

22nd annual meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists 31st of August – 4th of September 2016, Vilnius, Lithuania

Food choice and alimentary practices: from meals to diet and from site to region – the difficulties and benefits of examinations of diet and dietary practices

Introduction:

The development of cooking and food preparation practices transform raw ingredients into edible food. This transformation is not only chemical, but also cultural. It forms part of what the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss suggested that sets humans apart from apes and makes us a “cooking animal” (1964; *Le Cru et le cuit*). These complex actions (cooking and cultural assimilation) may take two forms, those which leave traces to be found in the archaeological deposits and those actions which may leave no physical trace in the archaeological record.

When examining preserved food remains on a supranational level (crossing two or more current national boundaries) the environmental record within Europe has facilitated some successful studies for some regions and periods (Livarda and van der Veen 2008; van der Veen, Livarda and Hill 2008). The evidence of preparation techniques such as traces of knives, hearths and grindstones, is supported by the remains of flora and fauna that are indicative of food choice and alimentary practices. Later, from the historic period onwards, we have textual documents which can add much detail in the form of economic documents, recipes, and personal observations on the context of food consumption.

But to what extent are these practices limited to different periods, cultures, peoples and places? And to what extent do modern political boundaries, differences in philosophical or methodological approaches to archaeological remains limit our ability to create pan-European narratives on the nature of human food use from different periods?

This session aims to explore how food choice and alimentary practices in Europe changed through time, but also how these changes may be linked to culture, technological innovations, shifting borders and the rise and fall of civilizations. The session organizers encourage researchers who have successfully studied different cultures or periods, passing existing cultural or political borders (e.g. including material from two or more different cultures or European countries) or comparing rural environments to towns to submit a proposal, as well as those researchers who have encountered difficulties when trying to operate projects which cross cultural or political boundaries.

Possible research topics to address:

- What food types are ‘invisible’ in the environmental record, and what can we do to address this?
- Dictated changes in crop cultivation in regions under foreign occupation
- The effect of famine on the choices of crop cultivation
- Reconstructed food distribution routes
- Trends in food and medicine
- The assimilation of “new” or “exotic” foods in periods with large migrations
- Town and rural hinterland relationships
- The influence of the “culinary revolution”, the import of overseas products in the 17th and 18th century, on the European city diet.
- The industrial revolution and its impact on the nature of food production.

Practical information:

The organization welcomes papers in English. Candidates are invited to submit a title and abstract of 300 words maximum before February 15th 2016. The abstract, accompanied by the affiliation and address data of the candidate, can be uploaded via the registration system for papers/posters at the conference website: <http://eaavilnius2016.lt/>.

Candidates will be informed regarding the acceptance of their proposals by the 15th of March.

Session organizers:

Dr. Julian Wiethold, Institute national de recherches archéologiques preventives (Inrap), Direction interrégionale Grand Est nord, Laboratoire archéobotaniques, 12, rue de Méric, F-57063 Metz cedex 2, julian;wiethold@inrap.fr

Merit Hondelink, MA, Archeodienst Noord bv, Osloweg 95, 9723 BK Groningen
mmahondelink@gmail.com

Don O'Meara, Durham University, Dawson Building, Department of Archaeology, South Road, Durham, DH1 3LE