

# Sources for researching food

Museum Buddies – East Midlands Food

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## 1. Primary sources

These will be available in County Record Offices, libraries and other repositories such as the Nottingham University Library, Department of Manuscripts & Special Collections. See the East Midlands section of [www.mytimemachine.co.uk/archives.htm](http://www.mytimemachine.co.uk/archives.htm) for links to archives in the region, and check their websites for online searchable catalogues.

### Advertisements

In newspapers, journals, magazines, trade directories and other publications. These may cover cooking equipment; food products and ingredients; health benefits claimed for different products; cafes and restaurants; gardening, and much more besides. It may also be possible to track changes in advertisements for the same products over a period of time, to see how they might change – and consider why. Needless to say, advertisements are designed to sell products, and their claims cannot be taken at face value!

### Catalogues

These might range from household and kitchen equipment and tableware to gardening catalogues, and can provide information about new innovations or trends, changes in materials and design, and prices. There may be some in your own collections or in local archives and libraries.

### Census returns

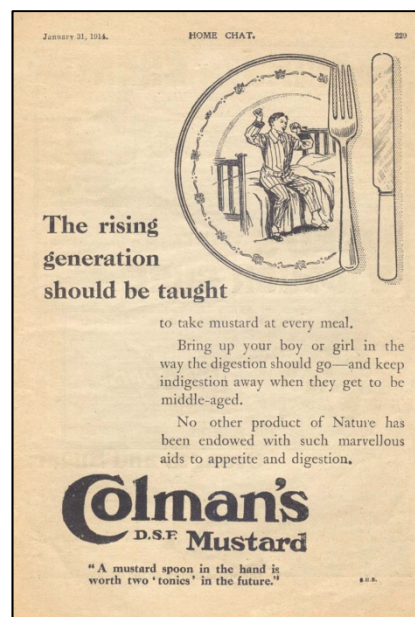
From these you can identify occupations relating to food including agriculture, cooks and kitchen maids, bakers and confectioners, butchers and a whole range of others. This could be a vast and complex area of research without a specific focus – so you could perhaps look at one village over a period of time to see what occupations can be identified, and if and how these change; or at one or two streets in an urban area, maybe a main central shopping street and one in a residential area. Census returns are available in local record offices, or through online subscription services such as [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). The 1881 Census is also available free online at [www.1881-census.co.uk/](http://www.1881-census.co.uk/). The 1901 Census is available at [www.1901censusonline.com/](http://www.1901censusonline.com/) - an initial search is free but you then need to purchase credits to access the full entries. The same applies to the 1911 Census which is available online at [www.1911census.co.uk/](http://www.1911census.co.uk/).

### Childcare manuals

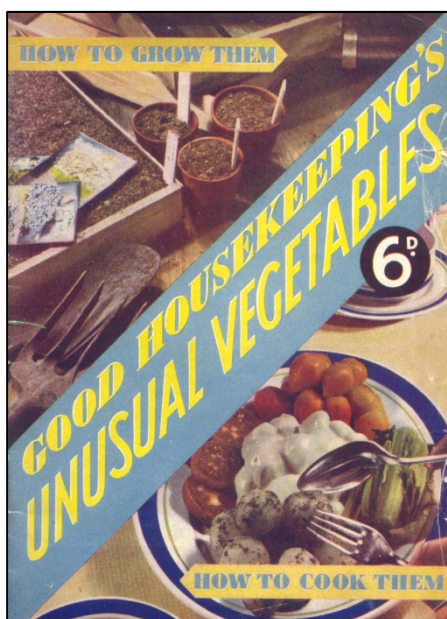
These usually include advice about feeding infants and children as well as other aspects of childcare. You may find older editions of these in libraries, second hand bookshops or charity shops, as well as local or national archives.

### Company records

It is worth checking to see if there are any records of companies engaged in the production of food and/or drink, including breweries. These may have been deposited in local archives, or the company may have its own archive to which it is willing to provide access.



## Cookery books & manuals of household management



You will find these in libraries, second hand bookshops and charity shops – and in local archives. For instance, the Derbyshire Record Office has a handwritten manuscript by Mary Swanwick from 1743 with over 100 recipes for meat, poultry, vegetables, savouries, puddings and drinks. This includes recipes for carrot fritters, almond butter, quince ‘marmalade’ and sausages, amongst many others. See [www.culture24.org.uk/history+%26+heritage/time/art31905](http://www.culture24.org.uk/history+%26+heritage/time/art31905) for more information. Nottinghamshire Libraries have also produced a book of 18<sup>th</sup> century recipes, *In Grandmother Gell's Kitchen* by Carol Barstow (Nottinghamshire County Council, 2009). There is a brief guide to 19<sup>th</sup> century cookery books at [www.thecooksguide.com/articles/cookbooks.html](http://www.thecooksguide.com/articles/cookbooks.html). *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* is an obvious source, and is available online at [www.mrsbeeton.com/](http://www.mrsbeeton.com/).

## Diaries/autobiographies

There may be entries in these relating to various aspects of food, including gardening, shopping, dining or hosting dinner parties, or to the difficulties of making ends meet – depending on the social class of the writer.

## Directories

Trade directories such as *Kelly's* and *Wright's* can be very useful in identifying food-related occupations and companies, ranging from farmers, cow and pig keepers and other agricultural occupations, to butchers, bakers, grocers, greengrocers and other shopkeepers, companies involved in food processing, and those engaged in less obvious aspects such as suppliers of sausage skins, food dyes and additives. Public houses, cafes and restaurants will also be listed. Directories are particularly useful for tracking changes over a period of time. You should be able to find a good range of directories in local studies libraries and record offices. Some are also available online at <http://www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/>.

## Etiquette manuals

These can give some insights into social customs at different times, in terms of what to serve (or not to serve...), how the table should be set, what to wear for a dinner party and so on. There is a brief overview at [www.thecooksguide.com/articles/dining-etiquette.html](http://www.thecooksguide.com/articles/dining-etiquette.html) which gives some examples.

## Film

Check the website of the Media Archive for Central England (MACE) which can be searched by location, titles and keywords - [www.macearchive.org/](http://www.macearchive.org/). There may be other visual material deposited in local record offices.

REFRESHMENT ROOMS, RESTAURANTS, CAFES &c.
Adnett Mrs. Lizzie, Kibworth Harcourt, Leicester
Barber Hy. Jn. 58 Main st. Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough
Barker Mrs. Kate, 149 Loughborough rd. Mountsorrel, Loughborough
Beer Arth. 3 Silver st. Whitwick, Leicester
Boden Mrs. Annie E. Kirby Muxloe, Leicester
Bowler Alfd. Derby rd. Kegworth, Derby
Bradshaw Mrs. E. 6 Beacon rd. Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough
Broadway Tea Rooms, Leicester rd. Dunton Bassett, Rugby
Brookes Mrs. Derby rd. Kegworth, Derby
Carrara J. 58 Humberstone gt. Leicester
Coleman Louis K. Leicester rd. Rothley, Leicester
Continental Café, 27-29 Humberstone gate, Leicester
Cooper Wilfred Sharman, 263 Melton rd. Belgrave, Leicester
Copper Kettle Café (The), 16 Burton st. Melton Mowbray
Cowling Mrs. Alice Eliza, Dunton Bassett, Rugby
Dakin C. 25 Scalford rd. Melton Mowbray
Davie Miss Clara, 47 Aylestone rd. Leicester

### Local authority records

Local authorities were – and still are – responsible for various services relating to food and drink: regulation of markets, for instance, and of licensing of premises selling alcohol. Medical Officer of Health Reports are often a very good source of information about food adulteration, or diseases such as bovine tuberculosis transmitted from infected milk or meat. You will be able to access these records in local records offices. You need to identify the relevant authority – these do change over



time – and then look at the records produced by different committees.

### Newspapers

In addition to advertisements (see above) these can be a valuable source of information about food-related topics. Items may range from reports of banquets, dinners and other social events to those of meetings of trade organisations such as Licensed Victuallers' Associations or Master Bakers, or trade unions covering food and drink trades; gardening columns; women's pages or columns with recipes; biographies or obituaries of local manufacturers or traders, and much more besides.

Researching in newspapers can be very time-consuming (and distracting, as they are full of other eye-catching but unrelated items!), so it can be much easier if you can identify at least an approximate date for the sort of material you are looking for. It is also well worth browsing a few newspapers from different years to get a sense of what they cover and to see what you find. They will be available in local record offices, usually on microfilm. See also the Libraries & Information East Midlands Newsplan website at <http://newsplan.liem.org.uk/> which allows you to search a list of newspapers in the East Midlands and identifies where you can access them. Some newspapers are also available online through the British Library – some are free but a charge is made for access to others. See <http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/> for more information.

### Photographs

Check your local record office to see what has been deposited. It will vary from place to place, but there may well be something that relates to your particular area of research. The Collections Trust's website *Culture Grid* has many images from museums of food-related artefacts, including paintings – go to [www.culturegrid.org.uk/](http://www.culturegrid.org.uk/) and search by keyword.



### Oral histories

Oral histories can be a rich source of information about various aspects of food, from childhood memories (sweets and school dinners, for example) to those of people involved in processing or selling it. Interviews with migrant communities often include material on cultural aspects of food such as festivals and religious celebrations; or they may refer to difficulties in obtaining their usual diet, and the growth of local shops and/or restaurants to cater for them. There are a number of repositories of oral history recordings in the East Midlands, including record offices, libraries and museums. The East Midlands Oral History Archive at the University of Leicester, which currently covers the counties of



Leicestershire and Rutland and the city of Leicester, has an online searchable catalogue at [www.le.ac.uk/emoha/catalogue](http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/catalogue). It also has information about other oral history collections in the East Midlands, including details of their location and how to contact them, at [www.le.ac.uk/emoha/emoha/emidlandsprojects.html](http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/emoha/emidlandsprojects.html).



Some organisations have produced publications based on oral histories – see Fine D., *Seasons to Taste: field to table past & present – a story of food in the Peak District* (Farming Life Centre, 2008) for an example. The Northamptonshire Black History Association has an online searchable catalogue at [www.northants-black-history.org.uk/search.asp](http://www.northants-black-history.org.uk/search.asp) which includes oral histories and documentary sources. See also its booklet *From Clanger to Coriander: celebrating diverse food*

*heritage in Northamptonshire* (May 2007). This has sections on the role that food plays in celebrations and rites of passage, along with recipes from a range of different countries including Scotland, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, India and Guinea West Africa.

The British Library National Life Stories (NLS) project has a number of collections relating to food and drink, including *Food: from source to salespoint* (C821); *Tesco: an oral history* (C1087); and *An Oral History of the Wine Trade* (C1088). There is a full list of the NLS projects at [www.bl.uk/nls](http://www.bl.uk/nls) along with details of how to access them.

### **Records of institutions such as workhouses, prisons and schools**

Personal records from these are often subject to a lengthy period of closure, but items such as minutes of meetings, accounts and order books are usually accessible to the public, along with records of the dietaries of prisons and workhouses for different classes of inmates. There is a useful section on 'Workhouse Food' on The Workhouse website at [www.workhouses.org.uk/](http://www.workhouses.org.uk/).

### **Trade organisations & trade unions**

You may be able to find records of trade associations such as licensed victuallers, bakers and butchers or shopkeepers in your local archives, or those of trade unions covering food and drink-related occupations. Check the websites of existing trade associations and unions to see if they have a section on their history.

### **Women's magazines**

An obvious source for recipes, advertisements and other food-related items, and useful to compare changing tastes, advice and attitudes over time. The Women's Library at London Metropolitan University has an extensive collection of these – see the online catalogue at [www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary/searchthecollections/home.cfm](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary/searchthecollections/home.cfm).



## 2. Secondary sources

There is a vast number of books, pamphlets, articles and other sources on the history of food – not to mention websites. Some of the latter are identified above in relation to specific areas of research, but are otherwise too numerous to list. However, one that might be useful is the ‘Currency Converter’ on The National Archives website at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/). This will allow you to convert the price of commodities in the past to current values.

Below is just a small selection of books and articles that might be useful, both general sources and some that are more specific to the East Midlands. Most will also have a bibliography that will lead you to other sources.

### General

... *Eating for Victory: reproductions of official Second World War instruction leaflets* (Michael O’Mara Books Ltd, 2007)

Bish M., *Eat Well, Waste Less: an A-Z guide to using up leftovers* (Green Books, 2009)

Burnett J., *Britain Eats Out: a social history of eating out in England from 1830 to the present* (Longman, 2004)



Colquhoun K., *Taste: the story of Britain through its cooking* (Bloomsbury, 2007)

Colquhoun K., ‘Poverty’s larder’, *Who Do You Think You Are?* (BBC magazine, November 2007) – re working class food across the centuries

Collingham L., *The Taste of War: World War Two & the battle for food* (Allen Lane, 2011)

Counihan C. & Van Esterik P. ed., *Food & Culture: a reader* (Routledge, 2008)

Davidson A., *The Oxford Companion to Food* (Oxford University Press, 2006)

Day I., *Ice Cream: a history* (Shire Books, 2011)

Higginbotham P., *The Prison Cookbook* (The History Press, 2010)

Higginbotham P., *The Workhouse Cookbook* (Tempus Publishing, 2008)

Langlands A., Ginn P. & Goodman R., *Victorian Farm* (Pavilion, 2008)

Langlands A., Goodman R. & Ginn P., *Edwardian Farm* (Pavilion, 2010)

Mabey R., *Food For Free: a fantastic feast of plants & folklore* (HarpurCollins, 2004 edn)

Masset C., *Tea & Tea Drinking* (Shire Books, 2010)

McLean J., *The Compendium of Nosh* (John Murray, 2006)

Panayi P., *Spicing up Britain: the multicultural history of British food* (Reaktion Books, 2010)

Phelps T., *The British Milkman* (Shire Books, 2010)

Spencer C., *British Food: an extraordinary thousand years of history* (Grub Street, 2004)

Walker J., *Discovering Words in the Kitchen - origins of food names* (Shire Discovering, 2010)

## East Midlands

Andrews I., *Traditional Northamptonshire Recipes* (W.D. Wharton, 2000)

Brown C., *Leicester Voices* (Tempus, 2002), Ch 8: 'Shopping'

Cope-Faulkner, Healey H. & Lane T., *Wide Horizons: a history of South Holland's landscape & people* (South Holland District Council, 2010)

Crust L. ed., *Ration Books and Rabbit Pie: Lincolnshire folk remember the war* (Society for Lincolnshire History & Archaeology, 2008)

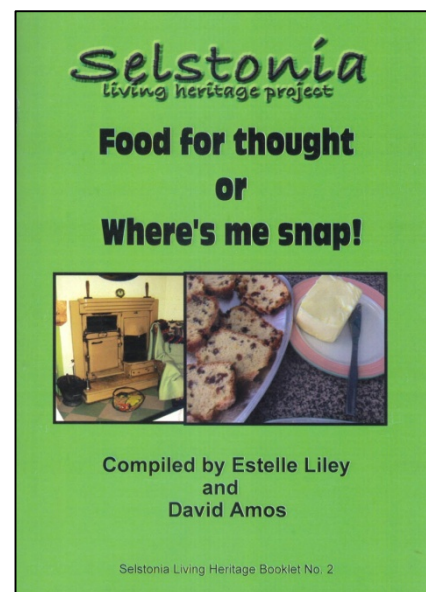
Fine D., *Seasons to Taste: field to table past & present – a story of food in the Peak District* (Farming Life Centre, 2008)

Lilley E. & Amos D., *Food for Thought: or where's me snap? – recipes from a Nottinghamshire coal mining community* (Selstonia Living History Project, 2010)

Hickman T., *The History of Stilton Cheese* (Haynes Publishing, 2001)

Northamptonshire Black History Association, *From Clanger to Coriander: celebrating diverse food heritage in Northamptonshire* (May 2007)

Stephens S., 'Food, glorious food', *Museums Journal* (February 2007, p28-31) – re developing an exhibition about food in the Fens



With thanks to Leicester City Libraries for permission to reproduce the corner shop photograph.