Objects(s): Soap Ration Notice, Recipe Leaflet and Food Festival Leaflet
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Soap Ration Notice, Recipe Leaflet and Food Festival Leaflet
In the Museum collection we have several items relating to wartime food and produce rationing, which provide a sharp contrast with objects relating to present day food and drink festivals, depicting such wide choice and variety. These three items provide us with just a small sample sufficient to offer a contrasting view of food and provisions between wartime austerity and today’s reality.

The first item is a Ministry of Food public notice about the soap ration for non-domestic users.

![Soap Rationing Notice](image)

Our next item, also produced by the Ministry of Food, is a recipe leaflet in green and red, containing a cookery calendar for the months of November and December. It is one of several similar leaflets produced by the Ministry of Food and issued to households with suggestions for using up foodstuff and produce in season. The Museum collection also holds Ministry of Food leaflets on the Preservation of Tomatoes and facts and recipes from the Potato Marketing Board. Each of these was designed with the sole purpose of reducing waste and making the most of scarce resources.

In contrast our next object is an information Leaflet promoting the Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival of 2011.

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In contrast with the earlier objects, this item portrays the food festivals of today. Celebrating the great diversity of foods and produce now available locally and more widely, together with education on how to cook new dishes and achieve the best from the diversity of ingredients.

**Wartime rationing**

In Britain, rationing was introduced during both World Wars. The First World War saw the rationing only of certain foods, affected by submarine warfare in 1917. By the middle of 1918, Ration Books were distributed for the rationing of fat’s, meat and sugar. It was not until the Second World War that rationing was widely introduced. The following timeline, produced for ‘History Extra’, gives some detail (although it omits such things as fuel and petrol) around the timing of rationing in Britain during and following the Second World War:

- January 1940 Food rationing begins: butter, bacon, ham and sugar rationed
- March 1940 Meat rationed
- July 1940 Tea and margarine rationed
- May 1941 Cheese rationed
- June 1941 Clothes rationed
- December 1941 Points rationing introduced for canned and processed foods

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Fish, fruit and vegetables (and until after the war bread(!)) were all exempt from rationing although imported fruits, if available at all, were increasingly expensive. Substitutes for common fish were introduced such as ‘Snoek’, a type of snake mackerel from the Southern hemisphere, which proved to be less than popular!
People were also encouraged to grow their own fruit and vegetables with slogans such as ‘Dig for Victory’.

Double⁹ tells us that in 1940, “To encourage the growing of vegetables in the Government’s ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign, the Council offered land for rent at 3d per rod.” He goes on to suggest that Stowmarket “as a more rural area, found fruit and vegetables were more readily available than in provincial towns and cities... people found it was possible too, but quite unlawful, to obtain illicit

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⁷ Gratwicke B. Thyrsites atun, Barracouta or snake Mackerel, also known as Snoek in South Africa [Internet]. 2020 [cited 9 June 2020]. Available from: By Brian Gratwicke - originally posted to Flickr as Thyrsites atun, Barracouta or snake Mackerel, CC BY 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8907906
⁸ Fraser P. [Internet]. 2020 [cited 8 June 2020]. Available from: By Peter Fraser - This file is from the collections of The National Archives (United Kingdom), catalogued under document record INF3/96. For high quality reproductions of any item from The National Archives collection please contact the image library., Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19556421
eggs and butter from local farms plus an occasional rabbit or chicken to supplement the meagre meat ration.”

It is fair to say that country people considered themselves slightly better off under rationing than their urban dwelling counterparts. Alun Howkins\textsuperscript{10}, quotes from an unknown Somerset source writing in 1942, who says; “The food situation here is fairly good in comparison with other areas known to me. The chief reason lies in the fact that Wellington is in the centre of a very prosperous agricultural area, and the majority of people are able to supplement their rations with their own garden produce and things they can buy direct from the country.”

Nevertheless, the government’s Minister for Food, Lord Woolton, felt it necessary to produce guidance for each household on how to reduce waste and make the best use of everything available during wartime. Hence the Ministry of Food came up with the idea of producing recipe booklets based on seasonally available produce such as STMEA:1988-47.46. One such example was the ‘Woolton Pie’ (a pastry pie made entirely from vegetables), which, like Snoek, also proved to be a less popular addition to the dinner table!

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{woolton-pie.png}
\caption{Image: Woolton Pie by autumnroseuk\textsuperscript{11}}
\end{figure}

**From wartime rationing to peacetime plenty**

Essential as it was to have rationing in wartime, to ensure there was enough to go round; the people of Britain were desperate to have more choice and a more equitable society. The wartime coalition government gave way to a return to party politics returning a Labour government under Clement Attlee. However, with an economy to re-build and shortages of everyday items still prevalent, some rationing was set to continue well into the 1950’s.


\textsuperscript{11} Woolton Pie [Internet]. 2020 [cited 8 June 2020]. Available from: By autumnroseuk - Woolton pie, CC BY 2.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=46161211
The second half of the 20th Century witnessed a period of significant growth in the Supermarket sector. It also brought about experimentation with new dishes. Who can remember ‘boil in a bag’ curry, or instant ready meals to heat in the microwave?

Concerns about food additives and artificial flavourings, led in part to a revival in more natural and wholesome foods. People were travelling further around the world for their holidays, often eating and drinking local food and drinks. By the millennium, television shows about food and cooking were popular with several TV Celebrity Chefs making programmes highlighting foods from home and around the world. Supermarkets responded with wider ranges of fresh produce from around the world and catering for varying tastes and lifestyle choices. This leads us to the next item in our collection, STMEA: 2014-358, a leaflet for the 2011 Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival.

**Food and Drink Festivals**

I’m not certain where or when Food and Drink Festivals originated. Some writers have suggested the earliest might be pre-Christian in origin as a celebration of good harvests. In more recent times, ‘Lammas Day’ (traditionally the first harvest of the wheat crop), prompted the baking of ‘Lammas Cakes’ (loaves shaped and baked into sheaves of wheat). Whatever their true origins Food and Drink Festivals are now popular throughout the western world. The Museum is of course no stranger to this type of event having hosted 23 CAMRA, Festivals of Beer and Brewing and annual Apple Day’s since 2018. Some festivals concentrate on single products such as cheese or chocolate with others having a wider remit. Since the first Smithfield show of 1779, County Agricultural have hosted many stands showcasing food and drink produced locally.

The Aldeburgh Food and Drink Festival first launched in 2006 joining a growing number of Festivals promoting locally produced food and drink. It’s unique appeal, according to Salter writing in the Telegraph is; “having hit on a winning formula of producer stalls, appearances from credible chefs (José Pizarro, Olia Hercules and Thomasina Miers were three of last year’s names), and masterclasses in everything from Middle Eastern baking to wild-food foraging.”

This festival, competes with several others in Suffolk, all of which, celebrate the wonderful diversity of food and drinks available and/or produced in the County. What better way to thank our forebears for their wartime sacrifices than to showcase the very best that Suffolk has to offer?

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12 Leatherdale D. Food Festivals: Celebrating the Great and the Good of Food [Internet]. BBC.co.uk. 2018 [cited 8 June 2020]. Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43457624
13 Festival Aims - Aldeburgh Food & Drink Festival [Internet]. Aldeburgh Food & Drink Festival. 2020 [cited 8 June 2020]. Available from: https://aldeburghfoodanddrink.co.uk/about/festival-aims/