

FIRST FACTS
about the
MIDDLE
AGES

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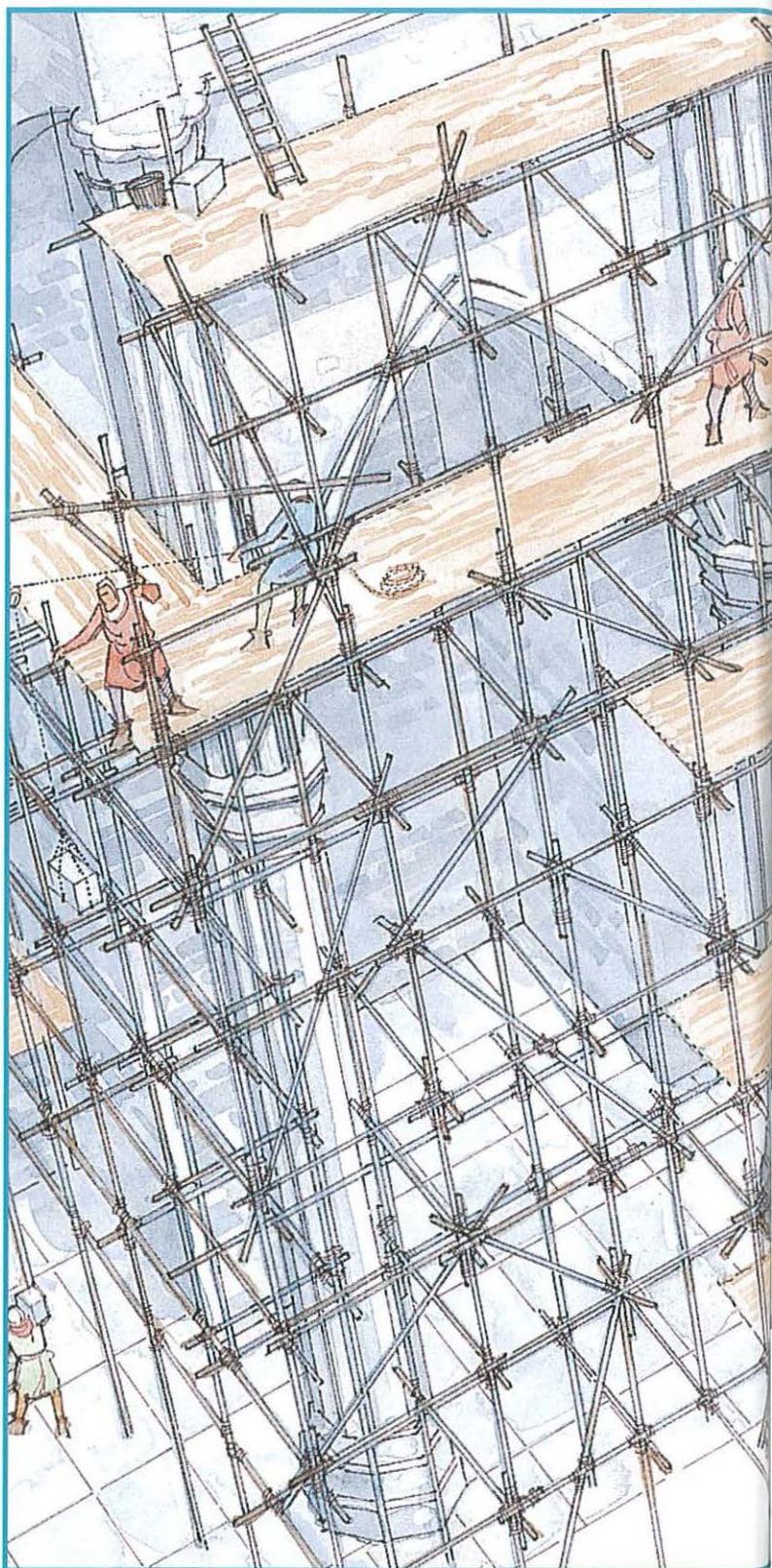
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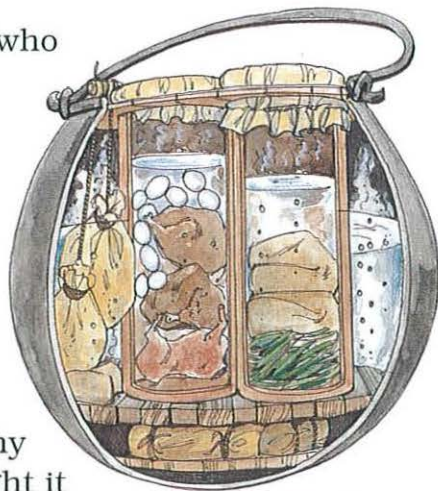
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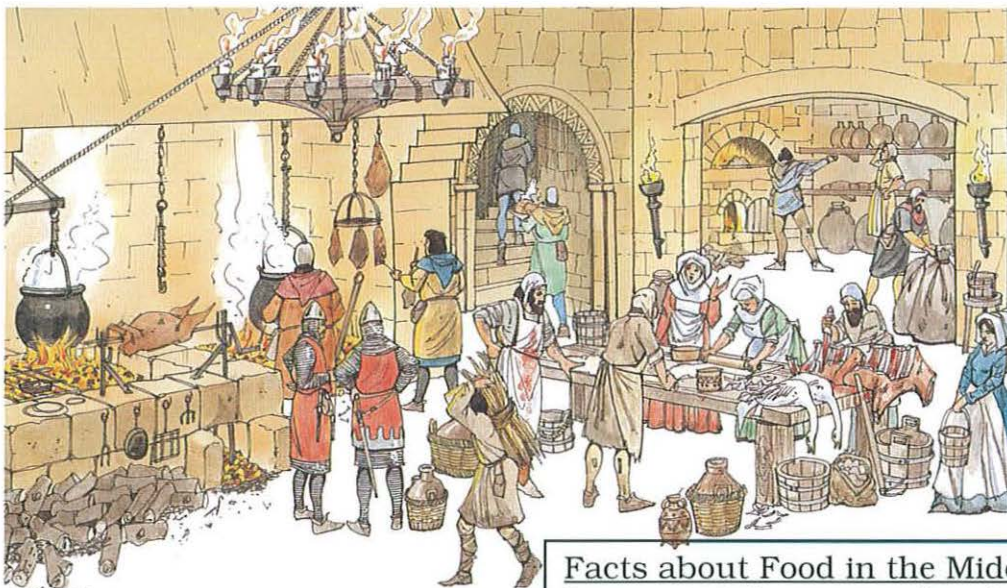
FACT: PEOPLE USED BREAD FOR PLATES

IN MEDIEVAL TIMES what you ate depended on who you were. Peasants ate coarse brown bread, pea soup, cabbages, onions and garlic. If they were lucky, they might also have some ham or bacon, apples, pears and homemade cheese.

Nobles liked rich meat cooked in sauces with strong tastes. Medieval cookbooks give recipes for hot and spicy dishes flavored with ginger and saffron. Sweet and sour foods were cooked with honey and unripe grapes, and puddings were made with eggs, almonds and cream. This was an unhealthy diet – nobles did not eat much fresh fruit (they thought it was harmful), bread or vegetables. In fact, they used 'trenchers', thick slices of bread used like disposable plates. They were used to soak up grease and spills, then given to the poor to eat.



A CAREFULLY packed cauldron (cooking-pot) could be used to cook several different foods at once over an open fire.



A BIG MEDIEVAL castle needed a big kitchen, too. The cooks might have to provide meals for a hundred people every day while the lord and his soldiers were staying there.

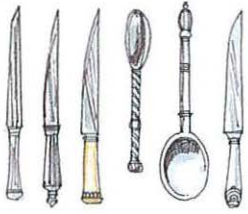
WHEAT from the lord's farms was ground into flour at the mill, then baked in the castle oven. Vegetables came from the castle garden.



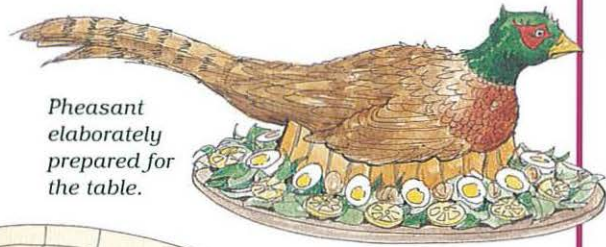
Facts about Food in the Middle Ages:

Laws protected consumers from bad food. Bakers caught selling moldy loaves were dragged through the streets tied to the back of a cart. Brewers whose ale was too weak were fined. Officials called 'ale-tasters' would spill some on a chair. If they stuck to the seat, the ale was strong and sweet enough.

Ale was an important drink because milk and cold water were unsafe. Cows might be diseased and water was often polluted by sewage.



MANY servants were needed to cook and serve dinner to the lord and his guests. Some are shown at the bottom of the page. After the meal, jesters and minstrels often entertained the diners.



Pheasant elaborately prepared for the table.

MEDIEVAL people ate with their fingers, or with spoons and knives. Forks were not used.

DISHES for feasts could surprise – whole birds were baked in pies.

MEALTIME STAFF

- 1 Steward
- 2 Taster (checks for poison)
- 3 Pantler (keeps food stores)
- 4 Butler (keeps stores of drink)
- 5 Launderer (supplies clean table-cloths)
- 6 Cooks
- 7 Scullion (kitchen-boy)
- 8 Carver
- 9 Cup-bearer.

