

Authenticity in the Kitchen
Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2005

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Edited by Richard Hosking

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Preface

'Authenticity' overwhelmed us in 2005. Seventy-five proposals for papers were received, of which 46 were accepted and delivered at the Symposium. All but one, published elsewhere, are to be found here, making an unusually large volume.

The Symposium, organised so capably by Patsy Iddison, Registrar, Phil Iddison, Secretary of the Trustees and Jane Levi, Chairman of the Trustees, got off to a fine start with an opening address on the subject of Authenticity delivered by Colman Andrews, editor-in-chief of *Saveur*. Paul Levy has written a full report of this and the panel discussion that followed, and this can be found on the Symposium website at <www.oxfordsymposium.org.uk>.

Saturday lunch marked a departure from the Symposium custom of having a meal provided by the symposiasts themselves, and a luncheon of 'Authentic English Fare' was served in the Lloyd Common Room of Brookes University. Our hearty thanks go to Anne Petch of Heal Farm for providing delicious pies; to Maggie Beer for sending us her excellent Fruit Paste from Australia; to Patricia Michelson of La Fromagerie, London, for her generous donation of cheeses, and to all those, especially Sri Owen, one of our own Trustees, and Donald Sloan, Head of Brookes University's Department of Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism Management and his staff, who worked extremely hard to make the lunch such a success.

Another departure from the previous year was the Saturday night Symposium Dinner, served in the magnificent Headington Hill Hall, preceded by drinks on the Hall's sweeping lawns. For the aperitifs, Ursula Heinzelmann devised a highly successful tasting of German ciders followed by an interesting and equally successful matching of German wines with our meal. Ursula has our deepest gratitude, as do the producers who supplied gave us the ciders and wines, and The Winery who supplied them. The authentic Moroccan dinner in Headington Hill Hall was a very grand affair, cooked by Paul Bloomfield of the Fox Club, London; with menu and recipes from Caroline Conran and Anissa Helou. The huge success of the dinner was not only a great tribute to Paul's organisational and culinary skills and to the team who assisted him, but also to the skill and good taste of Caroline and Anissa; to all of whom we offer our hearty thanks.

Sunday lunch was perhaps the most lavish that has been served at any Symposium. Thanks to the great generosity of Tourism Malaysia we were served an authentic Malaysian wedding banquet. Our thanks go to Mr Libra Lee Haniff and Mr Razip Hasan, Directors of Tourism Malaysia UK, who achieved this extremely generous sponsorship for us; to Chef Mohd Shawal Abdul Jalil whose incredibly skilled and hard working team made it all possible, and to Jill Norman whose brainchild it was.

Jill should also be thanked for working with Wine Australia, and Sri Owen for working with Bisol Desiderio in Italy to supply us with fine wines that we could enjoy

whilst basking in the knowledge that in drinking them we were raising funds for the Symposium.

As usual, Alicia Rios and Raymond Sokolov entertained us, this time with a sketch entitled 'In the Bureau of Authentication'. As editor, I feel that 'At the Office of Authentication' would have been a more authentic title, and in an effort to preserve authenticity have done my best to keep the insidious neologism out of the following pages.

Patsy and Philip Iddison's Bring and Buy stall has become a much valued Symposium institution, and we heartily thank them for the funds raised, and their hard work in raising them. Another greatly appreciated Symposium institution is the delicious bread provided by Dan Schickentanz of de Gustibus, whom we also thank very much. The American Friends of the Oxford Symposium have also made a notable contribution to Symposium funds, and this year sold many of our first-ever Symposium Aprons thanks to the hard work of Carolin Young and her mother. Carolin also arranged a fascinating, fund-raising visit to the 15th-century kitchens of Lincoln College.

So many people have worked hard for the success of the Symposium, and we thank them all. Our warmest thanks, however, go to Donald Sloan and all at Brookes University who worked so hard to make Symposium 2005 the undoubted success that it was.

Richard Hosking

The Real Thing? Understanding the Archive at Fairfax House, York

Peter Brown

When Father Hugh Aveling was researching for his book *Catholic Recusancy in Yorkshire*¹ he noted a bundle of over 1000 documents in the Newburgh MSS which referred, not as expected, to the Fauconburg family of that estate, but to the Fairfax family from Gilling Castle, a country seat five miles across the valley.² These papers are an eclectic mix of invoices and records covering the period 1735–72 and included a number which detailed the day-to-day living of the Fairfax family. They were not of any particular interest to the priest, and consequently remained uncatalogued until recent times.

When researchers began looking at these in some detail, we discovered a number which covered the building of Fairfax House in York during the period 1759–62, also a large portion recording the purchase of silver, glass, porcelain and other domestic utensils, but the majority were for the daily provisions of the Fairfax household.³ Not all the bills were continuous, and there were some curious gaps; the housekeeper's records, for example, are limited to the years 1769–72, and whilst the general supplies of wine are well documented, the butler's cellar book, which showed the amounts consumed on a daily basis, only covers a four-year period. Other runs of invoices were more complete, the butcher's supplies of beef, mutton and calf's heads are detailed on a weekly basis and the supply of confections is also well documented.

Less exotic, but just as interesting, are a number of invoices from the York plantsman, John Telford, for the period 1759–60, which itemise a comprehensive range of root and salad vegetables purchased by the head gardener, Ralph Craggs.⁴ Over 50 varieties of vegetable were being supplied and these included 8 varieties of cabbage (savoy, white savoy, sugarloaf, ball, red, early Dutch, best, and winter cabbage), 6 different types of lettuce (winter, imperial, capucheen, coss, mix'd and cabbage lettuce), 5 types of bean (Spanish, speckled kidney, bottonia kidney, haricot and early beans), 3 varieties of cucumber (early, long and prickly), some short hotspur and early Charlton pease, curl'd and Italian brocoli, white and red beet, border and ground spinage, Spanish and Welsh onion, white and green endive, together with garlick, shallots, carrots, parsnips, leeks, collyflower (sic), early turnip, white mustard, radish, cur'd parsley, and purslan. Potatoes and artichokes were seemingly not cultivated in the kitchen garden, but bought in from local markets at York.

Other supplies from Telford included a range of umbelliferous plants, herbs and flowers intended for cooking, including nasturtium, thyme, hyssop, sweet marjo-

double marigold, angelica, caraway and white Dutch clover. From a mid-eighteenth century context, this is a surprisingly sophisticated medley of root and salad growing and suggests that both Telford and Lord Fairfax's gardener, Ralph Craggs, had acquired considerable horticultural knowledge.⁵ Also the generally held view is that the products of the kitchen garden were intended mostly for consumption by the servants, but with such a huge range and variety under cultivation in the kitchen gardens at Gilling and Fairfax House, this hypothesis needs to be rethought. The popular recipe books of the period, by the likes of Hannah Glasse (1747), Eliza Smith (1758) and Elizabeth Raffald (1771), have little regard for vegetables, unless they are being boiled to a pulp or used to flavour the sauces.⁶ We have tended to assume that because they get little coverage in these texts, they were not part of the rich man's diet, but this may not be the case.

The British medical profession in the first half of the eighteenth century, was also working from a very different theory of diet and health than we understand today,⁷ and the doctors were on the whole, rather suspicious of vegetables.⁸ They acknowledged, however, that some roots and salads were easier for Europeans to digest than others. The general rule of thumb was: the sooner to maturity (i.e. asparagus and some of the salads), the easier to digest. Those which took longer to ripen (i.e. those taking in more of the solar rays!) were much harder to absorb into the system. Also the smaller the vegetable the better; large onions or apples and pears, for example, were considered difficult for the European stomach. Similarly, the lighter colours were also easier to digest (i.e. turnips, parsnips, potatoes, etc.), whereas carrots, skirrets and beet gave us problems.⁹ For some medical conditions, however, certain vegetables were actually recommended; those suffering from stones, for example, needed a 'smooth and diluting regime ... Artichoke or Asparagus dressed with Butter or milk, Beets fried, Pease-soup, Turnip-soup, etc.' Also anyone with a 'diuretick' condition must avoid the 'flatulent roots ... Pease, Parsnips, Turnips, Carrots, Salads of Nasturtiums, Horseradish, Mint Bawn (sic)', and other 'warming' things. Cucumber, however, was never one of the acceptable vegetables and damned by association with the lower classes. Not only was it considered a poor-man's diet, it was plentiful and cheap during the months of August and September at a time when cholera was most prevalent. Eating too many cucumbers, if you had cholera or a similar intestinal infection, would induce a vomit and this was the last thing the patient needs at this time, and could result in death. The medics also felt that melons and summer fruits are to be avoided if you had cholera, as were swine's flesh, fish, honey and all things sweet.¹⁰ (It is interesting to note that the simplest and most effective treatment for cholera today is to give the patient sugar and water!)

There was also a great distrust of fish and sea-animals amongst the medical fraternity. 'Those who live much on fish are infected with scurvy, or cutaneous eruptions and other diseases of a foul blood', said Dr. Cheyne in his tome, *An Essay of Health and Longlife*.¹¹ 'Fish was not fit for the Studious and Tender' he said, but acknowl

Running a 15th-century Restaurant in the 21st Century

Judy Gerjuoy

Olde Hansa, founded in 1997, is the most popular restaurant in Tallinn, and therefore in Estonia. The 'persona' of the restaurant is that of a mid- to late-15th-century merchant's home. This is carried out with its décor, the way the wait staff is dressed, and most importantly, the food. Unlike the Medieval Times restaurants in the United States, which have little or no concern with authenticity, but rather are putting on a show, the people of Olde Hansa are concerned with authenticity, and spend a great deal of time and money researching and working with medieval scholars on several continents to recreate their chosen time-period more accurately.

They are not content with the status quo, but rather seek to improve what they are doing, and to bring it closer to what would have been done in the 15th century, within the constraints of 21st-century health and safety issues. For instance, in the last two years, they have redone all their bathrooms so they appear at first glance to be a medieval garderobe (bathroom). The flush toilets are built into a wooden throne-like chair, that resembles a medieval privy. The flushing mechanism is a large wooden button in a wooden box, built into the wall, and does not look like a modern handle. Water comes out of a copper pitcher, which is discreetly attached to a pipe, giving the illusion of a pitcher and basin set-up. The doors to the bathrooms are made from hand-hewn planks and use hand-forged hinges.

Obviously this is not 100 per cent authentic, but it looks authentic, and meets 21st-century health codes. As we will see in this article, most of the compromises that Olde Hansa makes come from conformity to 21st-century codes.

One of the advantages that Olde Hansa has is that Tallinn is one of the most intact medieval cities left in Europe, with some of the walls and towers that surrounded medieval Tallinn still extant. This means that there is a medieval atmosphere both in the restaurant and outside of it. The building that Olde Hansa uses for its restaurant is a 15th-century building that has been modernized in some parts, but retains most of the original structure. The major changes include electricity, piped water and sewage, and modernizing the kitchen. The kitchen is a modern kitchen, with gas and electric appliances.

The building has three floors plus a basement. The kitchen is on the second floor and there is dining on all three floors as well as outside in the summer months. The second floor has a musicians' gallery where musicians frequently play medieval songs using replica medieval instruments, and the third floor has a freestanding wood-burning fireplace. The walls are decorated with designs from illuminated manuscripts and tapestries. The tables and chairs were made for Olde Hansa. The tables are medieval

trestle tables, or are wooden boards on saw-horses, as was done in the Middle Ages, and the chairs are based on medieval designs. The public part of the restaurant is lit by candles and well-hidden electric lights.

All of the wait staff are dressed as 15th-century servants, including shoes that look medieval. The shoes are not 100 per cent accurate, as they have modern soles instead of medieval soles, so they will last longer and be more comfortable for the staff. The staff is not allowed to have hair that is dyed in non-normal colors, piercings that show except earrings, visible tattoos and other 21st-century items.¹ The wait staff is trained in maintaining the illusion that it is the 15th century by avoiding modern references and making medieval ones.

The place where Olde Hansa is farthest from authentic is in their kitchen and menu, and therefore their food. This is due to several reasons, all of which impact upon their authenticity. Some of these could be changed, while others cannot, at least in any practical way.

The first issue is the cooking equipment. Medieval food was prepared in a number of different ways. First, of course, was cooking in a pot over a fire. Cooking in a pot over a modern gas stove will give you the same results as was done in the Middle Ages, so those dishes don't have a problem in terms of authenticity. Second was cooking in a medieval oven. A medieval oven is not really comparable to a modern oven. In general, when things were cooked in a medieval oven, the oven was filled with wood and heated up. When the oven was hot enough, the coals were removed, the items to be baked were put into it, and the oven was sealed.² This resulted in items cooking in an oven which gradually decreased in heat. At Olde Hansa the food is cooked in a modern oven. A modern oven gives you approximately the same temperature the entire time of the cooking cycle, which means the resulting food comes out differently. Third, food in the Middle Ages was cooked on a spit over an open fire.³ Olde Hansa does nothing comparable to that. And, of course, the food is stored in modern refrigerators and freezers, which are not medieval. However, they serve in many ways as a modern substitute to going to the butcher every day, and have no major effect on the authenticity of the food.

The second issue is the ingredients themselves. Modern species of animals, fruits, vegetables and spices have been bred in ways that make them a lot different from the medieval species in size, taste, color, and texture. For instance, modern cattle are a lot larger than medieval cattle⁴ and have a much higher percentage of fat. The medieval carrot was available in many colors, not just orange. In *Le Ménagier de Paris*, written in 1393, translated by Eileen Power, it says in a carrot recipe, 'Carrots be red roots which be sold in handfuls in the market.'⁵

The third issue is the recipes themselves. Some of the dishes at Olde Hansa are done from extant medieval recipes, but some are constructed by the cooks, based on medieval ingredients of the time and medieval cooking techniques.

The fourth issue is the fact that modern people come to the restaurant and want

History in the Baking: Taste, Authenticity, and the Legacy of the Scotch Oven

Roger Haden

Writing in 1891, Italian cookery authority Pellegrino Artusi complained:

If I knew who invented the oven, I'd erect a monument to him at my own expense. He certainly deserves it far more than many others who've been honoured in this monument-crazed century.¹

From Artusi's culinary perspective, the evolution of the oven was a story of great cultural significance and overdue for some public recognition by his countrymen. Moreover, what has remained an unremarked evolution may have proved particularly poignant for Artusi, as he witnessed first-hand the onrush of change which modernisation brought to cookery, baking, and indeed, to the form of the oven itself during the last decades of the nineteenth century.²

In this paper I explore the notion that, over time, indeed spanning millennia, an accumulated gustatory wisdom was embodied in the generic design of the pre-modern oven, which during modern times was quickly and almost entirely outmoded. Artusi's comment therefore underscores a broader process: how a dominant culture based on self-interest historically overshadows what could be called authentic human invention.

The history of the oven also discloses a history of the sense of taste. This history has always been fragile, because a physiological mode of knowing the world by understanding specific sensations constitutes a knowledge always susceptible to dominant institutional forms of knowing, like applied science, for example. The latter can also influence the degree to which sensory taste is historically devalued. The disciplinary discourse of the philosophy of science has paid more attention to sight and hearing as preferred epistemological tools of trade. In contrast, I suggest that the oven is an authentic gauge of what the sense of taste has contributed to our species' corporeal, culinary, and cultural experience. This old-world sensory wisdom (*Homo sapiens* means the 'thinking,' but arguably also, the 'tasting' human) of the premodern era is embodied in the technology of the domed stone oven.

Historically, taste invested oven technology with a kind of sapience, not by conscious act on the part of an inventor, but by a slow accumulation of traditional knowledge formed by the constant receipt of taste's unique sensory register. Taste is a living sense negotiating between bodily life and environment. The form of the oven

gives material form to this slow evolution. Siegfried Giedion writes:

The form of the baking oven has passed down almost unchanged throughout the centuries. Like the axe or the knife, it is the basic tool of the human inventory. The oven developed into an egg-shaped chamber, which is excellently adapted to retaining and distributing heat... the baking oven was an oval chamber encased in a thick, fireproof vault of clay, brick or stone... every detail of this simple device – the vaulting, the inclined hearth, the position of the flue – was the product of unfathomably ancient experience.³

The generic form of premodern domed oven was thus not an invention, per se, but emerged as an outcome of an organic evolution, the technical extension of an empirical wisdom. Historian Peter Brears describes a 16th-century English example:

The oven itself was of the beehive variety, consisting of a large domed masonry structure, entered by way of a small rectangular door. A fire of fast-burning kindling was first lit inside the oven so that its floor, walls and roof were brought up to a high temperature. The fire was then raked out, the bread swiftly inserted, and the oven door sealed in place with mud. After a short while, the oven door was broken open, and the bread, baked by the heat retained by the masonry, was withdrawn and allowed to cool.⁴

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Many medieval illustrations of ovens feature the domed stone arch of this generic oven style.

Humoralism and the oven: a technology of taste

This type of oven clearly produces different sorts of flavours, but to understand how such a taste-informed technology developed we need to understand the premodern context in which the domed stone oven evolved. It was much more than merely a means of cookery. It was I suggest an organon ('An instrument of thought or knowledge; a means of reasoning, discovery... a system of rules or principles of demonstration or investigation' – *OED*), a unified practical and symbolic source of a tangible, indeed, tastable knowledge. The oven made everyday sense of the cosmos itself. It graphically demonstrated by analogy the humoral concept of correspondence, central to humoralism, which up until the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century had been the dominant system of medical knowledge in Europe for 1500 years.

Both the wheat from which bread was made, and bread itself, were thought to 'ripen,' for example; one by the sun, the other because as the loaves of bread baked in the oven they 'rose' and also took on the golden colour of the sun, and, moreover, resembled the ripened wheat from which the bread was made. The bread was also thought to expand like the foetus within its mother, and so the oven – already

'How does it taste Cisti? Is it good?' Authentic Representations of Italian Renaissance Society and the Culture of Wine Consumption in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*

Salvatore Musumeci

The pages of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* are filled with images that colorfully depict Italian Renaissance table-culture and alimentary habits – images that are conveyed to us using the literary conceit of story-telling.¹ A group of noble men and women who took refuge in the Florentine countryside to escape the dangers of the Black Death told ten stories per day over a ten-day period, each day being guided by a predetermined theme.² But while Boccaccio's novelle are often short humorous pieces that poke fun at the hypocrisy of the religious or at husbands who are easily hoodwinked by their wives and vice-versa, they also contain important insights into the complex social world of Renaissance Florence. Above all, we see into the ways in which this reality was communicated through food and wine, or indeed through all things that might be considered edible and consumable. Using one of these tales, that of Cisti the Baker and Messer Geri Spina, this paper highlights the metaphorical concepts attached to the culture of wine consumption and demonstrates the beverage's centrality as a mode for constructing social communities and defining social status, as well as touches upon the anxieties and concerns its consumption raised for both Messer Geri and Cisti.³ In doing this I aim to show how wine not only ennobled Cisti and Messer Geri, but also served as a bridge that united two individuals who lived and operated within two separate and distinct social classes in a time where status and affluence colored and influenced every aspect of life in early Renaissance Florence.

Set in the city and surrounding countryside of Florence in the period around 1348, Boccaccio ensured that the memory of war and factional fighting as well as the plague and its devastation would remain fresh in the minds of his audience. The historicity and the use of contemporary details is an essential aspect of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The city witnessed a dramatic demographic change from the later thirteenth century to the early decades of the fourteenth, with its population increasing to close to 90,000 people,⁴ thus making it the fifth most populous city in Europe.⁵ The Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani, writing in 1338, notes that the city had '146 bakeries'⁶ and that the city 'consumed 140 *moggia* of wheat every day'.⁷ In addition to the vast amount of wheat consumed it was also estimated that wine consumption, per week, reached a gallon a head.⁸ But while it appears as if the larders of citizens were amply stocked with bread and wine, the idea of a varied and

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balanced diet was far from reality.⁹ The city was at war with Milan, the papacy and King Ladislaus of Naples; it was similarly locked in a struggle to gain and maintain its surrounding countryside, neighboring towns and cities such as Lucca and Pescia, and the port city of Pisa. Within the city partisan tensions and neighborhood politics were also liable to flare at any given moment. In a time when the Medici had not yet risen to be known as the princes or de facto rulers of the city, the patrician class was characterized by political unrest and conspiracies, family feuds, forced exiles and even an impending revolution.¹⁰

Florence was essentially undergoing a transition from a minor town to a major city. Daily life in and around the Palace of the Priors and the *Mercato Vecchio* was buzzing with a variety of vendors, merchants and products.¹¹ But at the same time, the reality of plague was quickly approaching. Those who survived the epidemics of 1340 and 1348 literally saw the city's population cut in half.¹² The psychological and demoralizing effect of witnessing parents burying children who succumbed to plague, and family members leaving weakened or sick loved ones to fend for themselves in an attempt to escape the ever increasing prospect of death by the pestilence was, as many have remarked, not without effect on the social conscience and moral fabric of the city. This reckless abandonment and breakdown of the civil and reasoning process fascinated Boccaccio in particular.¹³ In an age where the citizens of Florence still recalled the wretchedness and horror brought about by the plague, where factional and familial fighting was part of the everyday and where war and rumors of war were a constant topic of discussion and source of grief from the heavy taxation that ensued, the daily life in early Renaissance Florence was hard, haunting and suffocating.

A series of concepts, which can roughly be divided between the practical and the metaphorical, were attached to the culture of wine consumption in this period. Informed and sustained mostly by religious literature, medical/dietetic treatises, folkloric practices and a thriving oral tradition, these concepts can be said to have created and to represent the nature of consumption in the later medieval and early Renaissance periods. In analyzing the story of Cisti and Messer Geri, I will attempt to illustrate the extent to which these concepts were encapsulated in one narrative of wine consumption by first exploring those ideas attached to practice and then those that were used to make wider, more metaphorical messages.

The basic plot of Boccaccio's tale of Cisti and Messer Geri can be summed up as follows: Messer Geri is hosting the Pope's emissaries during their visit to Florence. In the course of their day they find themselves walking past Cisti's bakery in order to reach their destination. Cisti, realizing that the day is hot, thinks to himself it would be nice to offer Messer Geri and his visitors a glass of his white wine as refreshment. However, a baker would never issue a direct invitation to a gentleman, so Cisti instead goes through a series of charades in order to indirectly entice Messer Geri and his guests to his bakery for a drink. This technique is effective and Messer Geri and the Pope's emissaries decide to taste Cisti's wine. When they taste for themselves that

Haroset

Susan Weingarten

Haroset is a food with symbolic significance, which is used at the Jewish Passover *Seder* meal. From biblical times Passover was celebrated in Jerusalem by eating the paschal lamb together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Following the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE, the Passover rituals were recreated in a new way as the *Seder*. This meal commemorates the exodus of the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt to freedom, and has been widely celebrated by Jews in their homes up to the present day. The *Seder* ritual includes reading a text, the *Haggadah*, pointing to and eating symbolic foods, and drinking four cups of wine.

Among the symbolic foods eaten at the *Seder* are the ‘bitter herbs,’ to remind the participants of the bitterness of slavery. These were originally some form of endives or bitter lettuce, common in Palestine in the spring. Once the Jewish diaspora spread north, grated horseradish was often substituted for the bitter lettuce.¹ *Haroset* was made to dip the bitter herbs into, and take away some of their bitterness. It was said to resemble the mud or clay for the bricks which the Jews made as slaves in Egypt.²

As a child I learned the ingredients of *haroset*:

Apples, raisins
Chopped up fine
Cinnamon, nuts
And sweet red wine.³

This is the present-day authentic Ashkenazi *haroset*, but there are many variations which developed over the centuries, particularly in Sephardi communities.⁴ Indeed, in practice today and throughout history there is no one ingredient which is common to all versions of *haroset*, although we can point to the geographical distribution of certain ingredients.

The Talmudic sources

From the very first time the Jewish legal codes were written down we find detailed discussions of the rituals of Passover, which get a whole section to themselves in the 3rd-century Mishnah, as well as in the subsequent Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud [JT] and the Babylonian Talmud [BT]: Pesahim, the Passover laws.⁵

The earliest written evidence of *haroset* is to be found in the Mishnah. However, this only describes *haroset* in terms of its function and symbolism, not its ingredients or taste.

They bring before [the leader of the *Seder*] unleavened bread [*matzah*] and let

tuce and the *haroset*, although *haroset* is not a religious obligation. R El'azar b Zadoq says: It is a religious obligation.⁶

Thus the Mishnah mentions the *matzah*, the bitter herbs and *haroset* as belonging to the *Seder* ritual 'even though *haroset* is not a religious obligation,' merely, it is implied, a custom. However it then quotes the contrary view of Rabbi El'azar b Zadoq, a rabbi who lived before the destruction of the Temple, who says that *haroset* is a religious obligation. Rabbi El'azar was a spice merchant in Jerusalem, and other sources quote him as saying that merchants would cry the spices for *haroset* in the streets of Jerusalem, where Jews would come on Passover to eat the paschal lamb in the days when the Temple still stood.⁷ Thus the evidence for the use of *haroset* is now put back to a time before 70CE, and it is clear that it is older than the new form of the Passover *Seder* meal. Rabbi El'azar, then, saw spices as an essential ingredient.

The Mishnah adds:

On all other nights we dip our food once, on this night we dip twice.⁸

The Mishnah is alluding here to the usual practice all over the Roman empire of dipping bread into a condiment at a meal. But at the *Seder*, it says, we dip twice – referring to an initial dipping of ordinary herbs into salt water and the later dipping of the bitter herbs in *haroset*.⁹ However, there is no discussion of what *haroset* is.

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Both the Talmuds expand the Mishnaic discussion of *haroset*.

The Jerusalem Talmud: *haroset* as *dukkeh*

The 5th-century JT notes that *haroset* is called '*dukkeh*' because it is pounded [*dukhab*].¹⁰ Yemenite Jews, who were cut off for many years from the mainstream Jewish community, relied on the JT as their religious authority unlike other Jews, for the Babylonian Talmud did not reach them for many hundreds of years. They have preserved the tradition of the JT and to this day they call *haroset* '*dukkeh*.'

The JT goes on to quote Rabbi Joshua b Levi, a 3rd-century Palestinian rabbi, as saying that *haroset* must be thick like mud or clay, while others say it should be liquid, 'in memory of the blood.' Blood from the Passover lamb was used by the Jews to mark their houses before they left Egypt. They dipped bunches of hyssop into the blood and painted it on the lintels of their houses as a sign for the Destroying Angel to pass over them and spare their children. The mention of blood may also refer to the first of the ten plagues in the book of Exodus, when all the water in Egypt was turned to blood.¹¹

It is also clear from the JT that it was usual to put spices in *haroset*. However, there is no mention of other ingredients.

In the Babylonian Talmud, finalised in the 7th century, Rav Ammi claims that *haroset* is used as a dip for the bitter herbs to counteract the harmful *kappa* they