

Medieval meals essay sample

[Nutrition](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

During medieval times people lived very differently than we do today. One aspect that stands out more than others though was the food that was eaten. Holidays and celebrations during medieval times were also very different. There was a lot of work involved in preparing meals and getting ready for feasts. It took time and careful planning, but in the end it was usually worth the effort.

Medieval celebrations were a time for food and enjoyment. The celebrations were usually based on feast days that were determined by when certain crops would be harvested. Wheat and rye were usually sown from the end of September all the way up until Christmas. Spring crops were then planted and would be harvested from Christmas time until Easter. Cold weather would often affect other important things such as how much feed was available. By November feed for the animals was often so scarce that farmers could not keep the animals. Therefore November became known as the “ blood month” because all of the meat was salted, cured, and smoked in order to be kept for the winter. The biggest feast during medieval times was celebrated for two weeks straight. It went on from Christmas Eve until January 6th. These were the 12 days of Christmas. This was a vacation time and the lords of the castles would usually give out gifts as bonuses to the servants. ([www. medieval-life. net/festivals. htm](http://www.medieval-life.net/festivals.htm))

Music was also a big part of celebrations. It would be played during feasts for entertainment to the guests. Many instruments were used such as recorders, horns, trumpets, whistles, bells, and drums. Many times the music would be played on a specially built stage that was placed at the end of the Great Hall.

Not only was music delightful to the ears, but it was also believed that music helped in the digestion of food. ([http://www. medieval-life. net/music. htm](http://www.medieval-life.net/music.htm))

Eating was one of the castle-dweller's most popular pastimes because it provided nutrition, and entertainment. Banquets were often used to impress a lord's guests. Generally meals would be taken about three times a day. Breakfast and lunch were usually very small affairs. Supper, however, was a large affair and could range from three to six different courses. During spring and summer there was plenty of food, but during the winter food could sometimes become very scarce. Even so, everyone made the most of what they had. ([www. castles-of-britain. com/castlesf. htm](http://www.castles-of-britain.com/castlesf.htm))

There were many types of food in medieval time. People usually only had fruits and vegetables that could be grown seasonally or found wild. Fish were eaten by those that had access to a river, lake, or nearby stream. Meat came from the livestock that was owned by the families and was never wasted. Sometimes cooks even used spices with the meat to hide the smell of it rotting. ([http://www. kyrene. k12. az. us/schools/brisas/ saunda/ma/1jon. htm](http://www.kyrene.k12.az.us/schools/brisas/saunda/ma/1jon.htm)) The wealthier a person was, the more often meat would be a part of his diet. ([http://www. regia. org/food. htm](http://www.regia.org/food.htm))

The kinds of food people ate in medieval times differed according to what social class they were in. People in the upper more wealthy classes had a wide variety of food available and a large amount of it. Many meats, such as capon, geese, lark, chicken, beef, bacon, and lamb, were available to the wealthy. Those people who lived close to water could also get a wide variety

of fish to put on the table. Dairy products were also seen on the tables of the rich. . (<http://www.medieval-life.net/food.htm>)

Peasants, on the other hand, had to deal with a much more simple diet.

Wheat that was harvested was taken straight to the market. Peasant breads were made from barley and rye which were made into dark heavy loaves of bread. Ales were available for drinking as was water that had been sweetened with honey. Peasants got very little protein, but what they could get usually came from peas and beans. (<http://www.medieval-life.net/food.htm>)

Raw vegetables were considered unhealthy to all and were vary rarely eaten. Even so, anything that was able to be grown was used with the exception of poisonous plants. Lucky families were able to have fatty bacon and salted pork for protein and flavor. Most poor families were dependent on simple foods in order to survive. All medieval diets were very lacking in Vitamins A, C, and D, and did not have very many calories. Even so, they were low in fat, and high in fiber, and were very “ heart healthy”.

Most food was eaten from wooden or clay bowls, and only a knife and a spoon were used. Forks did not seem to appear until very late in the medieval period. The most common type of cup was a wooden cup or mug. There is no evidence that cups with handles were ever used. The wealthier people would use horns or conical glass vessels to drink from. (<http://www.regia.org/food>)

People in medieval times were always in fear of famines. Crops were rarely enough to create a large amount of food, and even the richest lord could not
<https://assignbuster.com/medieval-meals-essay-sample/>

keep enough grain to last through a famine. Malnutrition was also always present, but very few people actually died from it. Rumors of famine would usually come before the famine itself. People would begin to hoard food and supplies, and black markets would attract many customers. Bakers would also put filler in bread instead of grain in order to make it last longer.

(<http://www.medieval-life.net/famines.htm>)

Medieval food had its pluses and minuses and was mostly very different from today. Considering all of the complications that they had during their time, it is amazing how well off people were back then and that they were able to come up with so many ways to prepare and preserve their food.