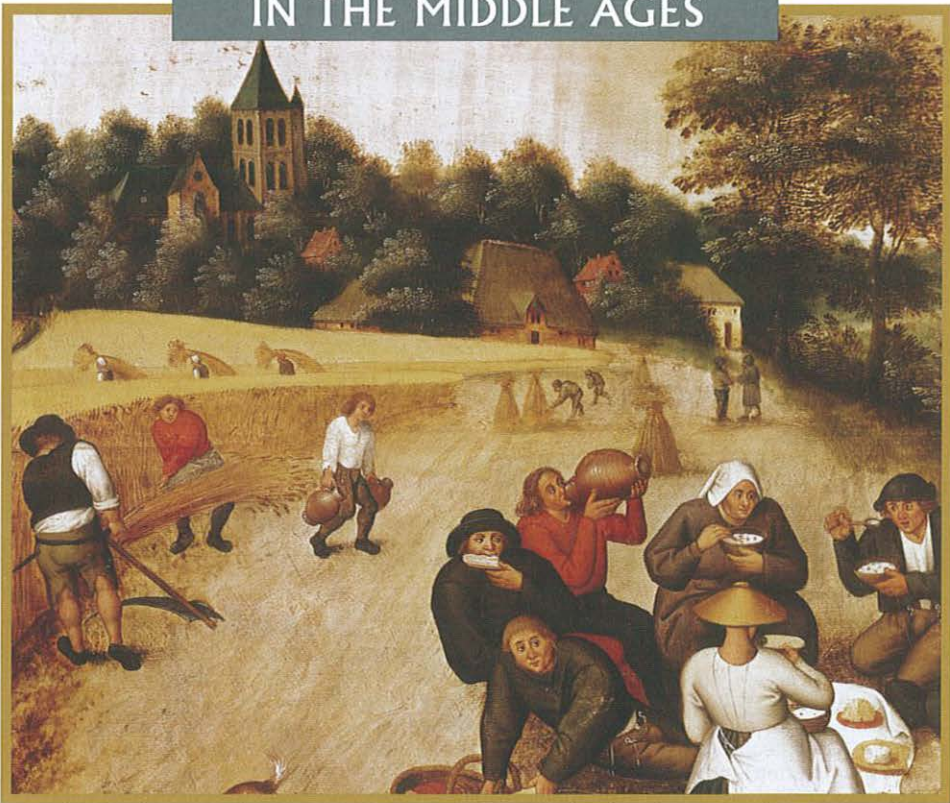




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feudalism and Village Life

IN THE MIDDLE AGES



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Gareth Stevens
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to make porridge. Poor cottars often ate porridge (made from boiling grains) to avoid having to pay the miller to grind their grain.

Unlike nobles, villagers did not eat meat very often. The meat from a pig or ox that was salted or smoked in the fall had to last for a number of months. Chickens and geese were needed for their eggs. Cheese and eggs were important sources of protein for many peasants. They supplemented these foods with fish, doves, and game they poached (hunted illegally) in the lord's woods.

Villagers ate the same home-grown fruits and vegetables as their lords did—cherries, plums, and pears in the north; quinces, oranges, and lemons along the Mediterranean Sea. Peasants ate many vegetables in season. Almost anything—even strawberry leaves—went into their pots. They ate peas and beans fresh after the harvest and then ate them dried in the winter. Women preserved cabbage by pickling it in brine and making sauerkraut.

For seasoning food, peasants used salt, honey, vinegar, and herbs. For very special occasions, a farm wife might buy some spices. A peasant's daily drink was usually ale, wine, or cider that was made locally. Both adults and children sometimes drank milk.

Villagers normally ate three times each day. They probably ate breakfast at dawn before starting work. This meal consisted of bread, cheese, and an onion or other vegetable, plus a drink. Dinner, their heaviest meal, was at noon. It usually consisted of bread and a thick soup made from greens, turnips, beans, onions, and perhaps a piece of meat or bone. The evening's supper was usually made up of leftovers from dinner as well as more bread and cheese.

The Peasant Table

Even more than lords, peasants filled up on bread. Their bread was coarse, usually made from a mix of grains. It was sometimes made from peas and beans. These same products were used