



## Ancient Egyptian Food By Janet Wood [www.ancientnile.co.uk](http://www.ancientnile.co.uk)

### **EGYPTIAN FOOD:**

The Ancient land of Egypt was one of the most fertile valleys in the world and supported one of the world's greatest civilisations. Rich soil, provided by the river's annual flooding, deposited thick silt over the land providing sometimes two, or even three, harvests a year. Herodotus, a famous Greek historian, once wrote that Egypt was the Gift of the Nile.

Bread and onion were the staple diet of most Egyptians. The average kitchen was usually situated at the rear of the house, or on the roof. Mostly it was in the open, but may have been partially shaded. Egyptian food was cooked in simple clay pots, using wooden utensils and stored in jars.

Beer was the national drink and was also made from barley. To improve the taste the Egyptians would add spices and it was usually stored in labelled clay jars. The importance of beer to the ancient Egyptians should not be underestimated as it was esteemed so highly that it was regularly offered as libation to the gods.

Wine for the upper classes was made from local vineyards. After the harvest was gathered, the workers would tread the grapes, and the juice collected. Other wines were made from pomegranates or plums.

Even the poor people of Ancient Egypt ate a fairly healthy diet including vegetables, fruit and fish. But it was only the larger plantations that grazed animals, mainly because the average farmer had to use his limited land to grow crops. Poultry was mostly roasted for the table, but meat was mainly the privilege of the rich. Seasoning included; salt, pepper, cumin, coriander, sesame, dill, fennel, fenugreek, seeds etc.

All of the big festivals of the year were religious and organised by the temple priests. The biggest of these was the festival of the god Amun that lasted a whole month. Music, dancers, singers, acrobats and jugglers would accompany the religious procession. Much feasting and partying went on with a great deal of wine and beer being consumed. There would be; music, singing, story telling and the younger members of the family would dance to entertain the guests.

Although the ancient people did not write down their recipes, or use cook books, the ingredients needed to make most of the dishes are well known, many of which are still used in Egypt today.

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