat the oven to 500°F. Oil one seasoned nonstick, oven-proof 9-inch skillet or two 5-inch skillets. Shape the dough into 1 large or 2 small round loaves. Place the loaf or loaves in the oiled pan or pans and let rise for about 40 minutes or until doubled. Brush the tops of the loaves with olive oil, if desired.

To bake loaves: Place the bread in the oven and reduce the oven temperature to 400°F. Bake for about 40 minutes or until nicely browned and loaf sounds hollow when tapped with your finger. Remove the loaf from a pan and cool on a wire rack.

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dessert that layers leftover bread with fruit, usually apples, and is baked. It isn't a bread pudding because it lacks eggs to make the custard binder. Sally Lunn is a very light, yeast-risen egg bread. Anadama is supposedly named after Anna, who kept cooking only one thing—a cornmeal and molasses bread—until her husband finally burst out, "Anna, damn her!" Suzanne Dunaway's Buona Forchetta Bakery in southern California makes an updated version of this bread.

"Beer Is a Good Family Drink"¹²

As food historian John Hull Brown points out in *Early American Beverages*, men, women, and children in colonial America drank alcoholic beverages. Beer, familiar from England, was the earliest drink in the colonies. Women were the brewers; they made beer from nearly anything that grew. They made vegetable beers from corn, tomatoes, potatoes, turnips, pumpkins, and Jerusalem artichokes. They made tree beers from the bark of birch, spruce, and sassafras, and from maple sap. Fruit-based beers were brewed from persimmons, lemons, and raisins. There were herb beers using wintergreen, and spice beers made of ginger, allspice, and cinnamon. Even flowers became beer: rose beer. There was molasses beer. They made their ale two barrels at a time, from 8 or 9 bushels of malt, 12 pounds of hops, 5 quarts of yeast, and 72 gallons of water.¹³ And, of course, just as in ancient Egypt, once they had beer they had leavening for bread, either from the beer itself or from the "leavins"—the dregs.

They also distilled "spirituous waters" and cordials using spices from the Middle East like coriander, cardamom, and anise seed, and the stones of apricots, peaches, and cherries.¹⁴ Wine was made from ginger, currants, and cherries, but sweet wines, sack, and Madeira were imported. Later, the Scots-Irish brewed whiskey from corn, barley, or oats. Colonial Americans drank hard cider distilled from apples, peachy made from peaches, and perry made from pears. The colonists liked to dress up their alcoholic beverages with cream, sugar, eggs, mace, and nutmeg—like eggnog.

"Kill-Devil" Rum, Stonewall, Bogus, and Flip

Rum, distilled in New England after 1670, was cheap and available. It was called by a variety of names—rhum, rumbullion, rum-booze—and used in a variety of mixtures: stonewall, which was cider

☛ The Golden Age of the Netherlands

and rum; bogus, which was unsweetened beer and rum; blackstrap, made with molasses and rum; and flip, a popular drink that appears at least as far back as 1690 in New England. Here's one way to make it.

RECIPE

FLIP

"An earthen pitcher or huge pewter mug . . . would be filled about two-thirds with strong beer to which would be added molasses, sugar, or dried pumpkin for sweetening, and New England rum, about a gill, for flavor. The bitter, burnt taste was gotten by plunging a red-hot loggerhead, an iron poker-shaped stirrer, into the flip making it bubble and foam."¹⁵

Punch, with its five ingredients of tea, arrack, sugar, lemons, and water, arrived from India via the British East India Company. New Englanders added a sixth ingredient, and rum punch was born. Life was good to New Englanders; they could expect to live ten years longer than if they had stayed in old England. But since they attributed their longer life to drinking alcohol, it became difficult to enforce laws restricting its intake.¹⁶

Life was longer, but food preparation was still difficult and time-consuming. Before the modern stove with a cooktop and an oven was invented in the mid-19th century, most cooking was done with the quadriceps, because it involved long hours of squatting to stir foods in front of the open hearth. A stool or rocking chair could be pulled up next to the fire, but it still involved long hours next to open flames, as the picture on the following page shows.

On wealthy southern plantations, meats were hung in a separate smokehouse, as the picture on the following page shows.

To see more of a southern plantation, log onto www.cwf.org.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE NETHERLANDS

Between England's colonies in New England and the Chesapeake was the Dutch colony of New Netherland. The Dutch knew that they would have to entice people from other countries to settle New Netherland, because the Dutch people, prosperous and free to prac-

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Cooking in Colonial Williamsburg.
Courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation



Hog butchering and curing.
Courtesy Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

tice the religion of their choice, had no reason to leave their own country. The Dutch settlers who did go to New Netherland found oak trees that grew seventy feet high and made logs that burned hot and bright for hours. As in the Netherlands, bread was a staple in New Nether-

❧ The Golden Age of the Netherlands

land, but it was baked at home. The Netherlands was urbanized, so commercial bakers made bread, but parts of the colony were very sparsely populated, so it was necessary for people to have their own brick ovens built into the wall next to the fireplace. American ingredients like corn and pumpkin found their way into standard Dutch recipes like pancakes. Bread was more than food in the Dutch colony; it was a trade item so much sought after by the Native Americans—especially white breads and sweet cakes—that by 1649 there were laws against making bread to trade with the Indians.¹⁷ New Netherland was just a small part of a vast Dutch empire.

The Dutch replaced the Italians—the Medicis of Florence and the Venetians—as the international bankers, and the world banking center moved to the Netherlands. The Dutch dominated or controlled the world shipping trade in spices, sugar, coffee, slaves, precious gems, and grain. The Dutch fleet of 10,000 ships also delivered oil, wine, and salt from Portugal, Spain, and France to northern Europe, and gold and silver from New World mines to Old World vaults. One of the reasons the Netherlands rose to power was that it was unique—a unified, religiously tolerant republic. During the 16th century, while the European monarchies fought with the Church and within their own countries over religion (and in some places killed a greater percentage of the population than the Black Death had), the Netherlands was open for business. Many of the Jews who had been driven out of Spain by the Inquisition went north to the hospitable Protestant Netherlands and contributed their knowledge of banking and business to an already flourishing economy. The stock exchange, called the *bourse* (French for “purse”), was created in Amsterdam in the middle of the 16th century. In 1609, the Bank of Amsterdam opened. It had an international money exchange, it used the system of writing checks invented by the Arabs in the Middle Ages, and the Dutch government guaranteed the safety of deposits—something not available in the United States until 1933. The Dutch florin was accepted as payment all over the world, much as the American dollar is today.¹⁸

“God Made the World, but the Dutch Made Holland”¹⁹

Dutch life was tied to the sea and was a constant battle with it. The Dutch invented windmills to pump water out of the fields and reclaim land from the sea, and dikes, walls to hold back the sea. Much of Dutch food and industry centered around the sea. Twenty-five percent of the Dutch population was connected to the herring industry, from fishing and selling to preserving by smoking, salting, and pickling.²⁰

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In a time when the economy of other European countries was suffering, the Dutch were extremely prosperous, with a large middle class and a high standard of living. Dutch virtues were cleanliness and thrift. Every morning, Dutch housewives washed not only their own stoops but also the public sidewalks in front of their houses. They lived and ate well. At fish markets, the Dutch bought only live fish. They threw away dead fish, as well as mackerel and red mullet.²¹ Even workers could afford meat, cheese, and butter, and the urban poor were provided for in poorhouses that had been recycled from monasteries or convents when the Netherlands converted to Protestant from Catholic. Sailors on warships were fed a 4,800-calorie-per-day diet of mutton, beef, pork, smoked ham, bread, beans, peas, and smoked and pickled fish, much of it herring.²² They were a country that grew no grain and made no wine, but they controlled trade from the breadbasket of Europe, the countries around the Baltic Sea.

Dutch Cuisine: *The Sensible Cook*

One Dutch cookbook was predominant in the Netherlands (and in New Netherland) in the 17th century. *The Sensible Cook*, published in 1668, contained 189 recipes and two appendices, “The Sensible Confectioner” and “The Dutch Butchering Time.” The cookbook and a beekeeping manual were part of the medical section of *The Pleasurable Country Life*, a manual for wealthy bourgeoisie who owned a country house and a garden. The manual was really a compilation of three books: *The Dutch Gardener*, about ornamental gardens; *The Sensible Gardener*, about medicinal gardens; and *The Medicine Shop or the Experienced Housekeeper*, about the care of humans and animals. None of the information in *The Sensible Cook* was available to English speakers until 1989, when it was translated by a Dutch woman, food historian Peter G. Rose. As Rose points out, the gender of the anonymous author of *The Sensible Cook* is unknown, but the book opens with a statement “to all cooks, male and female” and ends with the words “everyone to her own demand.”²³ Before mentioning a word about food, the author tells the reader how to build a stove, one of the rare examples before the 19th century of being able to stand up and cook. The recipes are divided into sections: first salads, herbs, and vegetables; then meat, fowl, and fish, followed by baked goods, custards, drinks, and miscellaneous; then a section on tarts, and finally one on pasties. As Rose also points out, the author was an organized person who took the trouble to capitalize the first letters of the main ingredients and to give

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exact measurements in terms of the *loot* (approximately 14 grams), *pint* (approximately half a liter), and *pond* (approximately 454 grams).²⁴

The cookbook also shows the influence of the Middle East and the Middle Ages. Stews and sauces are thickened with bread, toast, ground nuts, eggs, or—a Dutch innovation—cookies. Sauces of sugar and verjus or vinegar continue the sweet-sour medieval cooking tradition. The recipe “To make a proper Sauce” shows its Middle Eastern roots: ground almonds are added to the white bread crumb thickener, while sugar and verjus make it sweet and sour. The only other ingredient is another Middle Eastern spice, ginger. There is little difference in the spices used for meat and for fish. Thirty of the 59 recipes for meat use nutmeg and/or mace; so do ten of the 18 fish recipes. For example, sturgeon is studded with cloves, spit-roasted, basted with butter, then stewed with Rhine wine, vinegar, cinnamon and nutmeg.²⁵ Bream is also spit-roasted, stuffed with its own roe, chopped egg yolks, parsley, nutmeg, mace, pepper, and butter; sauced with pan drippings, anchovies, and verjus, and garnished with oregano.²⁶ Many of the recipes contain a butter enrichment at the end; a recipe for hen stewed with greens reminds: “Especially do not forget the butter.”²⁷ Few of the desserts use nutmeg or mace; rosewater is still the flavoring. The Middle Eastern influence was also apparent in cumin-studded Gouda cheese, and in the national dish, *hutsepot* (hot pot), a seasonal meat and vegetable stew.

RECIPE

*H*UTSEPOT, THE DUTCH DISH

“Take some mutton or beef; wash it clean and chop it fine. Add thereto some greenstuff or parsnips or some stuffed prunes and the juice of lemons or oranges or citron or a pint of strong, clear vinegar. Mix these together, set the pot on a slow fire (for at least three and a half hours); add some ginger and melted butter.”²⁸

The Dutch ate four times a day—breakfast, the main meal at midday, afternoon (at 2:00 or 3:00 P.M.), and evening. They ate bread at all four meals: bread and butter, bread and cheese, bread and meat. It was all washed down, any time of day, with beer. Bread was baked by professional bakers in communal ovens even if the dough was made at home, because few people had ovens in their houses. Bread was the

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mainstay of the Dutch diet until the potato caught on at the end of the 18th century.²⁹ Rice was rare; there are only a handful of rice recipes in *The Sensible Cook*. There are also very few foods from the New World. The turkey makes an appearance, as do green beans, called “Turkey beans” because that is where the Dutch got them. But this was a time before the Dutch knew chocolate.

The Dutch displayed their wealth in the furnishings of their homes, their art, their gardens. They had Turkish carpets, Persian silk, Ming china (until Delft began producing homegrown Dutch knockoff blue ceramic tiles and tableware), lace, and linens by the dozens for bed and table. They also adopted an idea from Topkapi Palace, the residence of the sultan of Turkey: gardens for no purpose except beauty, acres of gardens with not one edible plant in them, just flowers, especially tulips and especially red ones. The buying and selling of tulip bulbs was intense in the Netherlands, where fortunes were made and lost on just a handful of bulbs. Dutch art reflected Dutch life: secular, not religious. The still-life paintings celebrated the new, exotic fruits—lemons, oranges, apricots—in settings of abundance and wealth.

All of this abundance presented a dilemma for the Dutch Reformed Church: were the Dutch going to be rich or religious? Were all these spices, sauces, and sugar, these cheeses and meats, all these possessions, the speculating in tulip bulbs, going to cause the Dutch to lose their souls? The response in some cities was sumptuary laws to regulate the sumptuousness—the luxury—of everyday life. For example, in Amsterdam in 1655, no more than fifty guests could be invited to a wedding, the celebration couldn't last longer than two days, and a ceiling was put on how much could be spent on gifts. Some city councils went too far and banned the December 6 festival of food and gift giving in honor of St. Nicholas—Sinter Klaas to the Dutch, Santa Claus to us—along with dolls and gingerbread men. It didn't last—the children rebelled.³⁰ (We can only wonder what the city fathers would have done about the anatomically correct gingerbread people available today.) While the Church continued to preach thrift, the Dutch made money and spent it—and consumed it. They never stopped eating their pancakes and waffles sprinkled with sugar or swimming in caramel. Before Americans invented baking powder, beaten eggs made the pancakes rise; yeast inflated the waffles.

The Spice Islands: Nutmeg versus New York

Much of the wealth of the Dutch empire came from its colonies in the Spice Islands, now Indonesia. In 1602, the Dutch East India Company

☛ The Russian Bear

was founded to trade in Asia. The Dutch East India Company, remote from the Netherlands but having to make decisions for the good of the empire, became so powerful that it functioned like a state: it could coin money, make treaties, and raise its own army. Within a short time, the Dutch broke the monopoly the Portuguese had held on the nutmeg trade for almost a century.

The British were after the spice trade, too. In 1600, they had founded the British East India Company. Like Columbus, they were determined to find their own route to the East Indies. Their quest became more urgent when bubonic plague struck again in the 1660s; physicians believed that nutmeg, the seed of the *Myristica fragrans* tree, was the cure. The maps of the time showed it was possible to get to the Indies by sailing north of Norway and then east. Mistake. The crews starved or froze to death. Determined to do business in the East Indies, the British went to war with the Dutch. They lost, then felt humiliated by the treaty, which gave the Dutch what seemed by far the better deal. The Dutch got to retain control of the lucrative Spice Islands trade, and all they had to give away was their puny colony in North America. The British tried to retain their pride and renamed the colony New York.

THE RUSSIAN BEAR

Peter the Great Modernizes Russia

The Netherlands got a special visitor in the 18th century. Czar Peter the Great realized that if Russia didn't keep pace with Europe, it would be a huge, helpless giant and European countries would come scavenging and pick it apart like vultures. In his program to modernize Russia, Peter visited shipyards in the Netherlands in disguise, which fooled nobody because he was six feet eight inches tall and traveled with an entourage. Peter built a navy and upgraded the army. He hired European officers to train his men. To get a port on the Baltic Sea, he went to war with Russia's neighbor, Sweden. Peter won. He got his port and built a magnificent city that he named St. Petersburg, after the first Christian saint, whose name just happened to be the same as his.

Peter wanted to make Russians behave, look, and eat like Europeans. Europeans read the newspaper, so Peter published Russia's first newspaper, editing it himself. (The newspaper, like the alphabet, was late getting to Russia.) European men were clean-shaven, so Peter taxed men's beards. But it was cold in Russia; men were reluctant to part with their face-warmers and paid the tax instead. Peter had more

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success introducing European foods to Russia. He sent Russian chefs to European countries to learn the latest cooking methods. One of the things Peter found in Europe was the potato. Russia is now the world's leading producer of potatoes. The Russians used distilling techniques they learned from Poland to make potato-based vodka.

Ukraine: The Breadbasket of Russia

The large, flat plain of Ukraine is like the American Midwest—grain-growing territory, the breadbasket of the region. The peasants there lived harsh lives. Long after the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and many other social and intellectual movements had come and gone, peasants in eastern Europe were still living as they had in the Middle Ages. They were not slaves, but almost. They could not be bought and sold individually, but they were bought and sold with the land. When you bought a farm, you bought the land, the buildings, and the peasants. Laws made it impossible for the serfs to leave the land they worked. They revolted many times, unsuccessfully, until they were finally freed in 1861, the same year America began a civil war to free its slaves. Until then, the lives of Russian serfs were reduced to the basics: work and try to get enough to eat. The scarcity of food was mirrored in the Russian Orthodox Church's fast days—up to 200 a year.³¹ The staple food was bread—black bread made from rye in the north, wheat bread in the south. It was eaten at every meal. It was sacred to these people and so was the place it was baked.

The Russian Stove

An old Russian peasant proverb says, “The stove in the home is like an altar in a church.”³² The stove and the fire in it were treated with the utmost respect. For Americans to understand the Russian stove, we have to get rid of all our ideas about what a stove is. In a place where the temperature during the winter routinely drops into double digits below zero, the stove could take up a quarter of the entire hut. It was always built into a corner, made of clay, and functioned as a combination stove, furnace, and fireplace. The stove cooked food, baked bread, and preserved fruits and vegetables by drying. It also kept the temperature just right for fermenting drinks like *beriozovitsa*, made from birch tree sap, and *medovukha*, which was like mead, but with hops added. Later, *kvas*—wheat fermented with water and sugar—became popular.

☛ France

The stove also warmed the house. Beds were built on top of it and around it, like a sleeping loft. In Russia, people who lounged around on the stove—what we call “couch potatoes”—were “stove potatoes.”³³

Tea and the Samovar

In the mid-18th century, tea became all the rage in Russia, the only country that invented a separate machine to brew it (until the Mrs. Tea machine arrived to keep Mr. Coffee company in the 20th century). The samovar was a large metal urn, usually brass, sometimes steel, copper, or silver, with a spigot to drain the hot water. The first technology to heat water for tea (or anything else) was a charcoal-filled tube in the center of the samovar, but today they are also electric. Samovars ran from the plain, water-boiling variety to very fancy ones that brewed tea on one side and coffee on the other, or had legs that unscrewed for portability. Some were a complete tea service, with creamer, sugar bowl, and cups and saucers.³⁴ It is immediately recognizable as a Russian appliance.

Peter the Great had visited England, prowled the shipyards in the Netherlands, and met European heads of state. But the ruler and the country he most admired were King Louis XIV and France.

FRANCE

Italy Comes to France: Forks

Beginning in the 16th century in Italy, a new utensil changed the relationship of humans to food, and to each other at the table. The fork created a distance between the diner and his dinner. It also distanced the people eating from each other. No more eating the same food out of the same pot, with the same utensil—their fingers—as they had in the Middle Ages. The fork had been known as a serving tool since ancient Rome, used to spear solid food out of the boiling pot. It arrived at the table as a serving tool to keep the hands of all the diners out of the serving dish. Finally, it became an individual utensil. At first, people had to make a serious effort to use it, because it was two-tined, difficult to maneuver, and not as efficient as fingers. Food kept falling off. The fork also cut out one of the sensations that had always been involved with eating: feel. But it also made it possible to eat some foods, like pasta. Slowly, it spread from the Italian court to France, then England, and finally Germany. It was strictly upper-class, crafted

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from gold, silver, or crystal. Since primitive people had just been discovered in the Americas, civilized people didn't want to eat like them. One of the means by which the fork began its northward migration was a teenage girl.

Italy Comes to France: Catherine de Medici

FOOD FABLE

❧ CATHERINE DE MEDICI—DID SHE OR DIDN'T SHE? ❧

In 1533, the same year that Queen Elizabeth I of England was born, a 14-year-old princess left Florence, Italy, to marry a French prince, in a marriage arranged by the pope. Catherine brought her cooks, pastry cooks, confectioners, and distillers, and Italian *alta cucina*—supposedly the end of spicy medieval cooking and the beginning of French *haute cuisine*.

Food historian Barbara Wheaton states that this is incorrect because “French *haute cuisine* did not appear until a century later and then showed little Italian influence; and there is no evidence that Catherine's cooks had any impact on French cooking in the early 16th century.”³⁵ Catherine supposedly introduced frozen ices, artichokes, parsley, and the fork to France.

Wheaton says further that Catherine didn't have much power at court because she didn't have children for 14 years; because her husband was not supposed to become king, but his brother died; and because her husband's mistress set court fashions.³⁶

Later, after her husband died and she ruled through her son, Catherine de Medici's court was the height of fashion. In 1581, she was responsible for the first real ballet, the *Ballet comique de la reine*—the Queen's Comic Ballet. She also helped to popularize a new fashion from the New World—tobacco. The active ingredient in tobacco, nicotine, was named after the French diplomat who sent the seeds to Catherine, Jean Nicot.

Catherine survived and even excelled in the backstabbing world of court intrigue. She was involved in the religious wars between the Catholic majority and the Protestant minority, the Huguenots. On St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1572, French Catholics began a three-day coordinated massacre of 20,000 Huguenots throughout France, after which the pope and King Philip II of Spain celebrated. Catherine was not an innocent bystander.

La Varenne and the Beginning of *Haute Cuisine*

There was a dramatic shift in French cuisine in the middle of the 17th century. In 1651, a French chef named La Varenne published a cookbook called *Le Cuisinier françois*—The French Cook. As Anne Willan, who has named her cooking school in France after him, pointed out, *Le Cuisinier françois* “is a seminal work; it marks the end of medieval cooking and the beginning of *haute cuisine*.”³⁷ Two years after *Le Cuisinier françois* appeared, La Varenne published *Le Pastissier françois*—The French Pastry Cook. (The word “*pastissier*” later changed into the modern “*pâtissier*.”)

The beginnings of organization in French cuisine are here with two bouillons, one for meat, one for fish. It is also the beginning of modern sauces—the first roux, the fat and flour thickener. The trademark of most of La Varenne’s recipes is subtlety. The hand that sprinkles the spices is light, not heavy like in the Middle Ages. Salt and pepper are the seasonings, with a squeeze of lemon juice and maybe a bouquet garni. Missing are the large doses of cinnamon, mace, clove, ginger. The use of truffles, which have to be dug out of the ground, shows a break with the medieval theory of humors, while the division of the book into meat days and meatless days still shows the influence of the Catholic Church.

More fresh fruits and vegetables appear in these recipes, because they are more readily available and because gardening had advanced considerably, especially among the upper classes. However, there were still not many foods from the New World. La Varenne used the foods that were trendy among the French nobility, like peas, lettuce, and artichokes. People *had* to have peas. Woe to the host who served asparagus instead, although asparagus could be served disguised as peas.

Le Pastissier is the first thorough pastry cookbook, with precise, clear instructions and definitions of weights and measures, perhaps the influence of the Scientific Revolution that was then taking place in Europe. However, Willan thinks that *Le Pastissier* was probably not written by La Varenne or was written by him and an anonymous Italian pastry chef, because Italian pastry chefs were the best in the world at that time. Also, cooking and pastry were two separate professions. In any case, it is sophisticated—there are fifteen varieties of marzipan. It also has the first cakelike biscuit recipes. La Varenne’s books were the beginning of a trend. Forty years later, another chef, Massialot, wrote *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois*, which continued the style of cuisine La Varenne began.

SIXTH COURSE ➤ THANKSGIVING, *HUTSEPOT*, AND *HAUTE CUISINE***Vatel: The Chef Who Gave His All**

Another giant in food history is Vatel. From all accounts, he was a genius in many areas: planning and managing huge festivals, coming up with imaginative ideas for pageants, and menu planning. He impressed all who attended the gala events his employers hosted. Then, in 1671, disaster. As maître d'hotel to the duc de Condé, Vatel was responsible for planning and executing to perfection a major event for the king, who was coming to visit the duke for several days. The pressure was tremendous. The day a seafood feast and extravaganza was planned, almost no food arrived from the purveyors. Sure that he had destroyed the social and political life of the duke, as well as his own professional life, Vatel fell on his sword. The fishmongers arrived with full carts as he died, but he had left no instructions on how to prepare and present all the food. In 1981, Vatel gave his name to a hotel management school in Paris (it now has seven branches internationally), and in 2000 a movie was made about him starring Gérard Depardieu and Uma Thurman. Thirty-three students from the Institut Vatel, cutting, chopping, and slicing, made the kitchens look real.

The Frenchman Who Loved His Coffee (Plant)

In 1689, an Italian named Procope opened the first coffeehouse in Paris. Almost everywhere coffee was introduced it met with two responses. The first was overwhelming enthusiasm from the people who drank it. The second was repression by the government. In Mecca, the governor ordered the coffeehouses closed when he heard the patrons were making fun of him. King George II did the same in England for the same reason. The French were going to ban coffee because they were afraid it would replace wine as the national beverage; the Germans feared for their beer. In all these places, people kept drinking coffee and eventually the bans were lifted. An exception was Italy, where coffee was never banned even though Catholic priests appealed to the pope to ban the Muslim beverage. Instead, the pope tried it and gave it his blessing.

From its beginnings in the 9th century, when it was ground into a paste with animal fat, ways of consuming coffee changed. Grinding coffee into a powder made it possible to read the grounds at the bottom of the cup, which gave a boost to fortune-tellers. In 1710, the French, ever neat and efficient, put the ground beans in a cloth bag,

☛ France

poured boiling water over it, and invented the infusion method. The French are also credited with adding milk and creating *café au lait*, which moved coffee from an upper-class evening beverage in a public place to a morning luxury indulged in private. Eventually, *café au lait* filtered down into the general population and became the drink of the working class.

Coffee changed more than just eating habits—it changed social and political habits as well. For the first time, people had a public place and a reason to congregate that did not involve alcohol. It began as a social pastime and became a political one. The rulers who worried about what people in coffeehouses were saying about the government were right to be concerned. In France, the ideas that spread through coffeehouse discussions played a real part in the French Revolution. Coffee is also connected with a food fable about the origin of the croissant.

FOOD FABLE

☛ WHERE THE CROISSANT COMES FROM ☛

The Fable: In 1683, the croissant was supposedly invented after the siege of Vienna. Either (1) a baker working late at night noticed the Turks trying to tunnel under the city and saved Vienna or (2) to celebrate their victory over the Turks, the Viennese bakers invented a new pastry in the shape of a crescent—in French, *croissant*—which was either (1) the symbol on the Turkish flag or (2) the shape of the trenches the Turks had dug and were forced to abandon. That would make the Austrians the first people anywhere to have a cup of coffee and a croissant. Not likely, since the croissant is one of the national foods of France and the earliest recipe is from 1905.³⁸

The Fact: In 1683, the Turks attacked Vienna and lost. Pulling up stakes in a hurry, they left carpets, clothing, and five hundred huge sacks of strange little round beans. Dark. Hard. Bitter-smelling. Maybe camel food? Torch them. But one soldier had been in the Middle East and woke up and smelled the coffee. The beans were saved—so many beans that he opened the first coffeehouse in Vienna with them.³⁹

One Frenchman played a huge role in spreading coffee throughout the world. In 1723, Gabriel Mathieu de Clieu thought coffee would grow well in the Caribbean. He had one plant and nurtured it like a sick baby all the way across the Atlantic Ocean, even giving it his water ration. He was right—the plant loved the Caribbean. A great percentage of the coffee grown in the world today can probably be traced back to that one plant.⁴⁰

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COFFEE CHRONOLOGY⁴¹	
By 1500	Persia, Egypt, Turkey, North Africa have coffee because of Muslim pilgrims
1536	Yemen occupied by Ottoman Turks; coffee exported through city of Mocha
1600s	India begins cultivation from seeds smuggled in by a Muslim
1616	Dutch smuggle a coffee tree from Aden to Holland
1650	England's first coffeehouse opens at Oxford University
1652	London's first coffeehouse
1650s	In Italy, coffee is sold by street vendors
1658	Dutch begin coffee cultivation in Ceylon
1669	Turkish ambassador introduces coffee to Paris; it becomes a huge fad
1670s	Germany—coffeehouses open
1683	Venice, Italy, opens coffeehouse
1683	Viennese defeat Turks, capture coffee, open coffeehouse
1689	Procope, an Italian, opens coffeehouse in Paris
1696	Paris doctor prescribes coffee enemas
1699	Dutch transplant trees to Java, then Sumatra, Celebes, Timor, and Bali
1723	French begin growing coffee on Martinique in the Caribbean
1727	Coffee smuggled into Brazil
1734	Coffee grown in Haiti
1788	Santo Domingo grows half the coffee in the world
WWII	American GI Joes drink so much coffee it becomes known as "a cuppa joe"

Louis XIV: The Sun King

Louis XIV became king of France in 1643. He was an absolute ruler who claimed his power came from God. He said, "I am the state." Louis XIV was the most powerful ruler in French history. He grew up under the threat of assassination by the Fronde, a group of nobles plotting against the king. Louis was suspicious for the rest of his life and took safety precautions, including where he lived and how he ate. He built an enormous palace eleven miles southwest of Paris, in Versailles, and had the nobles live there so his spies could keep an eye on them.

Dinner at Versailles

The palace at Versailles was like a small city. Louis XIV expanded the main building, originally a hunting lodge, to 2,000 rooms that stretched for 500 yards. A 150-yard-long wing at each end of the main building formed a U-shaped courtyard. In the center of the courtyard, Louis XIV placed a huge statue of . . . Louis XIV. The 15,000 acres of

☛ France

gardens, lawns, and woods included 1,400 fountains. One of the centerpiece was the Galerie des Glaces (Hall of Mirrors), a long formal room. A wall of mirrors reflected the gardens outside glass-paned doors (what we call French doors). Ten thousand people lived in Versailles; two thousand worked in the kitchens. Running the palace cost more than half the annual income of France.⁴²

Dinner at Versailles was at 10:00 P.M., about the time it gets dark in Paris in the summer. The Sun King took advantage of mealtimes to enforce his power. To guard against poisoning, his food was taken in locked containers from the kitchen to the dining hall, escorted by his private armed guards, the Musketeers. They announced the passage of the king's food through the halls of the palace by calling out, "*Les viandes du roi!*"—"the king's food!"—and everyone had to stop what they were doing and bow. Since he was without equal, Louis dined alone (except sometimes with the queen) in kingly splendor at a huge banquet table high on a platform. Musicians played while he dined; courtiers stood and watched while he ate, hoping for a word of acknowledgment or favor.

The meals Louis XIV ate were legendary. A glutton, he consumed huge amounts of food in no particular order, often against the advice of his physicians. Once, he ate "four full plates of soup, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a big dish of salad, two big slices of ham, some mutton with *jus* and garlic, a plate of pastry, and then fruit and some hard-boiled eggs."⁴³ And he ate it all with his hands. Although Catherine de Medici had brought the fork from Italy more than a century earlier and it was accepted throughout Europe, Louis didn't like it and refused to use it. He did use something else that Catherine had introduced, the handkerchief.

The Orangerie

Oranges became very popular at this time. The first oranges, the ones that the Muslims planted wherever they conquered, were bitter oranges that were called blood oranges, because of their color, or Seville oranges, after the city in Spain. The sweet orange tree—*Citrus sinensis* or Chinese orange—traveled through India to the Middle East. It arrived in Lisbon in 1625 and spread quickly all over Europe, replacing bitter oranges in most places.⁴⁴ Orange juice and peel were thought to be the antidote to poisons, colic, and tapeworm. Wealthy people gave theme dinners planned around citrus fruit.

Louis XIV, an orange aficionado, built an *orangerie* at Versailles in the shape of a 1,200-foot crescent and used it as a backdrop for the

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MENU

THE SIXTEEN-COURSE CITRUS DINNER

"In 1529, the Archbishop of Milan gave a sixteen-course dinner that included:

caviar and oranges fried with sugar and cinnamon
 brill and sardines with slices of orange and lemon
 one thousand oysters with pepper and oranges
 lobster salad with citrons
 sturgeon in aspic covered with orange juice
 fried sparrows with oranges
 individual salads containing citrons into which the coat of arms of
 the diner had been carved
 orange fritters
 a soufflé full of raisins and pine nuts and covered with sugar and
 orange juice
 five hundred fried oysters with lemon slices
 candied peels of citrons and oranges"⁴⁵

masked balls and entertainments he liked so much, especially dancing and the comedies and satirical plays of Molière. It was the job of the royal gardeners to keep the Sun King supplied with oranges and orange blossoms all year round. The trees were usually kept in wheeled pots so they could be moved in from the cold or just repositioned to take advantage of the sun. Painters and weavers provided images of oranges throughout the château in paintings and tapestries.⁴⁶

By the time he died in 1715, Louis XIV had turned France into a superpower, a leader in world politics, fashion, and cuisine. But the palaces and the wars were expensive. He also left France with a debt equivalent to about 20 billion dollars. Since the nobles paid no taxes, the money would have to be squeezed out of the peasants and the middle class. Three-quarters of a century later, the peasants would grow tired of paying half their income in taxes so the nobility could feast on luxuries while they starved. They would make the Sun King's grandson, Louis XVI, pay the ultimate tax: his head.