



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Feeding Rome: Food supply, trade and consumption in an ancient metropolis

Sala, G.

Citation

Sala, G. (2023, December 14). *Feeding Rome: Food supply, trade and consumption in an ancient metropolis*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3673445>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3673445>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Feeding Rome

Food supply, trade and consumption
in an ancient metropolis

Guido Sala

Cover image: tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces the baker (1st century BCE)

ISBN: 978-94-93353-37-4

NUR 683

© G. Sala 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form by any means, without the prior permission of the author.

Feeding Rome

Food supply, trade and consumption
in an ancient metropolis

Proefschrift
ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op donderdag 14 december 2023
klokke 11.15 uur
door

Guido Sala

Promotor: Prof. dr. L. de Ligt
Copromotor: Dr. L.E. Tacoma

Promotiecommissie:

Prof. dr. J. Zangenberg

Dr. K. Beerden

Prof. dr. L. O. Fresco – Wageningen University & Research

Prof. dr. C. Holleran – Exeter University

Contents

1 Introduction.....	1
2 Sources.....	17
2.1 Introduction.....	17
2.2 The agronomists	18
2.3 The encyclopaedic work of Pliny	23
2.4 Sources on cuisine and recipes	25
2.5 Medical texts	30
2.6 Other literary sources.....	32
2.7 The Edict of Diocletian.....	36
2.8 Material evidence	39
2.9 Conclusions	46
3 The components of the Roman diet and the evolution of their use	49
3.1 Introduction.....	49
3.2 Food items consumed by the Romans.....	50
3.2.1 Main foods.....	50
3.2.2 Complementary foods	87
3.3 Conclusions	90
4 The evolution of the Roman eating culture.....	93
4.1 Introduction.....	93
4.2 High and low cuisines in the Roman eating culture	95
4.3 The roots of the Romans eating culture	99
4.3.1 Etruscan roots.....	100
4.3.2 Greek influences	103
4.4 Roman meals: structure, evolution and social function.....	107
4.5 Republican eating culture.....	113
4.6 Eating during the Imperial period	119
4.7 Conclusions	124
5 Obtaining food in ancient Rome	127
5.1 Introduction.....	127
5.2 The size of the Roman economy.....	129
5.3 State interventions in the Roman economy	130
5.4 Food trade locations and food markets.....	134

5.5 Obtaining foods partly subject to state control	142
5.5.1 Grain, bread and cereal products	143
5.5.2 Olive oil	155
5.5.3 Meat	159
5.5.4 Wine	164
5.6 Economic relevance of state food distributions	167
5.7 Obtaining foods free of state control	168
5.7.1 Legumes, vegetables and fruits	169
5.7.2 Fish	172
5.7.3 Dairy products	172
5.7.4 Salt	173
5.8 Variations in food prices between the 3 rd century BCE and the 3 rd century CE	174
5.9 Conclusions	176
6 Eating patterns in Roman society	179
6.1 Introduction	179
6.2 Basics of nutrition science for historians	180
6.3 Eating patterns in the Italian countryside	188
6.3.1 Rural slaves	188
6.3.2 Peasants	191
6.4 Eating patterns in the city of Rome	198
6.4.1 Elite	198
6.4.2 Skilled labourers and entrepreneurs	203
6.4.3 Ordinary Romans and the poor	209
6.4.4 Urban slaves	219
6.4.5 Children, elderly people and women	222
6.5 Conclusions	230
7 Food baskets for different income classes	233
7.1 Introduction	233
7.2 Comparative methodology to reconstruct food baskets	233
7.3 Food baskets for different income classes	241
7.4 Estimating the value of the food consumed in ancient Rome	248
7.5 Conclusions	251
8 Conclusions	253
Bibliography	259

Appendix: food items reported by André (L'alimentation et la cuisine à Rome)	285
Tab. 1. Cereals.....	285
Tab. 2. 'Legumes' (<i>Legumina</i>).....	287
Tab. 3. Roots.....	289
Tab. 4. Bulbs.....	290
Tab. 5. 'Asparaguses' (shoots and sprouts).....	291
Tab. 6. 'Artichokes' (flowers and parts of flowers).	292
Tab. 7. Salads (green parts of plants eaten raw).	293
Tab. 8. 'Spinaches' (green parts of cultivated or wild plants prepared in soups).....	294
Tab. 9. Botanical fruits presently considered vegetables.....	296
Tab. 10. Mushrooms, truffles.....	297
Tab. 11. Fruits.	298
Tab. 12. Nuts.	302
Tab. 13. Molluscs.....	303
Tab. 14. Crustaceans.	306
Tab. 15. Salt water fishes.....	307
Tab. 16. Undetermined salt water fishes.....	312
Tab. 17. Freshwater fishes.....	313
Tab. 18. Undetermined freshwater fishes.....	314
Tab. 19. Hunted birds.	315
Tab. 20. Undetermined hunted birds.	317
Tab. 21. Bred birds.	318
Tab. 22. Hunted mammals.....	320
Tab. 23. Bred mammals.....	323
Tab. 24. Animal products.....	325
Nederlandse samenvatting.....	327
Dankwoord.....	333
Curriculum vitae.....	335

