

St Nicholas Priory

Healthy eating in the Tudor period

Modern science has helped us to better understand what food our bodies need to work properly. We need a balance of fats, carbohydrates, proteins and fibre to stay healthy.

Let's see how Tudor diets compare.



Poorer Diets

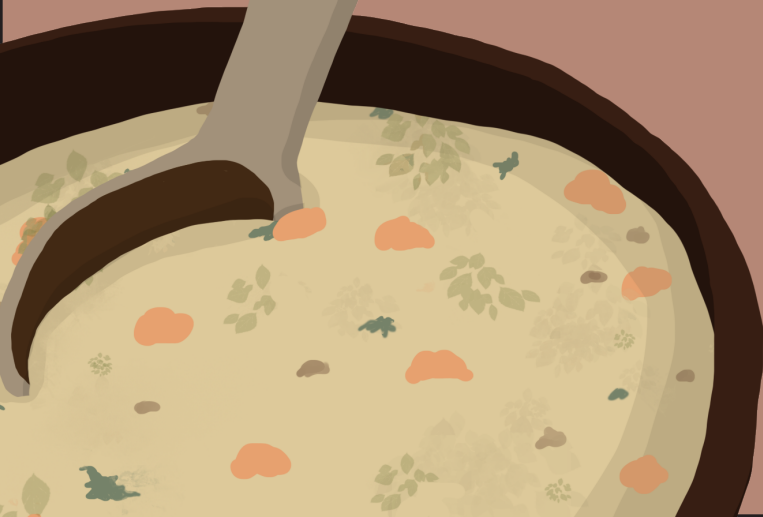
People from poorer backgrounds ate a lot of milk, cheese, butter, eggs, coarse bread and pottage. Cabbage and potatoes were key staples in poorer diets.

They did not eat much meat because it was expensive and difficult to store.

Pottage is a simple broth made of oats, herbs, vegetables and beans. Little pieces of meat or fish was sometimes stirred in if they had it.

Poorer Tudors relied on local harvests. When harvests failed or crops died, food became very expensive and poorer people sometimes starved.

Water was sometimes too polluted to drink and could make people sick. To avoid the dirty water, a lot of poorer people drank beer and ale.



Wealthy Diets

People with more money ate an awful lot of meat! Up to 3/4 of their food was meat. The rest of their diet was made up of sugary puddings and pies, exotic spices and fruit, and fine bread rolls called 'manchet'.

Wealthier Tudors didn't eat many vegetables, as they thought that vegetables were peasant food.

Gout is a disease that can be caused by eating a very meaty diet. A lot of very wealthy Tudors had gout, like King Henry VIII!

Sugar had to be imported from abroad and was expensive. Wealthy Tudors ate a lot of sugary foods to show how rich they were - this meant a lot of them had very bad teeth!

When the water was too polluted to drink, the wealthy drank wine and sherry.



Pottage contains lots of different ingredients from different food groups, making it while a well-balanced meal. Identify each ingredient as a carbohydrate, protein, fat or fibre:

Oats = _____

Cabbage = _____

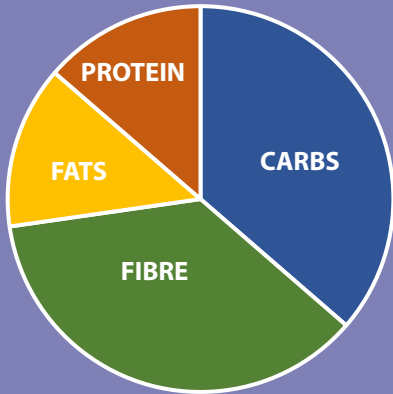
Beans = _____

Milk = _____

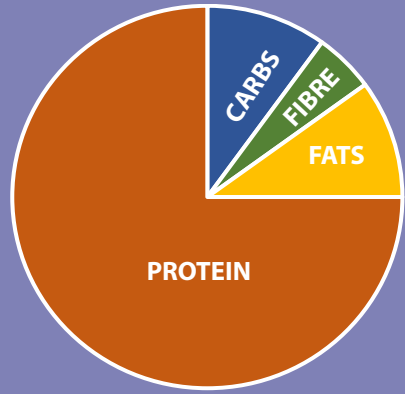
What are some of the key differences between the diets of poor and wealthy Tudor people?

What are some key differences between Tudor diets and the way we eat today? Think about what foods are affordable, food safety and how food can show status.

POORER DIET



WEALTHIER DIET



Look at the pie charts above, showing the portions of carbohydrates, proteins, fats and fibres in the Tudor diets.

Using what we know about balancing food groups, which diet do you think is the healthiest and why?

What changes would you recommend to make a wealthy Tudor's diet more balanced?

Today, we eat all kinds of food from all over the world. In the past, most people only ate food that could be grown locally. In the Tudor period, global trade began to grow and different kinds of food were introduced to Britain.

Circle the types of food that you think were available in Tudor Britain, then check out the answer sheet!

Sugar

Onions

Bananas

Tomatoes

Spices

Coffee

Potatoes

Chocolate

Rice

Tea

Why do you think 'new' and exotic food was mostly only eaten by the wealthy? A lot of these foods are far cheaper in modern Britain - why do you think that is the case?
