

Perna, Fici et Mel

Ham, Figs and Honey – a Roman feast in Frome

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The Food Frome project started in 2005 to investigate and promote food heritage in the Frome area. In 2008 we published several booklets including one on Roman food (as described in *Camertonia* 2009) and we produced a film of a 17th Century feast. Recently we have continued the Roman theme and we are currently working on a film about some aspects of Roman food in Somerset. The central event of the film is a Roman meal which took place in Frome on Saturday 12th June 2010. The guests included members of Food Frome and Ceri and Shaun Lambdin of BACAS; the cooks were Diane Wells, Susan Hayward and Fred Rolfe of Food Frome.

Our menu was designed to include dishes that might have been eaten by well off Romano-British farmers when the Frome Hoard was buried. The recipes are mainly based on locally produced ingredients but included a few imported luxuries such as olive oil, wine, dates, pine nuts and black pepper.

During the meal, which the guests thoroughly enjoyed, we were entertained with a reading of an anonymous Roman poem dating from AD70.

Despite the popular belief that the Romans used fish sauce (*garum*) in everything, we did not use it in any of our final recipes. Most of the ingredients used in the meal are readily available today but we did grow some special items such as rue (a bitter herb) and white carrots (orange carrots are a relatively recent introduction).

In addition to the meal and its preparation we have also filmed at Upper Row Farm including the Roman Garden, the Blacklands excavation and the *Deva Victrix* Roman soldiers. We investigated spelt growing at Roger Saul's Sharpham Park estate near Glastonbury and spelt milling at Burcott Mill. We have interviewed Ron Penn of the Charterhouse Environs Research Team, Claire Ryley the designer of the Roman Garden at Upper Row Farm, a local potter who has made reproduction Roman pottery and BACAS' own Les Hayes. Our filming is now complete and editing is under way.

The first showing of the film will be at the Frome Festival 2011, 6.30pm at the Corner House (previously the Lamb Inn), Frome on 11th July, tickets are £8 including tasters. We are hoping that the Corner House will feature a Roman menu for the evening. We will have DVDs for sale and video clips will also be available on the Food Frome website (www.foodfrome.org.uk).

Figure 1
Some of the guests and cooks at the Food Frome dinner



ROMAN FEAST

STARTER

Hypotrimma

A fruit and cheese dip made from soft cheese, wine, dates, and pine kernels served with carrot and cucumber crudités.

Bread baked in a clibanus

An upturned earthenware pot upon which coals are heaped.

MAIN COURSE

Perna

Baked ham and figs in a spelt flour and olive oil pastry accompanied by cymas (cabbage) cooked with roasted cumin, sweet wine and herbs, pultes - a lentil potage with leeks and herbs, and peas and broad beans.

DESSERT

Spelt semolina, wild strawberries and nuts

Served with warm honey and black pepper and dates stuffed with almonds served with salt.