

Anthimi, *De Obseruatione Ciborum*

Incipit epistula Anthimi uiri illustri comitis et legatarii ad gloriosissimum Theudericum regem Francorum de obseruatione ciborum: qualiter omnes cibi comedantur ut bene digerantur et sanitatem praestare debeant, nam non infirmitatem stomachi nec anxietatem humani corporis.

rationem obseruationis uestrae Pietati, secundum praecepta auctorum medicinalium, ut potui uobis exponere profuturam generaliter procuravi, quoniam prima sanitas hominum in cibis congruis constat. id est, si bene adhibiti fuerint, bonam digestionem corporis faciunt, si autem non bene fuerint cocti, grauitatem stomacho et uentri faciunt. etiam et crudos humores generant et acidiuas carbunculos et ructus grauissimos faciunt. exinde etiam fumus in capite ascendit, unde scotomatici et caligines graves fieri solent. etiam et uentris corruptela et ipsa indigerie fiet, aut certe desursum per os uomitus fit, quando stomachus cibos crudos conficere non potuerit. si autem bene praeparati fuerint cibi, digestio bona et dulcis fiet, et humores boni nutriuntur. in hoc enim prima sanitas constat ita ut, qui se taliter uoluerint obseruare, aliis medicaminibus non indigebunt.

similiter et de potu tantum oportet adhibere quantum cum cibis concordat. ceterum si plus praesumptum fuerit et maxime frigidum, stomachus ipse in frigidatus nihil praeualet, unde etiam corruptela nascitur et illa quae superius diximus. unum tamen

Anthimus, *On the Observance of Foods*

Here begins the letter of Anthimus, a Distinguished Gentleman, Count and Legate to His Excellency Theuderic, King of the Franks, concerning the observance of food. Or: how all food should be eaten so that it may be properly digested and promote health, rather than cause stomach problems and persistent infirmity of the body.

I have taken care, to the best of my ability, following the directions of medical writers, of a plan of diet for Your Reverence which will be of benefit to you, because in men excellence of health corresponds to the suitability of food. By that I mean: if food has been prepared well, it helps towards good digestion, but if it has not been cooked properly, it causes a heaviness in the stomach and bowels. It can even engender undigestible fluids, together with smelly hiccoughs and violent belching. Following on this, a vapour rises into the head, as a result of which sudden dizziness and unpleasant exhalations can often arise. This type of indigestion can lead to diarrhoea, or at the very least to vomiting, because the stomach is unable to digest raw food. But if food has been well prepared, the ensuing digestion is good and agreeable, and useful humours will be nourished. To such a degree does excellent health depend on this, that anyone who is prepared to take care over his food in the way which I shall set out will have need of no other medicine.

Drink should be treated in the same way, for as much should be taken as will harmonise with the food. If too much is drunk and at too a low temperature, the stomach grows chilled and loses its efficacy, so that there ensues diarrhoea and the other conditions that I mentioned above. Let me give you an analogy: if someone is

exemplum suggerimus: quomodo in fabrica domus parietis si calcem et aquam quis tantum temperauerit, quantum ratio poscit ut spissa sit ipsa mixtio, proficit in fabrica, et tenet; si autem satis aqua missa fuerit, nihil proficit. sic et in cibis uel potu ratio debet cognosci, ergo et sicut supra diximus, sanitas ex cibis bene coctis et bene digestis constat.

nam si quis dicat: homo in expeditione positus uel iter agens longum, quomodo potest se taliter obseruare? et ego suggero: ubi focus est uel uacat, quae praedicta sunt fieri debent. nam si necessitas exegerit carnes uel alia crudiora manducare, non ad nimitatem sed parcius. sed quid plus quam quod ab antiquis dictum est ‘omnia nimia nocent’. nam et de potu, si quis caballicando et in labore festinando amplius potum praesumpserit, commouendo se in equo uexabitur, et in uentre peiora nascuntur quam de cibis.

sed forte dicitur mihi: quare gentes aliae crudiores carnes manducant et sanguinolentas, et sani sunt? et licet nec illi omnino sani sint, quia ipsi medicinas faciunt – cum male sibi senserint, ustulant se foco in stomacho et uentre et per alia loca, quomodo caballi furiosi¹ ustulantur – tamen et inde reddo rationem: illi unum cibum manducant sicut lupi, nam non multos, quia non habent nisi carnes et lactes, et ipsud quod habuerint, manducant, et uidentur esse sani de paucitate ciborum. nec non de potu est quando habent, est quando longo tempore non habent, et paucitas ipsa uidetur ipsis sanitatem praestare. nam nos qui diuersis cibis et

¹ furiosi | furias GAH furies g foria Fischer.

constructing a wall of a house, he should mix the lime and water in the correct proportions to ensure that the mortar is thick, for then it is both useful for the building and it sets; but if too much water is added, then it is no longer useful. In a similar way proportion ought to be observed in food and drink, for as we said above, excellence of health corresponds to food that has been properly cooked and properly digested.

But let us suppose that someone asks how anyone can take this sort of care when engaged in military manoeuvres or a long journey. I would say that if a fire can be lit and if there is time, what has been suggested ought to be possible. However, if force of circumstance compels one to eat meat or anything else raw, then eat sparingly rather than to excess. What I am arguing can be summed up by the ancient motto: 'Everything in excess is harmful'. As far as drink is concerned, if someone drinks too much before riding his horse or hurrying about his business, then he will suffer pain when jolted on his horse, and what will be produced in his bowels will be worse than if he had eaten food.

Perhaps there will be asked the question of how it is that other peoples eat raw and bloody meat and yet are healthy. The answer is that these peoples may not really be healthy, because they make themselves remedies; for when they feel ill, they burn themselves on the stomach and the belly and in other places, in the same way that untamed horses are burned. My explanation for all this is as follows: these people just like wolves eat one sort of food rather than a variety of foods, since they possess nothing but meat and milk, and whatever they have they eat, and they appear to be healthy because of the restricted nature of their diet. Sometimes they have something to drink, and sometimes they do not, and this lack of abundance seems to be responsible for their state of health. By way of contrast, we who excite ourselves with different food

diuersis deliciis et diuersis poculis nos agimus, necesse habemus nos gubernare taliter ut non pro nimietate adgrauemur, sed magis parcius agentes sanitatem obtineamus. si quis uero delectatus fuerit cibum qualemcumque manducare, sed in primo bene factum cibum praesumat, et de aliis rebus parcius ita ut lucretur hoc quod primum accepit et bene digerat.

propterea diligenter constat obseruare quae a nobis suggesta sunt auxilio diuinae maiestatis et domini nostri Iesu Christi, a cuius largitate¹ longiorem uitam et praecipuam sanitatem habeamus. rationem ergo diuersorum ciborum quemadmodum uti debeant secundum praecepta diuersorum auctorum, ut potest intellectus noster habere, suggerimus.

1. in primis panem nitidum bene fermentatum et non azimum, sed bene coctum comedendum, et ubi locus fuerit, cottidie calentem, quia tales panes melius digeruntur. nam si non bene leuatus fuerit, satis grauat stomachum.

2. [hordei natura humida et frigida, et pergatorius sucus palearum. hoc ut agnoscas, hordeum non frixum sic coque in aqua et uidebis defluentem sucum copiosissimum.]²

3. de carnibus uero uaccinis uaporatis factis et in sodinga coctis utendum, etiam et in iuscello, ut prius exbromatas una unda mittas, et sic in nitida aqua quantum ratio poscit coquantur, ut non addatur aqua, et cum cocta fuerit caro, in uaso mittis acetum acerrimum quantum mediam buculam, et mittis capita porrorum et pulegii modicum, apii radices uel feniculi, et coquatur in una hora, et sic addis mel quantum medietatem de aceto uel quam quis dulcedinem habere uoluerit, et sic coquas lento foco agitando ipsam ollam frequenter manibus, ut bene ius cum carne ipsa temperetur. et sic teris: piperis grana L costum et spicam nardi per singula quantum

¹ largitate l et Weber, *om.* GAgPpHN, gratia Liechtenhan.

² GB *om.* AlgPpH *del.* Rose (1877) *exc.* Rose (1864) et Liechtenhan.

and different delicacies have, by necessity, to govern ourselves in such a way as not to be aggravated by excess, so that by living more frugally we may maintain our health. If pleasure is taken from eating food of whatever kind, then the food that is eaten first should have been properly prepared, and anything else taken more sparingly, in order that what is eaten first may not only be of benefit and but also be digested well.

With this in mind, everyone should steadfastly observe what has been put forward by me through the help of Our Divine Majesty and Lord Jesus Christ, by Whose bountifulness we may have a longer life and excellent health. I therefore present, to the best of my knowledge, a scheme of how different foods should be used according to the instructions of a number of writers.

1. To begin with, it is best to eat white bread, not unleavened, but well leavened and, when the situation allows, hot every day, because such bread is better digested. For if the bread is not well risen, it weighs heavily on the stomach.

2. Barley is, by its nature, moist and cold, and the juice from its husk is purgative. You can prove this by toasting unparched barley, and watching the juice oozing out in large quantities.

3. Beef which has been steamed can be used both roasted in a dish and also braised in a sauce, provided that, as soon as it begins to give off a smell, you put the meat in some water. Boil it in as much fresh water as suits the size of the portion of meat; you should not have to add any more water during the boiling. When the meat is cooked, put in a casserole about half a cup of sharp vinegar, some leeks and a little pennyroyal, some celery and fennel, and let these simmer for one hour. Then add half the quantity of honey to vinegar, or as much honey as you wish for sweetness. Cook over a low heat, shaking the pot frequently with one's hands so that the sauce coats the meat sufficiently. Then grind the following: 50 pepper corns, 2 grammes each of costmary and spikenard, and