



Oxford Symposium on Food & Cookery

CALL FOR PAPERS:

CURED, FERMENTED & SMOKED FOODS

9—11 July 2010,
St. Catherine's College, Oxford

Deadline for proposals: 15 February

Send submissions to:
editor@oxfordsymposium.org.uk



Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with ham, lemon, a roll, a glass of wine and others on a table*, 1643, courtesy of Christie's.

Papers are invited on the topic "Cured, Fermented and Smoked Foods." In the first instance you are requested to submit a 500 -1,000-word abstract, setting out your ideas and showing your main lines of argument by 15 February. If accepted, a final paper of no more than 5,000 words will be due on 1 May.

Mankind has always had the necessity of preserving food, as plants start to degrade as soon as they are harvested, and animals as soon as they die; and few foods will keep for long without some form of treatment. The various means of preserving food result in changes of flavour and texture. These have been and are appreciated in most cultures and at most times in human history. Though invented through necessity, and often, historically, the food of the poor, some of these techniques now yield food delicacies and luxuries – e.g., smoked salmon, caviare and Champagne.

Curing, by drying, salting or preserving in sugar, can paralyse micro-organisms, and interfere with or destroy enzymes that cause spoilage. They also cause desirable changes of flavour and texture. Fermentation caused by yeasts and moulds can have both positive and negative effects on the life of foodstuffs, as in bread, alcoholic drinks, cheese, yoghurt, soy bean products, sauerkraut, and meat products such as salami. The tastes and smells, and changes of texture produced by fermentation, often make the food more appealing.

The same is especially true of smoking which in the past was an adjunct to salting and drying in the preservation of food and although its role is redundant today because of advances in the techniques of preservation, it remains in use for flavouring as a versatile and popular technique.

There is a story to be told behind every cured, fermented or smoked product. It might be a story of poor peasant life, of fishermen at sea, of diets on long sea voyages, of marching armies, or of the nostalgia that makes these foods delicacies for the urban populations of New York and London. There is something to say about the methods of curing in antiquity and in different cultures, and of their importance in pre-refrigeration times when transport was difficult.

Papers might examine the chemical actions of curing, and investigate the health benefits and health risks - the controversial use of saltpetre, nitrites and nitrates and controversies about the implication of a salt-rich diet in the risk of heart disease..

We will welcome papers on specific foodstuffs. So whether fish, flesh or good red herring, there is meat here for every intellectual appetite.

– Paul Levy, Claudia Roden, & Carolin Young