

Victorian Diet

Rich and poor Victorians ate quite different food. Rich children would have eaten very well with lots of choice. For poorer children there would have been fewer options. Farmers tended to eat better with a diet of meat, vegetables and fresh milk.



Rich Victorian food...



compared to poor Victorian choice of food

Popular foods included beef, mutton, port, bacon, cheese, eggs, bread, potatoes, rice, porridge oats, milk, vegetables, flour, sugar, treacle, jam and tea.

Breakfast might consist of stoneground bread smeared with dripping or lard, with a large bunch of watercress.

There were plenty of cheap, seasonal vegetables to be found in the markets, including onions, cabbage, leeks, carrots and turnips. The main fruits were apples in the winter and cherries in the summer.

The Victorians also ate lots of nuts, such as chestnuts and hazelnuts, which were often roasted and bought from street-corner sellers.

Meat was relatively expensive. If you lived near the sea you would probably have eaten a lot of fish. Herrings, sprats, eels, oysters, mussels, cockles and whelks, were all popular, as were cod and haddock.

For fresh food you would have to eat vegetables that were in season (growing at that time) unless they had been pickled or preserved. With the invention of the railways and steam ships food was moved around the country more easily and imported from other countries. This meant that there was a wider range of food available.

Tinned meat was available from the 1860s (160 years ago). At first, this was mainly fat with just a few chunks of meat. It was a cheaper option for poorer people as it was less than half the price of ordinary meat. By the late 1800s there was a wide range of tinned food available.

You could buy lots of unusual foods from stalls in the street. These included rice milk, ginger beer and sheep trotters.



Activity Suggestions

Hold a Victorian Picnic



You could play some of the playground games while sharing some Victorian food with your family.

We have added a few recipes that you could try.

Make sure you ask for help from an adult to ensure that you are safe.

Make a family cookbook



Think about what your favourite meals are.

Can you make a family cookbook?

Write down the recipes and draw pictures to go with them.

You will need to make a list of all the ingredients you need and quantities.

Then list the equipment that you need.

Write detailed instructions to help someone make the meal.

Finally, try out your instructions and see how the food tastes.



Victorian Recipes

Lemonade

Ingredients - 3 large lemons and sugar

Equipment - Potato peeler or zester, knife and chopping board, pan with a lid, sieve, fork, or lemon juicer.



1. Remove the peel very thinly from the lemons using a potato peeler or zester.
2. Put the peel into a heavy saucepan and cover with 3 cm of water.
3. Put a lid on the pan and put it on a low heat. Make sure that it doesn't boil, or your lemonade will taste bitter.
4. Leave your pan to cool and then strain the liquid into a jug, taking out all the bits.
5. Cut the lemon in half. Squeeze the juice from the lemon into the liquid and add sugar to taste. This is the cordial.
6. When you want a drink of lemonade mix some of your cordial with water. You can use sparkling water if you would like fizzy lemonade.

Pastry Sandwiches

Ingredients - Puff pastry, jam, 1 egg white, icing sugar,

Equipment - Knife, baking sheet, rolling pin, pastry brush, sieve,



1. Preheat the oven to 170°C (150°C for fan assisted ovens)/Gas Mark 3.
2. Roll out your pastry so that it is thin. Put half of it on a baking sheet.
3. Spread jam all over the pastry.
4. Put the other half of the pastry on the top.
5. Press the edges of the pastry together all around the outside.
6. Brush it with egg white and then sieve a sprinkling of icing sugar over the top.
7. Bake for 20 – 25 minutes.
8. Leave it to cool and then cut your pastry into finger-sandwich sized strips (about 3 cm wide). You can pile them up to make a pretty pile of sandwiches.



Victorian Food

Apple Cake

Ingredients –250 grams of puff pastry, 450 grams of apple (after it has been cut up), 60 grams of sugar.

Equipment –rolling pin, vegetable peeler, knife and chopping board, apple corer (if available),fork, baking tray



1. Preheat the oven to 170°C (150°C for fan assisted ovens)/Gas Mark 3.
2. Divide the pastry into two equal sized pieces.
3. Roll each piece out into a circle (about 20 cm in diameter). Put one on a baking tray.
4. Peel the apples and take out the core.
5. Slice the apples thinly.
6. Lay the apples on to one of the pastry circles leaving about a 3 cm gap at the edge.
7. Sprinkle the sugar evenly over the apples. Keep a small amount to put on the top.
8. Dampen the edge of the pastry with a small amount of water.
9. Put the other pastry circle on top and press the edges together. You can push a pattern into the edge using a fork if you would like.
10. Make a few short cuts in the middle of the top with a knife to let the steam escape during cooking.
11. Brush the top with a small amount of water and then sprinkle the remaining sugar on the top.
12. Bake for 20 – 25 minutes.

Cottage Soup

Ingredients – 1 carrot, 1 onion, 1 small turnip, 1 stalk of celery, 950 ml of stock, 30 grams of butter, 30 grams of plain flour, dried mixed herbs, salt and pepper to taste.

Equipment – knife, chopping board, pan, blender/sieve, wooden spoon



1. Cut up all of the vegetables into small chunks (about 2 cm cubes).
2. Melt the butter in a pan.
3. Fry the vegetables in the butter on a medium heat for 10 minutes.
4. Reduce the heat and add the flour. Stir it in along with the stock, herbs and salt and pepper.
5. Increase the heat and boil for 20 – 30 minutes.
6. Blend your soup using a blender or by pushing it through a sieve. Reheat to serve.