

FROM FIELD TO TABLE: VISUAL IMAGES OF FOOD IN THE WESTERN

ROMAN EMPIRE

by

JOAN ROMANOSKY TUCKER

(Under the Direction of Robert I. Curtis)

ABSTRACT

Although studies have been made of visual representations of food in Greek and Etruscan art, no comparable study exists for the art of Rome. This study focuses on visual images of food production and consumption in the western Roman empire of the first through fourth centuries AD and correlates the images with the ancient literary sources. Chapter One focuses on rural life, Chapter Two on the city, and Chapter Three on the home. The fact that the Roman elite (in Italy and the provinces) frequently chose to represent food in mosaics and frescoes found in their homes and shops, as well as on funeral monuments, is evidence that food was important to them as a symbol of status. Romans could proclaim their *Romanitas* as providers of food for the vast empire, while at the same time displaying their wealth.

INDEX WORDS: Roman technology, Roman agriculture, Food, Mosaics, Roman painting, Roman art, Roman provinces, Transportation, *Xenia*

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DEDICATION

To Kevin, with love.

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INTRODUCTION

During the first through fourth centuries AD, it was common practice for Romans in Italy and throughout the vast empire to display their wealth by means of the paintings and mosaics with which they decorated their homes.¹ Scholars, such as Roger Ling and Katherine Dunbabin, have written numerous books and articles describing either paintings or mosaics of this era, often focusing on a particular region of the empire.² Although historians have chosen to discuss the social aspects of food and dining among the Romans during this period, scholars have not traced visual representations of the entire process of food production and consumption from field to table.³ Burkhard Fehr and Simonetta de Marinis have provided discussions of food and dining in Greek and Etruscan art, but no one has combined the two concepts into a single discussion with regard to the art of Rome.⁴ Emily Gowers focused on literary representations of food in her book *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature*, but she presented no images of food in paintings or mosaics as part of her discussion.⁵ To fill this lacuna, this study collects and analyzes depictions of the planting and harvesting of crops in the fields, the transport of

¹All dates given in this paper are AD unless otherwise specified.

²Roger Ling, *Roman Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Katherine Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa. Studies in Iconography and Patronage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

³Peter Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴Burkhard Fehr, *Orientalische und Griechische Gelage* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1971); Simonetta de Marinis, *La tipologia del banchetto nell'arte etrusca arcaica* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1961).

⁵Emily Gowers. *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

goods to mills or shops, and the acquisition of food for consumption in the home. These representations, found in shops, homes, and tombs, combined with written evidence from the period, have much to say about economic life and social status in the imperial era.

In the world of ancient Rome, agrarian practices, as well as the rituals of food gathering, preparation, and consumption, formed dominant themes in everyday political and social life. Government officials were concerned with the procurement of grain and oil, along with their prices and distribution, and even appointed officials to arrange contracts for the supply of grain needed to feed the estimated one million people in the city of Rome itself. During the Republican period, land reforms were constantly being submitted to the Senate and prompted the murders of public officials (for example, the Gracchi brothers in the second century BC) who wanted to take land from the owners of large *latifundia* and give it to the poorer farmers.⁶ In 22 BC, Augustus appointed a *praefectus annonae* from the equestrian ranks to supervise the grain supply of Rome.⁷ Food production and the management of farms were the topics of many "how-to" manuals written by men such as Cato, Columella, and Varro.⁸

By the first century AD, grain, wine, and olive oil were the most important food exports to Rome from Africa, Greece, Gaul, and Spain. Since members of the nobility living in the provinces and in Italy often kept both urban and rural homes, it would have been natural for them to employ artists to depict rural scenes in the public areas, such as

⁶Helen Jefferson Loane, *Industry and Commerce of the City of Rome (50 B.C. - 200 A.D.)* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938), 13-16.

⁷Dominic W. Rathbone, "Food Supply," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3^d ed., ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 604.

⁸Cato *de Agr.* passim; Columella *Rust.* passim; Varro *Rust.* passim.

dining rooms, of their city dwellings. In Thysdrus (El Djem, Tunisia), the House of Africa includes two second-century illustrations of the goddess Africa that exemplify the pride expressed by the provincial nobility in “being Roman” and providing food for the empire. The first pavement depicts the goddess surrounded by the four seasons, a visual reminder



Figure 1

that this was a fertile province that supplied much of Rome’s grain. The bust of Summer, in the right corner, is wreathed with sheaves of wheat, while Spring, Autumn, and Winter are crowned with flowers, grapes, and olives, respectively. In an adjoining room, is *Allegories of Rome and the Provinces* (Figure 1), a mosaic that includes a similar image of the goddess Africa. At the center of this pavement sits a female warrior dressed in Greco-roman garb and holding a lance, while her shield stands ready at her side. She is the

personification of Rome herself, mistress of the known world, a celestial sphere resting in her right hand. Surrounding her are allegories of six provinces, three of which are represented as portrait busts, three as standing figures. Africa, a bust in the lower left, is important not only for representing the location of the house, but also as a subtle reminder that the province was one of the granaries of Rome. Egypt, to the lower right, and Asia, above the image of Rome, were important as major influences on Rome's economy. One of the standing figures represents Spain with her olive branch, as a valuable exporter of oil to Rome. Another is Sicily, dressed in hunting garb with three feet behind her head to symbolize the *triskelis*, three points of the island. Sicily was significant as the oldest province and as another chief producer of grain; her nickname was the Island of Ceres. The third figure, extending a hand toward flames, cannot be identified, but in her right hand she holds a *patera* containing either embers or food for a sacrifice.⁹ Perhaps she is not a province at all, but instead a symbol of the eternal flame of Rome. Both pavements are expressions of the homeowner's pride in being part of the economic and political life of the empire.

Other mosaics found in Africa include rural activities such as milking, tilling, and threshing, and some portray the seasons with their accompanying routines.¹⁰ Pictorial calendars, found throughout Britain, Gaul, and North Africa, parallel the literary works of Cato, Varro, and Columella, and give the viewer a month-by-month account of farm life.¹¹

⁹Michèle Blanchard-Lemée et al., *Mosaics of Roman Africa: Floor Mosaics of Tunisia*, trans. Kenneth D. Whitehead (New York: George Braziller, 1996), 24-34. There is also a mosaic representing Africa, Egypt, Sicily, and Spain in Ostia, the harbor where essential foodstuffs from these provinces would have entered Italy en-route to Rome.

¹⁰See below, Figure 9.

¹¹Blanchard-Lemée, *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 47-49. See below, Figure 14.

Realistic representations of the processing of foodstuffs, including grapes and grain, are included on these calendars, as well as in scenes depicted in frescoes and on sculptural reliefs. Mosaics from Vienne (St.-Romaine-en-Gal, France) portray different methods of expressing the juice from grapes, including men treading grapes in a vat and operating a grape press.¹² The owners of the House of the Vettii in Pompeii (*Reg.* VI.xv.1) chose to depict in the *oecus* of their home a similar press, and in another scene from the same fresco, cupids are illustrated as millers who grind grain and bake bread. The relief from the tomb of Lucius Annius Octavius Valerianus shows the entire process of bread-making from the plowing of the fields to planting of the grain and baking of the loaves in an oven.¹³ These representations are realistic when compared with actual grape-presses, grain-mills, and ovens found at Pompeii and elsewhere in the empire.

Depictions of food were not limited to agricultural scenes, for throughout the Roman world, artists painted and carved images of grain, wine, and other foodstuffs being transported and delivered. A tomb painting found outside the Porta Laurentina in Ostia shows a ship, the *Isis Giminiana*, transporting grain.¹⁴ The prevalence of mosaic pavements of this type in the Piazzale delle Corporazioni in Ostia shows how important the grain supply and the proper measurement of grain were to the people of Rome. Public officials at Ostia contracted for grain, measured it, and made certain that it was properly distributed. This was necessary to guarantee an adequate food supply as well as a

¹²K. D. White, *Roman Farming* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970), Plates 56, 58. See below, Figure 23.

¹³See below, Figure 29.

¹⁴Russell Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 2^d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 294-95. See below, Figure 53.

"complacent electorate."¹⁵ In this square, mosaic floors and their accompanying inscriptions delineate the offices of shippers, longshoremen, and corn measurers. Once the grain had been transported from Ostia to Rome, the millers and bakers processed it for the people's use. The tomb of Eurysaces in Rome shows the delivery of grain to the bakery, the grinding of the grain in a donkey mill, the making of the dough, the baking of the bread, and the weighing and transporting of the loaves.¹⁶ Transportation of vegetables, farm produce, and wine are also the subjects of scenes found from North Africa to Germany.

Images of food sales can be found in both city and country settings. A sculpted tufa relief, found on the exterior of a shop at *Reg. VII.iv.16* in Pompeii, shows two men carrying a wine amphora that is supported between them on a long pole—an advertisement for a shop.¹⁷ Other advertisements include the fresco of fruits and vegetables for purchase in a *thermopolium* on the *Via di Diana* in Ostia.¹⁸ At the *Praedia* of Julia Felix in Pompeii, a large inn, a fresco shows buying and selling activity in the forum. Vendors in the image have set up temporary stands to display food for sale, and there is even a merchant selling pots and pans.¹⁹ In many funerary reliefs, women are portrayed

¹⁵Loane, *Industry and Commerce*, 154-55.

¹⁶J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 164. See below, Figure 58.

¹⁷Wilhelmina Jashemski, "A Pompeian Vinarius," *Classical Journal* 62 (October 1966): 196. See below, Figure 63.

¹⁸Gustav Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman City Life* (Edmonton, Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1982), 130-31. See below, Figure 67.

¹⁹Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1 (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas Brothers Publishers, 1979), 12. See below, Figure 80.

selling food items, and several funerary inscriptions confirm that it was a common practice for women to be engaged in the selling of food.²⁰

Inside the home, still-life paintings, known as *xenia*, were used to provide images of luxury and were associated with the exchange of gifts from host to guest, a custom adopted from the Greeks and considered to be a social and sacred obligation.²¹ In the Greek tradition, a guest (*xenos*) would be invited to eat with the family only on the first day of a visit. On succeeding days, the guest would be provided with the uncooked food with which he could prepare his own meals. These uncooked provisions were called the "stranger's portion" or *xenion*. Later the term was applied to still-life paintings and frescoes.²² In many houses these still-life mosaics were located around peristyle gardens and in rooms used for entertainment, such as *triclinia*. Dionysiac processions, sometimes in conjunction with the paintings of fish, birds, fruits, and vegetables, show the relationship between the gifts of the earth, the prosperity of the host, and the blessings of Dionysus, god of the vine.²³ Even the debris of a dinner was considered an appropriate subject for a mosaic.²⁴

For the Romans, art was not just a means of expressing preferences in home décor. While that aspect certainly was part of the charm of the art covering their floors, walls, and tombs, art was a way to display one's social status and to promote one's public

²⁰See below, Figures 71 and 72; CIL 6.9683, 9684.

²¹Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked, Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 52.

²²August Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, 2^d ed., trans. Francis W. Kelsey (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas Brothers Publishers, 1902), 474. See below, Figure 122.

²³Christine Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine: Roman Mosaics in the House of Dionysos*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 126-30.

²⁴See below, Figure 115.

image. Only twenty percent of the houses of Pompeii have mosaics, with over fifty percent of the houses in the top quartile of the city being so decorated.²⁵ In these homes, many of the mosaics and frescoes depicting foodstuffs are situated in the public areas of homes. These rooms, especially *triclinia*, were highly decorated in order to impress the guests or clients with the worth and prestige of the family. Therefore, still-life mosaics and frescoes of food—representations of the gifts and/or provisions given to one's guests—can generally be found in or near the *triclinium* to display the munificence and social status of the family. Images of luxury food items, such as asparagus and gazelles, abound, while there is not one instance of a bowl of *puls*, the porridge eaten by the masses. Shops and *caupona*e displayed their wares on shop signs painted or carved with images of items for sale. Again, there are many illustrations of vegetables, fruits, and wine, but no bowls of *puls*. The only basic food item portrayed in art seems to be grain, and the bread made from it, which was so important in sustaining life, and that was a major commodity throughout the Empire. Many of these representations are found in Ostia, Rome's harbor, where grain was unloaded from merchant ships for transportation to various areas in Italy. It was not uncommon for a Roman *pistor* (baker) to proclaim his importance in the chain of production and supply of bread to the people by displaying his profession on his sarcophagus or tomb. From the lavish mosaics of luxury items to the depictions of a staple such as bread, representations of food were omnipresent in a Roman's world,

²⁵Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "The Social Spread of Roman Luxury: Sampling Pompeii and Herculaneum," *The Papers of the British School at Rome* 58 (1990): 175-79.

beginning with décor of the home where he spent his days and ending with the funeral monument where he would spend eternity.

CHAPTER 1

IN THE COUNTRY

The production and processing of grain, wine, and other foodstuffs in Italy and the western provinces is the subject of many frescoes and mosaics found in those areas. The subject matter of these scenes ranges from depictions of agricultural laborers with their tools in the fields to the processing of grapes, olives, and grain by means of treading, pressing, and grinding, to the transporting of the products from the country to the city. Fishing activities (rural, though not agricultural) are also depicted in many scenes. This chapter will explore images of rural food production depicted in frescoes, mosaics, and sculptural reliefs, as well as analogous descriptions in the literature of ancient Roman writers. The discussion will begin with the plowing of the fields and sowing of seeds and will end with the processing of the harvest for home use or transport to market.

In the prologue of his *de Agri Cultura*, Cato the Elder (234-149 BC) states that a man described as *bonum agricolam bonumque colonum* (“a good farmer and a good settler”) had received the highest praise.²⁶ In this work Cato describes the workings of a farm and even explains in minute detail how a farm should be chosen, operated, staffed, and equipped. It is a “how-to” manual for a citizen who wished to purchase an estate and become a “gentleman farmer.” Cato includes in his discussion four types of farms: vineyards, olive groves, *villae suburbanae*, and mixed farms. *Villae suburbanae* (near the city as their name

²⁶Cato *Agr.* prologue. Unless otherwise specified, all English translations are my own.

suggests) could produce perishable items that would bring substantial profits to the owner. Cato suggests dessert grapes, olives, and figs, as well as raisins, orchard fruits, flowers and nuts as appropriate produce for these markets.²⁷

The authors Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BC) and Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella (first-century) also discuss the types of farms and their workings.²⁸ Although Book I of his *de Re Rustica* is similar in content to Cato's work and describes the raising of crops, Varro adds two more farm types to Cato's list. He devotes Book II to animal husbandry (*pecuaria*) and the large farm that included a purchased or rented *saltus* or "wooded pasture" for grazing flocks and herds. In Book III he discusses *pastio villatica* or "villa husbandry," which included *ornithones* ("aviaries"), *leporaria* ("hare-warrens"), and *piscinae* ("fishponds") to provide luxury items for the tables of the wealthy. Although there were risks involved in this type of farming because of the changing whims of wealthy Romans in planning their banquets (both public and private), the enterprise could be very lucrative. In his *de Re Rustica* Columella touted mixed farming as the perfect model and decried large estates that would decay from lack of supervision.²⁹

This interest in farming and rural life was not confined to agricultural handbooks but can also be found in the work of satirists who denigrated the evils of the big city while praising country life. Writing in 30 BC after receiving his Sabine farm from his patron Maecenas, Horace says, "Once I have removed myself from the city into the mountains and into my refuge, neither evil ambition destroys me nor the oppressive south wind nor

²⁷White, *Roman Farming*, 93-94. See also Astin, Alan E. *Cato the Censor*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.

²⁸Varro *Rust.* 2-3; Columella *Rust.* passim.

²⁹Columella *Rust.* 1.3.12.

the business of untimely death,” *ubi me in montes et in arcem ex urbe removi, . . . nec mala me ambitio perdit nec plumbeus auster Autumnus gravis, Libitinae quaestus acerbae*.³⁰ At the end of the satire, he tells the fable of the country mouse and the city mouse to illustrate the evils of the city. At first the country mouse is attracted to the glamor of city life and the offerings of a lavish meal, but as soon as he is confronted with the dangers presented by the master’s dogs, he runs back to the countryside with these parting remarks praising the comforts of rural life:

.... *Haud mihi vita
est opus hac ait et valeas: me silva cavusque
tutus ab insidiis tenui solabitur ervo*.³¹

“This life is by no means essential to me,”
he said, “and farewell: the forest and safe cave with its
simple vetch will provide comfort for me from surprises.”

Juvenal, writing almost a century later, continues Horace’s theme and ironically commends his friend Umbricius for moving from Rome to Cumae so that he can escape the “fear of fires, continually collapsing houses and the thousand dangers of the savage city,” *incendia, lapsus tectorum adsiduos ac mille pericula saevae urbis*. Umbricius laments that there is “no place in the city for honest skills and no profit for labors,” *honestes nullus in urbe locus, nulla emolumenta laborum*.³² In the city there are too many foreigners, money is more important than integrity, it is expensive, and too many people are liars and cheats. Since

³⁰Hor. *Sat.* 2.16.

³¹Hor. *Sat.* 2.126-28.

³²Juv. *Sat.* 3.7-9, 21-22.

Rome has let its old traditions lapse, Umbricius considers himself fortunate to be leaving the wretched city for a better life in the country.³³

However, as much as Roman authors lamented the lack of morality in the city and rejected it as a place of distasteful trade, the city was also the center of political, social, and cultural life so necessary for the careers of the Roman elite. Although country life was touted as more virtuous, the majority of Romans did not avoid urban life or find it in any way undignified.³⁴ On the contrary, they often described inhabitants of the countryside as being given to *rusticitas* (“uncouth and uneducated behavior”), while those who lived in cities were polished and cultured, exhibiting the virtue of *urbanitas* (“decorous behavior, full of wit and manners”). In fact, members of the ruling class of a province were required to live in a town or within the limits of the first milestone.³⁵

The Romans’ desire for splendid homes grew as they expanded their territory into Greece in the second century BC, after which the houses of traditional Republican Rome became increasingly larger and more elaborate. Owners sought to decorate these villas with copies of Greek sculptures and Hellenistic landscape paintings. Soon the new “urban villa,” *villa urbana*, became popular and those seeking political office competed for land on the fashionable Palatine and Aventine Hills. In Pompeii as well, members of the upper class situated their villas so that they could take advantage of views of the surrounding landscape, and many older homes in the city were redesigned and enlarged over time. The

³³Edwin S. Ramage, et al., *Roman Satirists and Their Satire: The Fine Art of Criticism in Ancient Rome* (Park Ridge, New Jersey: Noyes Press, 1974), 147-48.

³⁴In his *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* 27.75, Cicero says that the boorish country life (*agrestem*) also promotes thrift, diligence, and justice (*parsimoniae, diligentia, iustitiae*).

³⁵Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Elites and Trade in the Roman Town,” in *City and Country in the Ancient World*, ed. John Rich and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1991), 242-49.

House of Loreius Tiburtinus, known also as the Miniature Villa, on the Via dell'Abbondanza in Pompeii (Reg. II.ii.5; Appendix 1) began as a small atrium house and was redesigned after the earthquake of AD 62 to imitate a country villa. This remodeled home included a *biclinium* with a fountain, porticoes, and a sixty-five foot pergola across the rear of the house. In the garden there was a *nymphaeum* with a fishpond painted in the upper basin below which a 160-foot watercourse ran toward real fishponds in imitation of seaside villas along the coast of Italy. The architectural style of the *villa urbana* was adopted by the cultural elite throughout the empire as Rome expanded further.³⁶

This theme of the contrast of country and city life, so popular in Roman literature, was also fashionable in the art of Roman Italy as well as in the provinces. It was essential for the *villa rustica* to include both the luxurious décor of an urban home with fine plasterwork, statuary, frescoes, and mosaics in addition to farm equipment such as grainbins, haylofts, and mills. Therefore, painters and mosaicists chose to depict the daily life of the Romans, including their agricultural activities, on floors and walls throughout the empire. By the first century BC, painters in Italy were illustrating rural life, although these pursuits were not immediately adopted in mosaic works. As early as the first century AD in the North African provinces, pavements depicting country life were used in small areas of a room or as part of Nilotic scenes. It was not until the third century, however, that large-scale use of these images became increasingly fashionable, and then mainly in conjunction with representations of the seasons.³⁷ It is noteworthy that many of these

³⁶Paul Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 16-20, 136-58.

³⁷Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 109-10.

scenes have been found in urban settings although they depict rural themes. One of the simplest images of farm life can be found in the House of the Small Fountain (*Reg.* VI.viii.23) in the town of Pompeii.³⁸ This first-century wall painting of a plow leaning against a wall (Figure 2) shows a working farm and may even depict the homeowner's rural estate. The plow (bottom left) is a simple one, made of wood except for the metal share that would have been attached by mortise and tenon.³⁹

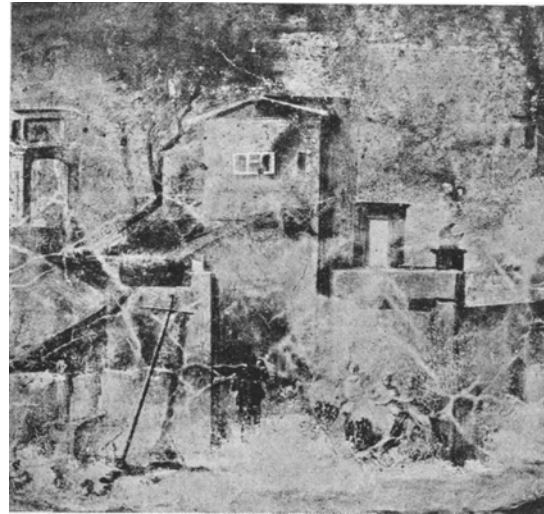


Figure 2

A more elaborate scene, found at Uthina (Oudna, Tunisia) in the House of the Laberii (Appendix 1), dates from the late second or early third century. The floors of almost the entire house are decorated with mosaic pavements of varying subject matter including several fishing and hunting scenes, along with elaborate farm scenes found in several atria of the house. The mosaics in Rooms 21 and 30 both depict rural scenes while the pavement of Room 32 has a central panel of Dionysus giving the vine to Icarius.⁴⁰ *Rural Scenes* (Figure 3) in Room 21 illustrates several farm activities. In the center portion, a shepherd leans on his staff at the door of a small farmhouse as his flock walks toward him. Leaning against

³⁸John Percival, *The Roman Villa: An Historical Introduction*, ed. Graham Webster (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 23.

³⁹K. D. White, *Greek and Roman Technology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 59.

⁴⁰Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 265-66. Most of the figural mosaics in this house are now in the Bardo Museum.



Figure 3

the outside wall of the house is a plow, much like that seen in the House of the Small Fountain in Pompeii (Figure 2). Perhaps in an attempt at perspective to show someone in the distance, the artist has placed a plowman who guides his oxen through the fields above the image of the shepherd and his flock. Below the farmhouse (or in the foreground) is a tent and a third man, whose horse drinks at a well, while yet another man drives a pack mule in the opposite direction.⁴¹ Around the bottom and sides of this image are hunting scenes and one figure who is gathering olives from a tree. The farm in this mosaic is consistent with the advice given by Varro in his prologue to Book II, when he suggests that a farmer should have an understanding of both agriculture and husbandry.

*Qui habet praedium, habere utramque debet disciplinam, et agri culturae et pecoris pascendi, et etiam villaticae pastionis.*⁴²

⁴¹Ibid., 112.

⁴²Varro *Rust.* 2 prologue 5.

One who has a farm should have knowledge of each, both agriculture and feeding of the herd and also of villa-husbandry.

Just as at the House of the Small Fountain, this mosaic is located in a city dwelling, although the decorative theme of the home is rural life.

The *Labors of the Fields* (Figure 4), another mosaic depicting plowing and gathering,



Figure 4

can be found at Caesarea (c. 200; Cherchel, Algeria). Like the previous two mosaics described, it illustrates rural activities and is located in a city home. It is composed of a series of four superimposed registers showing various farming activities. The two upper registers depict peasants plowing in a field of olive trees with an ox-drawn plow similar to that in *Rural Scenes* (Figure 3). In describing the agricultural

practices of Africa, Pliny the Elder (c. 23-79) states that one crop was grown in the shade of another:

*Palmae ibi praegrandi subditur olea, huic ficus, fico punica, illi vitis; sub vite seritur frumentum, mox legumen, deinde olus, omnia eodem anno, omniaque aliena umbra aluntur.*⁴³

There the olive is placed below the huge palm, the fig beneath it, the pomegranate beneath the fig, the vines beneath that; under the vine, grain is sown, soon pulse, then vegetables all in the same year, and all things are nourished in the shade of another.

Although the palm trees are missing from this mosaic, the two peasants are working together to drive the oxen and then sow the seeds in the shade of the olive trees. This mosaic also illustrates the instructions of Varro, according to whom fields were plowed three times:

*Terram cum primum arant, proscindere appellant, cum iterum, offringere dicunt, quod prima aratione glabrae grandes solent excitari; cum iteratur, offringere vocant. Tertio cum arant iacto semine, boves lirare dicuntur, id est cum tabellis additis ad vomerem simul et satum frumentum operiunt in porcis et sulcant fossas, quo pluvia aqua delabatur.*⁴⁴

When they plow the land the first time they call it “to cut the surface,” the next time, they say they “break it up” because at the first plowing large clods are usually dislodged; when it is repeated, they call it “to break up.” When they plow the third time, after the seed has been broadcast, the oxen are said “to ridge,” that is with boards added to the plowshare at the same time they both cover the sown seed in ridges, and cut ditches so that the rain-water may run off.

In the upper section, the plowman drives the oxen in one direction and then seems to turn around in the next level of the mosaic to re-plow the same area, this time with another peasant walking ahead and casting out the seeds from a basket. Because of the condition of the mosaic, it is difficult to tell whether the board which Varro described has been

⁴³Pliny *HN* 18.51.6-9.

⁴⁴Varro *Rust.* 1.29.2.

added to the plow for the second (Varro's third) pass.⁴⁵ In the third and fourth registers of the mosaic, peasants are hoeing at the foot of trellises supporting grape vines. The season in these lower two registers must be winter, since the vines are bare of fruit and leaves, a time when workers would have been hoeing to loosen the soil around the vines. According to Varro, the time between the setting of the Pleiades and the winter solstice is the time to prune vineyards.⁴⁶ The workers toil under the watchful eye of the overseer who is portrayed on the bottom level. However, there is no depiction of the master or his home as is found in some other African mosaics.

Roman artists also portrayed harvesting and threshing activities in their work. At Buzenol (near the border of Luxembourg), a sculptured relief panel originally embedded in



Figure 5

a terrace wall depicts the “Buzenol harvester” (Figure 5). This relief illustrates the *vallus*, an apparatus consisting of a single axle mounted on a frame with teeth to “cut” the grain. This machine was mentioned for the first time by the elder Pliny in his *Historia Naturalis*.

⁴⁵Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 114-15.

⁴⁶Varro *Rust.* 1.35-36.

*Galliarum latifundiis valli praegrandes dentibus in margine insertis duabus rotis per segetem inpelluntur iumento in contrarium iuncto; ita dereptae in vallum cadunt spicae. Stipulae alibi mediae falce praeciduntur atque inter duas mergites spica destringitur.*⁴⁷

On the estates in the provinces of Gaul very large frames with teeth inserted at the edge and on two wheels are driven through the grain field by an ox yoked from behind; the torn off grain thus falls into the frame. Elsewhere the middle of the stalks are cut through with a sickle and the grain is stripped between two pitchforks.

A donkey or ox pushed this machine so as not to crush the grain beneath the feet of the



Figure 6

animal before it was even cut and, in fact, the donkey in the Buzenol relief stands behind the *vallus*.⁴⁸ The worker in the sculpture uses a stick to clear the wheat stalks from the metal teeth set to cut just below the heads of the grain so they would fall into the cart.⁴⁹ A similar *vallus* can be seen in the calendar relief of the Porte de Mars at Durocortorum (Reims, France; Figure 6), dating from the beginning of the third century.

Only seven of the twelve panels survive, but the panel for the month of August depicts a *vallus*. The worker on this panel is also clearing the teeth of the machine, as his horse (?) stands patiently behind the wheel of the cart. Evidently, the machine had a design flaw, since both reliefs depict the grain caught in the blades.

⁴⁷Pliny HN 18.72.296.

⁴⁸White, *Greek and Roman Technology*, 29-30, 53, 61.

⁴⁹Henry Hodges, *Technology in the Ancient World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 234.

The July panel of the same relief shows harvesting with a scythe, a method also depicted on other monuments throughout the empire.⁵⁰ In the area of Siliana in modern Tunis, a late third-century relief devoted to the god Saturn (Figure 7) shows agricultural



Figure 7

work on the farm of Cuttinus. On the top register (not shown here), Saturn is seated between Castor and Pollux. The master is shown with his family on the second register followed in the third register by a depiction of the whole process of plowing with oxen and cutting the wheat with scythes. The bottom register presents a scene of

carting the cut grain to market.⁵¹ Additionally, there are images of harvesting grain on Trajan's column (Figure 8) found in Rome itself. One scene illustrates soldiers cutting grain by hand and carrying it from the fields during the summer of AD 106.⁵²



Figure 8

After the harvest, the workers threshed the grain to remove it from the chaff. The luxury seaside villa at Dar Buc Amméra near Zliten (east of

⁵⁰White, *Greek and Roman Technology*, 29.

⁵¹J. W. Salamonson, *Tunisian Mosaics: Carthage in the Roman Era*, trans. Richard Passantino (Hartford: Connecticut Printers, Inc., 1967), 26.

⁵²Paul L. MacKendrick, *The Dacian Stones Speak* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 88.



Figure 9

Leptis Magna in Libya) contains several *emblemata* on various subjects. Among them in Room U (Appendix 2) there was a first-century mosaic pavement with nine rural scenes, of which only three survive intact, with two more being fragmentary. Other rooms contain busts of the seasons, still-lives, scenes of fish, and Nilotic subjects.⁵³ The threshing scene from the pavement

(Figure 9) depicts in the distance one of the buildings of the estate, perhaps the house itself with a colonnade, while in the foreground men drive horses and oxen to tread the grain under their feet. Just as mentioned by Varro, the threshing-floor is round, although whether it is elevated cannot be determined.⁵⁴ Another man, perhaps the overseer, sits on a bench in the shade of a tree and appears to be shouting directions to the workers.

Because of the importance of agriculture, the seasons were a very popular theme, especially in Africa. Mosaics of this type expressed hope for an abundant crop and prosperity for the landowner, and thereby, in a show of *Romanitas*, prosperity for the empire. Just as in the villa at Dar Buc Amméra, representations of the seasons can be found all over the western empire. The sixth-century inscription on a mosaic of the four seasons in the *triclinium* of Theodoric's palace in Ravenna reiterates the centuries-old

⁵³Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 17, 109. This is the date given by Katherine Dunbabin, although K. D. White places it in the third century. It is possible, according to Dunbabin, that the nine scenes may have been part of a rustic calendar containing twelve scenes. The mosaics were evidently reset in a later century, since they are dispersed throughout the room in no apparent pattern. If they formed a calendar mosaic, it is the earliest known example in Roman art.

⁵⁴Varro *Rust.* 1.51-2.

message of the mosaicists: *Sume quod autumnus quod ver quod bruma quod estas alternis reparam et toto creantur in orbe*.⁵⁵ “Gather what autumn and spring, winter and summer produce in turn, and is created throughout the whole universe.” At Thysdrus can be found the second-century mosaic of *Annus and the Four Seasons* in the House of the Dionysian



Figure 10

Procession (Appendix 2). Around *Annus*, the spirit of the Year (Figure 10), there are the busts of four women, each with a basket full of the fruits of her season. Spring holds roses, Summer has wheat, Autumn holds grapes from the harvest, and Winter has olives. *Annus* himself wears a crown of pinecones, sheaves of grain, figs,

pomegranates, and olives and is situated in a medallion of the same. In the *triclinium* of the same house is another representation of the seasons, this time in conjunction with still-lives and Dionysian figures. In this pavement, the bust of Spring has her usual garland of flowers and Summer, wearing a crown of wheat, holds her sickle. Autumn is not well-preserved. Winter (Figure 11), wearing a hood and



Figure 11

crown of olive branches, holds a *bidens*, a two-pronged hoe, and provides the oldest known example of the use of the hoe as an attribute for Winter. The use of olives in both

⁵⁵ Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 120.

pavements of this house presents a second innovation, for until this time Winter's attribute had been a bundle of reeds. Olives were one of the main sources of wealth for the area, and the use of olives instead of reeds as an artistic motif for the winter season became widespread throughout the province and then the empire.⁵⁶ This motif can be



Figure 12

seen on another second-century pavement, *Neptune and the Seasons* (Figure 12), found at a seaside villa in La Chebba (Tunisia). Although this mosaic depicts the seasons as standing, full-length figures and not just as busts, their attributes are exactly the same as those found in the House of the Dionysian Procession.

It is noteworthy that Winter (bottom left) is shown here with both reeds and olives.⁵⁷

In a departure from the traditional depiction of the seasons as female symbols, the *Lord Julius Mosaic* (Figure 13) from late fourth-century Carthage (Tunis, Tunisia) illustrates the seasons, the estate, and its owners. Found in a large apsidal room in a private city dwelling, the center of the mosaic depicts the actual estate of the owner, while the activities of the four seasons with their typical attributes are portrayed in the four corners

⁵⁶Ibid., 41, 49, 56.

⁵⁷Blanchard-Lemée, *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 47-49.

of the piece. Spring and Autumn are illustrated by the mistress and master of the household themselves at times when they would have been in the country for the harvest and the beauty of the year. In the spring (bottom left), the mistress stands as a servant hands her a necklace and another brings a basket of roses, perhaps for making perfume.

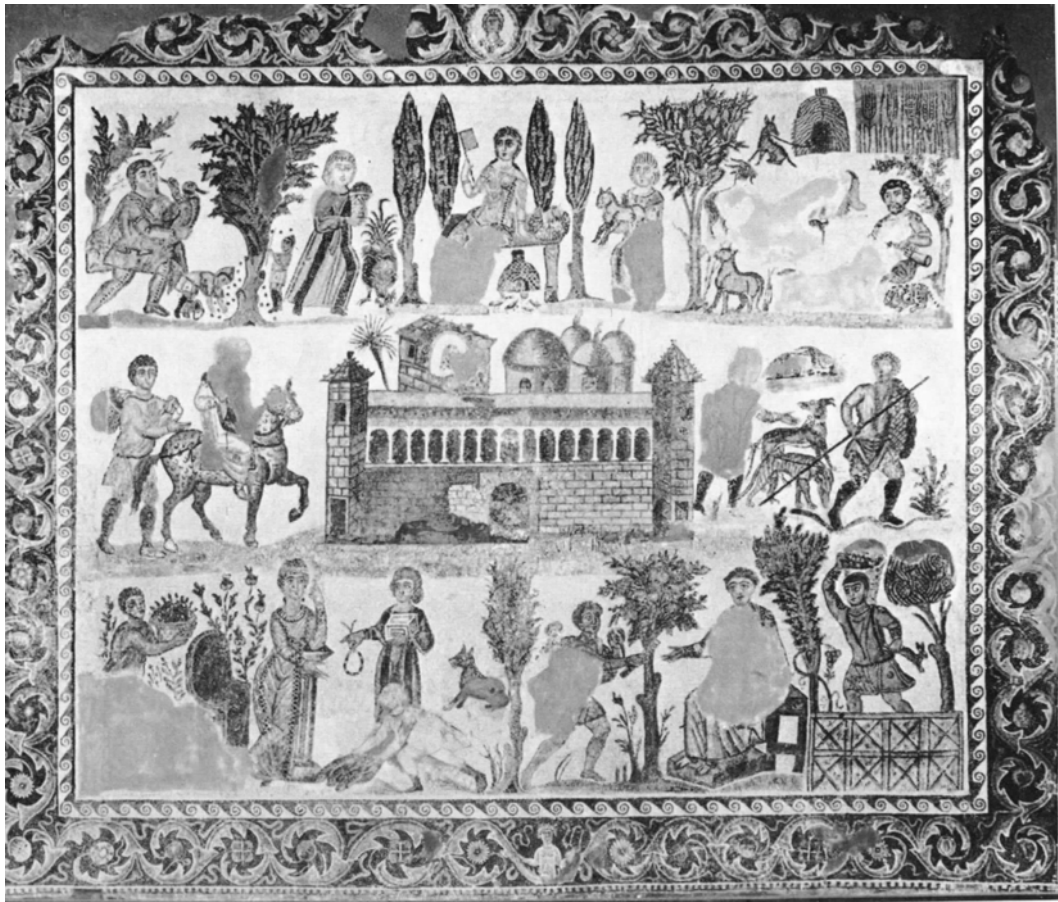


Figure 13

A third peasant puts several fish at her feet. In the autumn (bottom right), Lord Julius himself sits in his orchard as a worker with a basket brings him grapes from the vineyard seen behind him. Another peasant hands the master a scroll on which can be seen the letters IV DOM (Iulius Dominus). The top of the mosaic depicts summer and winter. In the winter (top left), a male peasant comes forward carrying a duck, and a woman carries a

basket of olives to the mistress, shown seated at top center. Peasant children are gathering olives from the trees in accordance with the advice of Varro, who cautions against beating olive trees to obtain the fruit:

*De oliveto oleam, quam manu tangere possis e terra ac scalis, legere oportet potius quam quatere, quod ea quae vapulavit macescit nec dat tantum olei.*⁵⁸

Concerning the olive from the olive grove, it is necessary to pick the ones which you can touch with your hand from the ground or ladders rather than to shake them, because that which has been beaten withers and does not give as much oil.

Although the peasants are all warmly dressed, the mistress is clothed in summer attire and fans herself with a peacock fan. Under her bench is a chicken coop with chickens; the rooster is standing next to the bench. To the right is the representation of summer with a shepherd sitting under an olive tree to watch his flock as a peasant girl carries a lamb to her mistress. In the background there is a field of wheat and a hut to which a dog is tied, while in the center register, the master arrives home on his horse before leaving again to go hunting.⁵⁹ This mosaic is unusual in that it juxtaposes several motifs— the villa itself, the owners, rural activities, and the seasons.

Related to the mosaics of the seasons are the calendar mosaics found throughout the empire that show specific rural activities for each month of the year. At the House of the Months in Thysdrus, there is an early third-century calendar mosaic depicting the seasons and months (Figure 14). This mosaic is somewhat unusual for a calendar mosaic in that it does not illustrate rural activities for every month as was customary for this type of pavement. Of the twelve months, nine depict religious feasts with only June, July, and

⁵⁸Varro *Rust.* 1.55.

⁵⁹Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 119-21.

September showing activities not ceremonial in nature. The calendar was a reminder that observances of the proper rites for each month would assure the owner of the estate of

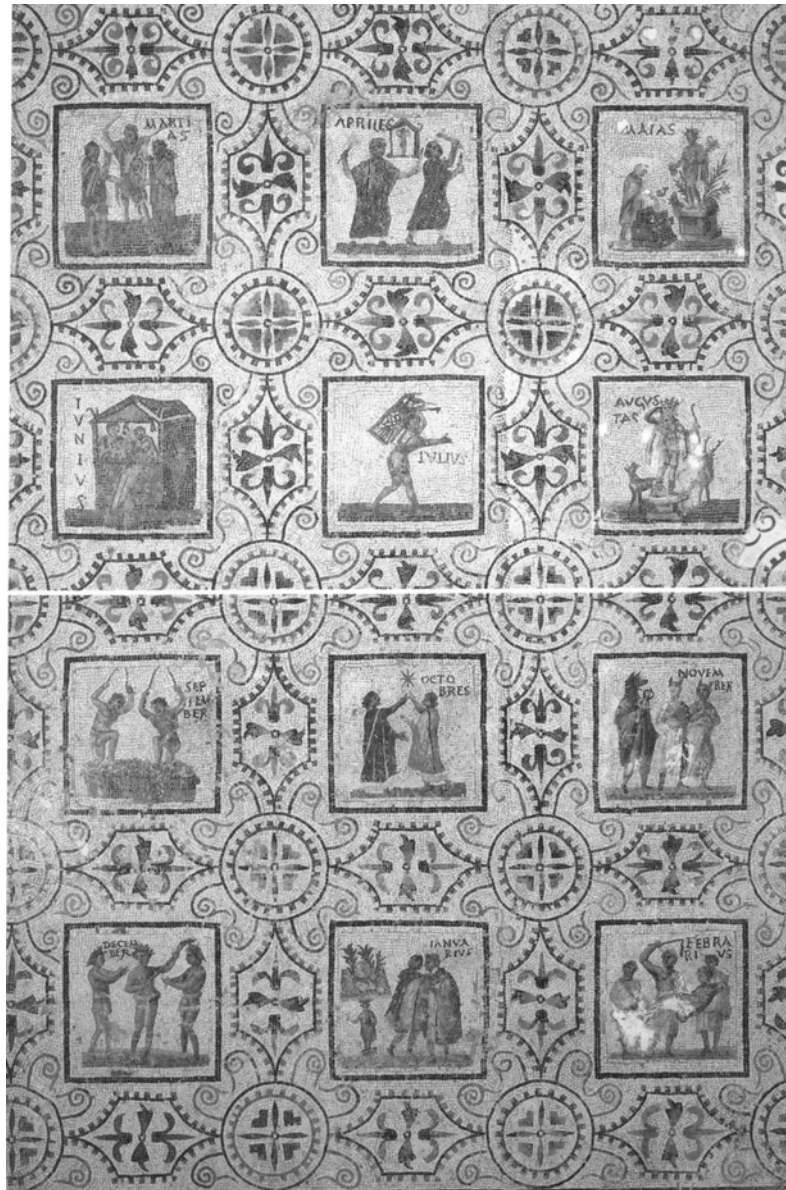


Figure 14

the fertility of the land and the abundance of the yield. July illustrates a worker carrying on his back a bundle of grain or beans, while September depicts the traditional treading of

grapes.⁶⁰ Rural scenes, however, are predominant on other rustic calendars around the empire. In Vienne, an early third-century calendar has a more traditional set of panels that show the seasonal activities of the farm. In Figure 15, the workers are sowing seeds, maybe beans, in rows, perhaps as a representation of December, since one ancient



Figure 15

almanac says that beans are to be sown and olives gathered in December.⁶¹ Other panels from the same mosaic depict plowing, picking olives, and processing grapes.

Representations not only of vines and grapes but also their processing can be found as well. Wine was one of Italy's main crops and Pliny

mentions eighty varieties, two-thirds of which were Italian, with the remaining third being imported from the provinces.⁶² In the kitchen *lararium* of the House of the Centenary in Pompeii (Reg. IX.viii.6), the painting *Bacchus and Mt. Vesuvius* (Figure 16) depicts the wine god Bacchus clad in a cluster of grapes standing beside a vineyard-covered Mt. Vesuvius. In the



Figure 16

⁶⁰Blanchard-Lemée, *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 44-48. According to K. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 111, this is the only calendar which depicts the month of July in this manner. The seasons represented on the left side of the mosaic are unusual as well in that they are male instead of female.

⁶¹K. D. White, *Country Life in Classical Times* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 59. The almanac can be found in CIL 6.2305.

⁶²Pliny *HN* 14.59-76, 94-97.

painting the grapes are growing on stakes as described by Cato: *Quam altissimam viniam facito alligatoque recte, dum ne nimium constringes*,⁶³ “Frame the vine as high as possible and tie it straight, as long as you do not restrain it too much.” The vines in this image, however,

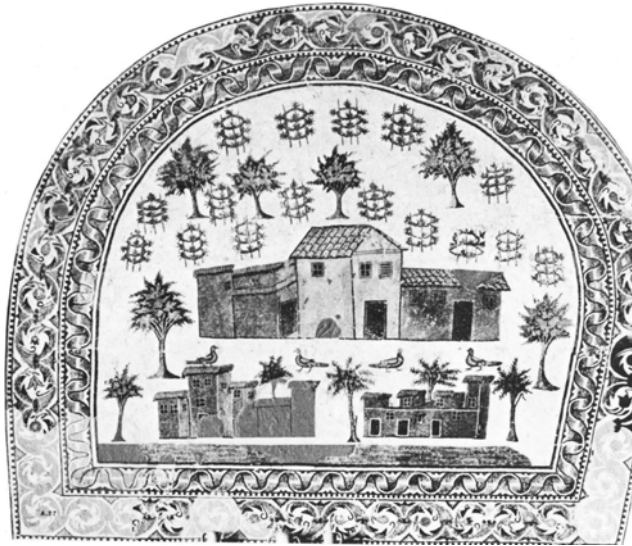


Figure 17

do not seem to be planted in the shade of trees as was mentioned above by Pliny the Elder (*HN* 18.51.6-9). By comparison, in the late fourth-century depiction of a seaside estate at Thabraca (Tabarka in northern Tunisia), there is a grove of trees with vines

growing beneath them held up by what seems at first glance to be circular trellises, similar to modern tomato cages (Figure 17). These are perhaps representations of the types of trellises described by Varro when he says that vines could be *compluviata in longitudinem et latitudinem iugata ut in Italia pleraeque*,⁶⁴ “supported lengthwise and sideways on *compluvium* shaped trellises, as are most in Italy.” Although a *compluvium* would technically have a shape more squared than round, the mosaicist has tried to depict this type of trellis in the Thabraca mosaic, and some of the trellises do appear more squared than rounded.

⁶³Cato *Agr.* 33. The painting also shows that Vesuvius had one peak instead of two before its eruption in AD 79.

⁶⁴Varro *Rust.* 1.8.

Erotes and peasants harvesting grapes comprise the subject matter of several types of media. A first-century blue glass cameo vase (Figure 18), found in a tomb on the Via dei Sepolcri in Pompeii, depicts a *putto* gathering grapes from an overhead garland or trellis since, as mentioned by Cato, vines should be trained to grow vertically. At the same time,

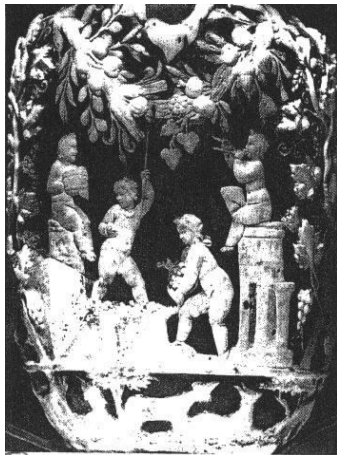


Figure 18



Figure 19

he treads the grapes already in the small (probably wooden) vat in which he stands. On a third-century sarcophagus fragment (Figure 19) from the Monteverde area of Rome are several *erotes* harvesting grapes. Two of the workers climb ladders to reach the grapes from the trellis above, while others place the fruit in baskets. A late fourth-century mosaic from Caesarea shows the process of gathering grapes from vines grown on trellises, pressing them to make wine, and transporting grapes by cart. A detail from this pavement (Figure 20), illustrates the use of the *falx vinitoria*, as the peasant in the image utilizes the vine-dresser's knife to cut the fruit from the vine. In his agricultural treatise, Columella

describes this tool in great detail, giving the names and uses for each of the six parts of the knife.⁶⁵

Before the harvested grapes could be processed, workers had to prepare the necessary vats, baskets, and *dolia*. As seen in the calendar mosaic from Vienne (Figure 21, cf. Figure 15), workers lined terra-cotta jars and treading vats with pitch to prevent the wine from seeping out.⁶⁶ Both Cato and Columella instruct farm owners to prepare for



Figure 20



Figure 21

the vintage ahead of time by cleaning vats, mending baskets, and pitching *dolia* on rainy days so that workers would not be idle.⁶⁷ Then, according to the *Geoponica*,⁶⁸ treaders must immediately press the collected grapes with their feet in vats on elevated treading floors. The men's feet had to be clean, therefore, they could not climb often from the vat; they also wore girdles to soak up sweat and keep it from dripping into the must (Figure 22).⁶⁹

⁶⁵Columella *Rust.* 4.25.

⁶⁶Robert I. Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology* (Brill: Leiden, 2001), 376.

⁶⁷Cato *Agr.* 2 and 23; Columella 12.*Rust.* 18.20-5. Columella suggests preparing for the harvest forty days in advance.

⁶⁸*Geoponica* 6.11. The *Geoponica* is a collection of agricultural literature compiled by Cassianus Bassus in the seventh century. It was later edited by an unknown author and published in Greek in the 10th century. Books 4-8 discuss viticulture.

⁶⁹White, *Country Life in Classical Times*, 70-1.

The men in this image not only hold on to cupped sticks to prevent them from slipping and falling into the vat, but they also hold on to each other for support. In a similar illustration, the rustic calendar mosaic from Thysdrus (Figure 14) depicts men treading



Figure 22

however, illustrate the *dolia* into which the must will flow. By contrast, the men in the mosaic from Vienne (Figure 23; cf. Figure 15) do not have the sticks with which to prop themselves up although two of them grasp each other's hands; the must in this image flows into four *dolia* positioned at the side of the treading vat. The third-century Roman

grapes and holding curved sticks above their heads. It is possible that these sticks would hook onto an overhead support of some type or a trellis, for the putto in Figure 18 also appears to hold a hook that is attached to the trellis overhead. None of these images,



Figure 23

sarcophagus fragment in Figure 24 illustrates *putti* working in a more elaborate treading vat with lion's head spouts from which the juice flows into the *dolia*. All of these images show the elevated treading floor on which the vat would be positioned.

Although the Romans believed that wine made from trodden grapes was superior to that made from pressed ones, the skins and seeds remaining from the treading were

placed in a mechanical press and this must was mixed with that from the treading to be made into wine.⁷⁰ According to Varro, the skins were pressed a second time and the inferior liquid put in separate jars with water to be given to the slaves.⁷¹ Figure 25, *Men*



Figure 24

(rope/winch) and presses the *prelum* (the second lever, manned by another worker) across the basket of grapes. A fresco, found in Pompeii in the *oecus* of the House of the Vettii (Reg. VI.xv.1; c. 62-79), shows a lever-and-drum press similar to several found during the excavations of the city. In this image (Figure 26), two *erotes* work a wooden press in much the same manner as the workers in the mosaic from Vienne (Figure 25). This fresco does not depict the must flowing into *dolia*.

Pressing Grapes, from Vienne (cf. Figures 15, 21, and 23), shows two men working with long poles on a lever-and-drum press as the liquid pours into the container to the side. Cato describes a press comparable to the one depicted in the mosaic.⁷² The worker on the left pulls the *vectis* (a lever) to tighten the *sucula*



Figure 25

⁷⁰Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 227.

⁷¹Varro *Rust.* 1.54.

⁷²Cato *Agr.* 18-19.

The must from the pressing was then left to ferment in *dolia* buried to one-half their height and allowed to sit, according to Cato, for thirty days.⁷³ Pliny the Elder says that the wine should then be stored in a cellar with windows facing north so that heat would not affect the quality of the wine.⁷⁴ The very large vineyard at Reg. IX.ix.6-7, as well as several smaller

ones, found during the excavations at

Pompeii, confirm this



Figure 26

practice. This vineyard had one large terra-cotta *dolium* with a 100-gallon capacity, while at Reg. II.v, excavations of the press room and its shed uncovered ten *dolia* embedded in the dirt floor. Each *dolium* was of a 275-gallon capacity that would yield forty *amphorae*. The facilities and equipment of these vineyards are comparable to those in country villas.⁷⁵

The process of harvesting and pressing olives is akin to that of grapes. As has

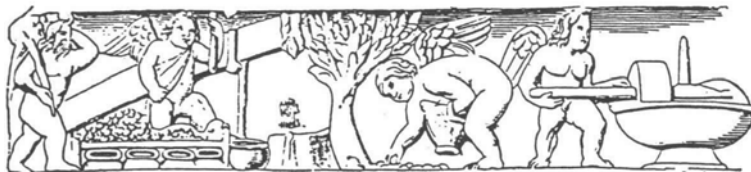


Figure 27

already been noted

(*supra*, p.23), olives were

harvested in the winter

and the olive was an

attribute of the personifications of winter in mosaics of the seasons. Furthermore, in the *Lord Julius Mosaic* (Figure 13), children are collecting olives in its illustration of winter.

Making Olive Oil (Figure 27) found on a sarcophagus at Rome, depicts the entire process of

⁷³Cato *Agr.* 26.

⁷⁴Pliny *HN* 14.133.

⁷⁵Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 226-28.

making olive oil beginning with the gathering of the olives around a tree. The winged worker in the center of the image bends down to gather olives that have fallen on the ground and then places them in a basket. Another worker, at the right of the image, then crushes the harvested olives in a *trapetum*, a rotary mill. Most of the parts of the *trapetum* can be identified in the image: the *mortarium* (“base”), the *columella* (“metal axle”), the *orbis* (“crushing wheel”), and the *cupa* (“handle”). The *miliarium* (“pillar”) into which the axle is fixed cannot be seen.⁷⁶ To the left of the image, a cupid treads the olives in a vat in front of which are four jars ready to receive the oil. Behind the treading cupid the *prelum* (“lever”) of a press stands ready for the final crushing of the olives. Although lever presses were used for olives as well as grapes, a farm that processed both crops would have a separate press dedicated to each. The villa at Settefinestre in Etruria dealt in both oil and wine with separate presses and facilities for each.⁷⁷ Once olives were pressed, oil had to be stored, and whereas wine was stored facing the cooler north, oil from olive pressing was stored in a cellar with light from the south so that the oil would stay thin and not congeal.⁷⁸

Special arrangements were necessary for the storage of grain since it had to be kept dry and cool in a dark place. Varro, Columella, and Pliny the Elder⁷⁹ describe pits, called *siri*, which would have been lined with straw and sealed so that no air or moisture could reach the grain, as well as special buildings for storing grain. Although Varro advises that

⁷⁶Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 306.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 372.

⁷⁸Vitruvius *de Arch.* 40-41.

⁷⁹Varro *Rust.* 1.57.2; Columella *Rust.* 1.6.15; Pliny *HN* 18.306.

storehouses should be ventilated with windows on the east and north,⁸⁰ Pliny advises against having windows at all.⁸¹ Columella describes storage buildings with vaulted ceilings that could be divided into separate bins for different types of crops.⁸² These multi-storied buildings housed liquids on the bottom floor, while grain and dry products would be stored above to provide proper ventilation.⁸³ One of the mosaics (in the left



Figure 28

apse of the room) at the estate at Thabracca (Figure 17) shows the out-buildings and sheds of a simple farm. Perhaps one of the smaller buildings is a storeroom, although it is impossible to tell for which crop it might have been used. Similarly, there is a barn above the main house in the *Lord Julius*

Mosaic (Figure 13), but it is again impossible to tell what it would have stored. In the second-century fresco of a farm on an estate near Trier in the Moselle Valley (Figure 28), there is a building on the left that is very similar in shape and form to that found in North African mosaics.⁸⁴ The tall, thin building has two second-story windows facing the front above a central door, but there is only one window for each floor on the side of the structure. Again, the question arises as to which crop this building was intended to house.

⁸⁰Varro *Rust.* 1.13.7.

⁸¹Pliny *HN* 18.301.

⁸²Columella *Rust.* 1.6.12-14.

⁸³Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 325-29.

⁸⁴The Moselle River begins in the northeast region of France and forms the border between Luxembourg and Germany, an area still famous for its wines. The fourth-century writer Decimus Magnus Ausonius wrote about this valley in his poem *Mosella* (191-198): *Tota natant crispis inga motibus et tremunt absens/pampinus et vitreis vindemia turget in undis*, "All the hilltops swim with a quivering motion and far-off tendrils tremble and the vintage swells in glassy waves."

Given the advice of Columella, it is possible that these buildings were used to store liquids below and grain above.

Once grain was stored, it then had to be processed. In *de Agri Cultura* 10.4 and 11.4, Cato describes a *mola trusatilis*, a device turned by both hands to rub one stone against another for milling grain a little at a time. Over time this simple machine was improved and a lever was added to the upper stone. Some types of grain were ground with a mortar

and pestle, and Pliny discusses a pestle with an iron cap.⁸⁵ In the *Moretum*, sometimes ascribed to the poet Vergil, the peasant-



Figure 29

farmer Simulus uses a handmill to grind the grain for his bread by feeding the hopper with his left hand while the right turned the round stone. A handmill turned by two men is depicted on the first-century sarcophagus of Lucius Annus Octavius Valerianus (Figure 29). On the top register of the relief (from left to right), workers plow the fields and harvest the grain. On the lower register (from right to left), an ox-driven cart transports the grain to the mill where two men use a long pole to turn a mill.⁸⁶

⁸⁵White, *Greek and Roman Technology*, 30-31.

⁸⁶Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 358. It is possible that this is a kneading trough and not a mill.

The largest mills were watermills described by Vitruvius⁸⁷ and mentioned in the emperor Diocletian's Price Edict of AD 301.⁸⁸ According to the edict, watermills were the most expensive at 2000 *denarii*, with handmills costing only 250 *denarii*.⁸⁹ The earliest known archaeological evidence for a watermill is an undershot mill at a first-century villa at San Giovanni di Ruoti (northwest of modern Potenza in Lucania). The remains of the Barbegal mill, which operated from the second to the fourth centuries, are located near Arles, France.⁹⁰ This overshot mill was driven by water from the nearby aqueduct and supplied the town of Arles with flour. It used sixteen waterwheels in parallel rows of eight to power the sixteen millstones. It has been estimated by A.

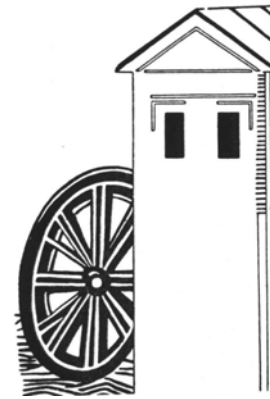


Figure 30

Trevor Hodge that the mill could produce enough flour to provide a population of 12,500 with 350 grams of flour per day—a population roughly the size of Arles in the fourth century.⁹¹ There are only two known artistic representations of Roman watermills from antiquity. The fifth-century mosaic of a waterwheel (Figure 30) from the imperial palace in Constantinople depicts an undershot watermill. The wheel in the image stands beside a mill building very similar to the ones found at Barbegal (Appendix 3). The only other known depiction of a watermill is a third-century fresco in the Catacombs of St. Agnes in Rome.⁹²

⁸⁷Vitruvius *de Arch.* 10.5.2.

⁸⁸*Edict. Diocl.* 15.52-55.

⁸⁹White, *Greek and Roman Technology*, 66.

⁹⁰Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 349-50.

⁹¹A. Trevor Hodge, "A Roman Factory," *Scientific American* (November 1990): 108.

⁹²Daniel Castella, *Le moulin hydraulique gallo-romaine d'Avenches "En Chaplax": fouilles 1990-1991* (Lausanne: Cahiers d'archéologie romande 62, 1994), 20.

After the grain was ground, it would be transported to a bakery or baked at home. Columella states that the bakery and grain-mill should be separate buildings from the farmhouse.⁹³ Included on the sarcophagus of Lucius Annius Octavius Valerianus is a scene in which a baker puts bread into (or takes it out of) the oven with a long wooden spatula (Figure 29). Likewise, the rustic calendar from Vienne (Figures 15 and 25) has an illustration of a baker at a bread oven (Figure 31). This oven has the same shape as the one depicted on the sarcophagus and the baker uses the same type of tool to maneuver the loaf. The oven itself into which the bread is placed is dome-shaped with a fire built underneath.



Figure 31

Just as important as agriculture and animal husbandry were the fish of the sea. Inhabitants of cities often commissioned works of art illustrating gardens, lakes, streams, and fishponds stocked with fish. There was a wide variety of fishponds throughout Italy, the archaeological remains of which can be found in both rural and urban settings. Seaside villas were popular among Rome's elite, who spent some of their tremendous wealth on intricately designed saltwater fishponds to provide ambience for their gardens and *triclinia*. These ponds were fashionable from the first century BC to the first century AD but declined in popularity as the empire grew and the large villas came under imperial control.⁹⁴ Varro says of fishponds:

⁹³Columella *Rust.* 1.6.21.

⁹⁴James Higginbotham, *Piscinae: Artificial Fishponds in Roman Italy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 65-66.

*Sic nostra aetas in quam luxuriam propagavit leporaria,
hac piscinas protulit ad mare et in eas pelagios greges
piscium revocavit. Non propter has appellati Sergius
Orata et Licinius Murena? Quis enim propter nobilitates
ignorat piscinas Philippi, Hortensi, Lucullorum?*⁹⁵

Thus, just as our age has propagated warrens as a luxury,
it has also extended fishponds to the sea and into
these has summoned sea-flocks (schools) of fish. Have not
Sergius Orata and Licinius Murena been named because
of these? For because of their fame, who does not know
of the fishponds of Philippus, Hortensius, and the Luculli?

These sea-water ponds were owned by the wealthy mainly as an ostentatious show of wealth and were just expensive toys. Varro says of these ponds *primum enim aedificantur magno, secundo implentur magno, tertio aluntur magno*, “they are first built at great cost, then filled at great cost, and then maintained at great cost.”⁹⁶ The orator Cicero speaks with disdain of those who maintained these lavish ponds and, in a letter to his friend Atticus, uses the derogatory term “fishponders,” *piscinarii*, to describe those he feels are more concerned with their ponds than with the welfare of the republic.⁹⁷ Columella, however, states that a fishpond could be a source of profit for a country estate, *quaestum villaticum*, and even gives specific instructions on how to build one.⁹⁸ Freshwater ponds, although not unprofitable, *non sine fructu*, were for the *plebs*, or commoners, and were generally stocked with fish caught near the villas, *piscibus nostris villaticis*.⁹⁹

Painters and mosaicists around the empire found inspiration in these fishponds. A second or third-century marine scene with realistic depictions of sea creatures was found

⁹⁵Varro *Rust.* 3.3.10.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Cicero *Att.* 1.18.7; 1.19.6; 1.20.3.

⁹⁸Columella *Rust.* 8.16.

⁹⁹Varro *Rust.* 3.17.2.

in the House of the Triumph of Neptune in Acholla near modern Ras Boutria, Tunisia (Appendix 4). Found in a semi-circular central apse of a corridor, this mosaic (Figure 32) faces the *oecus* and a *triclinium*. Twenty-two different fish are realistically represented, some more than once, for a total of thirty-four fish. Among those represented more than once



Figure 32

are shrimp, mullet (grey and red), cuttlefish, torpedo fish (electric ray), and flounder.¹⁰⁰

Mosaics depicting many of the same fish can be found in Pompeii. In *Marine Scene* from House VIII.ii.16 (end of the second century BC, Figure 33), an octopus is prominently displayed in the center doing battle with a lobster. The torpedo fish, mullet, and cuttlefish are also illustrated on this mosaic along with several other varieties that appear once on the Acholla mosaic: the sea bass, moray eel, striped bream, and a murex (although of a different variety). Another second-century BC mosaic, located in the

¹⁰⁰Suzanne Gozlan, *La maison du triomphe de Neptune à Acholla*, Vol. 1, Collection de l'École Française de Rome (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1992), 39-40.

triclinium of the House of the Faun in Pompeii (Reg. VI.xii.2-5; Figure 34), depicts the same battle between the lobster and octopus. There are variations in the types of fish illustrated and in the composition of the rest of the mosaic, but the central image of both is the octopus on the right locked in a fight with the lobster on the left. All of the creatures are



Figure 33



Figure 34

realistically portrayed with consideration given even to fin and scale structure. On the left side of each mosaic, a bird is perched on an outcropping of rock, seemingly underwater, but most likely showing the artist's effort to depict a wider landscape. Because of the many similarities, it is possible that both mosaics were created in the same workshop.¹⁰¹

Related to depictions of fishponds is the mosaic from the House of the Muses at Althiburus (Medeina, Tunisia) which has images of ships as well as sea creatures. This so-called *Catalogue of Boats* from the third century (Figure 35) illustrates thirty different types of ships (Appendix 5), some unmanned and some with the names inscribed in Latin or

¹⁰¹Katherine Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 47.

Greek, all surrounded by a sea full of different varieties of fish. In the *triclinium* of the same house, another mosaic continues the marine theme and portrays Venus and Oceanus along with a merchant ship carrying *amphorae* as cargo. The ship's sail is labeled

APAEONA LIBURNI.¹⁰²



Figure 35

There are also innumerable depictions of fishing activities. Nine large bulbous third and fourth-century flasks illustrated with topographical scenes of Baiae and Puteoli have been unearthed from Italy, Africa, and Germany. All nine are decorated with harbor scenes, including buildings, bridges, and moles. The three from the Baiae group, however, all contain scenes with *ostriaria*, “oyster beds.” One such flask from a grave at Populonia (Figure 36) depicts a barrel-roofed building connected to another one by a bridge. From

this bridge is suspended an artificial oyster bed with weighted ropes.¹⁰³ The flask's decoration shows the oyster bed from an aerial perspective as a trapezoid consisting of

¹⁰²Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 127, n.72. Dunbabin disagrees with P. Gauckler's theory that an *Apaeona* is a type of ship. She views the label *Apaeona* as a distortion of the Greek exclamation *ἀπ αἰῶνος*, “from eternity,” or *εἰς αἰῶνα*, “to eternity.” *Liburni* could be the name of the ship's owner or a group of owners.

¹⁰³K. S. Painter, “Roman Flasks with Scenes of Baiae and Puteoli,” *Journal of Glass Studies* 17 (1975): 54-55.

four squares with ovals. In the center of the trapezoid is a circle depicting the water and above is a semi-circle with four more squares representing a more distant portion of the bay. This is consistent with archaeological remains as well as with Varro's discussion of

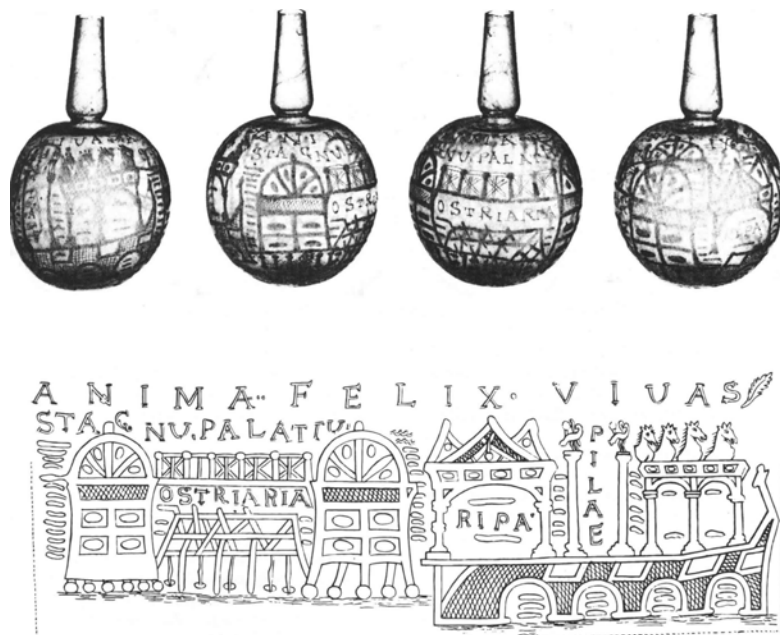


Figure 36

square basins needed to raise different types of fish (*Rust.* 3.17.4).¹⁰⁴

Some fishing scenes contain human and cupid-like fishermen. As seen previously in the *Lord Julius Mosaic* (Figure 13), a child places three fish at the feet of his mistress in the rural scene representing springtime.¹⁰⁵ All four types of fishing known to the Romans can be found in their art: lines, nets, eel pots, and harpoons. Martial was the first to

¹⁰⁴Jerzy Kolendo, "Parcs à huitres et viviers sur un flacon en verre du Musée National de Varsovie," in *Travaux du centre d'archéologie méditerranéenne de l'academie polonaise des sciences :Etudes et Travaux IX*, (Warsaw, 1976), 146-58.

¹⁰⁵Alfred Merlin, "La mosaïque du Seigneur Julius à Carthage," *Bulletin archéologique du comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* (1921): 103.

mention jointed fishing rods and the use of flies as bait.¹⁰⁶ Fishing lines made of flax, horsehair, or boar's hair were attached to poles or were just held in the hand, and the Romans made use of weights, hooks, and insects, just as modern fishermen. Funnel-shaped casting

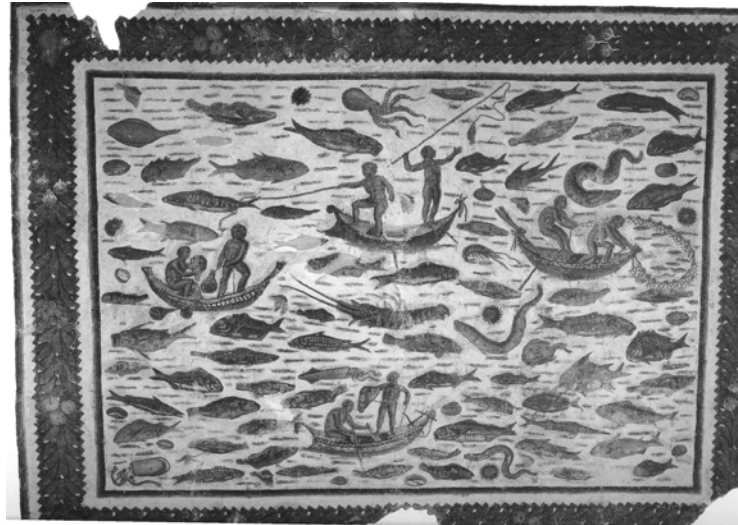


Figure 37

nets or seines were used, as well as eel pots made of cane or rushes. Tridents or harpoons were used mainly for crustaceans.¹⁰⁷ *Sea Filled with Fish* (Figure 37) was found in an underground funeral chamber at the Necropolis of Hermes in Hadrumentum (Sousse, Tunisia). It clearly illustrates three of the four different fishing techniques with four types of boats and gives the viewer a visual catalog of sea-life in the area. The boat on the left in the mosaic shows two men gathering and emptying traps made of wicker or rushes. In the boat at the top, one fisherman casts his line while the other is pulling in the fish he has caught. On the right, the two men are pulling in a cast-net full of fish, while in the bottom boat one man rows as the other prepares to cast and drag the net. The mosaic is detailed and

¹⁰⁶Martial *Ep.* 9.54.3 (rod) and 5.18.7 (fly). The fishermen in Plautus' *Rudens* 296-300 discuss making their living by catching sea urchins, oysters, shell-fish, conchs, and sea-nettles, and then fishing with hooks among the rocks: *echinos, lopadas, ostreas, balanos captamus, conchas, marinam urticam, musculos, plagusias striates; post id piscatum hamatilem et saxatilem aggredimur.*

¹⁰⁷Martine Sciallano, *Poissons de l'antiquité* (Istres : L'Imprimerie Techni-Plans à Istres, 1997), 13.

realistic even to the guy ropes seen on the boats at the top and right. In the sea surrounding the boats is an array of sea-life: octopus, cuttlefish, lobster, moray eel, bream, perch, mackerel, sea urchin, and murex.¹⁰⁸ Although this mosaic illustrates two types of nets, there is no image of the use of the trident for fishing. In *Fishing with the Trident*



Figure 38

(Figure 38) from Thugga (Dougga, Tunisia), the fisherman, half-kneeling on a small boat near the shore, holds a trident in his right hand with which he spears an octopus, while behind him in the sand is his fishing pole complete with hook. Similar to *Sea Filled with Fish* and also from Hadrumentum is *Fishing Scene*

(Figure 39) from the peristyle in front of the *oecus* in the House of the Arsenal (early third-century). In this mosaic, there are only two boats and two types of fishing are depicted.

The man in the boat to the left pulls in a net while the one on the right has his trident poised to strike a fish in the water below. All of these images provide

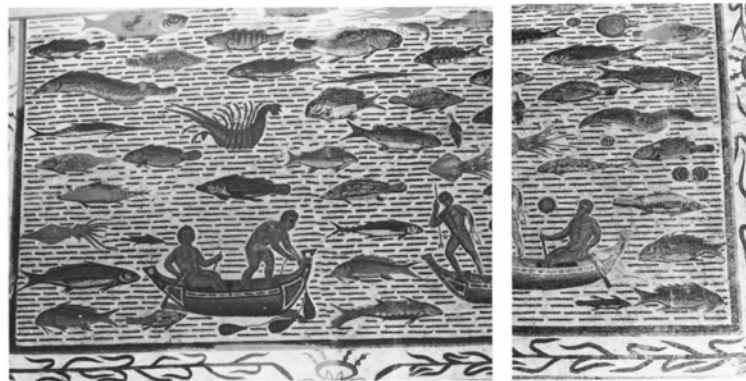


Figure 39

details of sea-life along the coastal areas of Africa and Italy.

¹⁰⁸Blanchard-Lemée, *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 122, 128.

The citizens of Rome and her empire recorded the activities of daily life not only in their literature but also in the art used to decorate their homes. Mosaics, paintings, and sculptural reliefs portraying many types of rural pursuits associated with the production of food decorated urban dwellings throughout the empire. As stated by many Roman authors, country life was more enriching to one's character than life in the evil city. Moreover, homeowners in the provinces and in Italy could show their *Romanitas* by adorning the public areas of their homes with images of the food items they provided for the people and the city of Rome itself: grain and oil from Africa, wine from Gaul and Italy, fish from those living on the coast. From coating *dolia* with pitch and plowing fields to carrying baskets of grain and transporting crops to the city, no task was too mundane to record.

CHAPTER 2

IN THE CITY

Once the crops had been harvested and the wine or oil had been made on the villa, it was necessary to transport the products to the market in the city. According to Varro a farm would be more profitable if it had the ability to ship its products from the villa by road or by river.¹⁰⁹ Cato agreed that a farm should be near a flourishing town or the sea or a navigable river or a good and much traveled road.¹¹⁰ There is little in the way of literary evidence for the types of vehicles used to transport goods by land but the transportation of grapes and wine is one of the most widely represented activities in Roman art. Although the shapes of baskets and the types of vehicles vary from era to era and province to province, there are similarities in the iconography of the images. In many depictions, the attitude of the oxen or draught animals is the same: one animal leans forward and swishes his tail against his flank as the other animal extends his neck, always with the yoke visible between the two. In front of them a peasant typically turns back with his stick to encourage the animals to proceed. Some of the images illustrate *plaustra* while others show *carri*; some wheels are solid wheels while others are spoked.¹¹¹ Sometimes a vehicle has a rounded instead of squared frame.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹Varro *Rust.* 1.16 2-6.

¹¹⁰Cato *Agr.* 1.3.3-4.

¹¹¹A *plaustrum* is a flat-bed cart with no sides or sides made of material woven like a basket. A *carrus* is a cart with solid sides.

¹¹²M. M. Molin, "Le transport du raisin ou du vin par la route à l'époque romaine en Gaule et dans les provinces voisines," in *Archeologie de la vigne et du vin en Gaule et dans les provinces voisines: Caesarodunum, Tome 24* (Paris: De Boccard, 1990), 205-11.

Plaustrum Transporting Grapes (Figure 40) is an example of this type of bas-relief from third-century Italy. In the relief, the peasant stands beside the heads of the oxen and holds a stick with which he goads them onward. Another peasant walks behind the



Figure 40

animals but instead of prodding them forward, he holds his stick over his shoulder. Behind him is a solid-wheeled *plaustrum* in which there are grapes in a basket. The oxen are in the usual attitude: the one closest to the viewer has his head lowered while

the other ox's head is raised, clearly displaying the yoke to the observer.

In a slight variation on the same theme, a third or fourth-century sarcophagus relief from Rome (Figure 41) shows oxen in the usual attitude yoked to a *plaustrum* of the same type as previously described. In this wagon there is a *culleus*, an animal skin used for transporting wine, instead of a basket containing produce.



Figure 41

Additionally, there is no peasant pushing the oxen from behind, although in front of them there is a driver holding a stick. A well-dressed gentleman, perhaps the master, rides on horseback ahead of the team as another peasant walks ahead of the horse with a staff in one hand and a bag (of money?) in the other. The building in the background is possibly for storage, since it is similar in shape and construction to those seen on the

Thabraca mosaic (Figure 17) and other depictions of storehouses. This building may be part of a town where the goods have been sold, since the leading man is passing by a milestone inscribed with the number five (V) indicating that he is five miles from the city center.



Figure 42

In the transportation of wine, barrels were not much used in Italy until the end of the third century, but a few



Figure 43

second-century representations can be found on Trajan's column and the Arch of Septimus Severus, both of which depict the Roman army on the march.¹¹³ In his *Historia Naturalis* 14.132, Pliny mentions that in the regions of the Alps (*circa Alpes*), wine is put into casks (*tegulis*). These vessels, also called *cupae*, were probably a Gallic or northern Etruscan invention of the first century BC.¹¹⁴ *Transport of Wine* (Figure 42), from Langres in northern France, illustrates mules pulling a wine barrel on a cart with a heavy chassis to support the weight of

the massive barrel.¹¹⁵ The mules, just as the oxen in previous illustrations from Italy, are yoked and driven by a man with a whip. Although the barrel in figure 42 does not appear

¹¹³Molin, 210-13. The *cullens* was more commonly used to transport wine in Italy in the first through fourth centuries.

¹¹⁴Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 379.

¹¹⁵White, *Greek and Roman Technology*, 133.

to be strapped to the vehicle, the one in *Wine Merchant* (Figure 43, second or third century) has a visible strap across the middle of the barrel attached to the cart. Only one man, who stands at the side of the animals, drives the ox in this tomb relief from Trier. They have



Figure 44

evidently entered a town, as a gateway is visible in the background, and the wineshop is depicted above. Delivery of wine within a town can be seen on a tavern sign (Figure 44), found near the forum in Pompeii (*Reg.* VI.x.1). This cart, however, bears an animal

skin *cullens* (cf. Figure 41), the neck of which is bound closed by a cord. An individual uses one of the legs as the spigot from which wine is being poured into an *amphora*.

The Romans transported barrels by sea as well as on land. *Towing of a Boat Loaded with Barrels* (Figure 45) and *Riverbarge* (Figure 46) both depict the transport of barrels by ship.



Figure 45

In figure 45, a third-century relief from Cabrières d'Aigues, France, one sailor steers with his oar while two men pull the small canoe-like boat containing only two barrels. The decoration on the relief above the scene shows *amphorae* covered in wickerwork to protect them during transport. The *Riverbarge*, part of the funeral monument of a third-century wine merchant from

Noviomagus (Neumagen, Germany),¹¹⁶ depicts *amphorae* even more clearly. In this three dimensional sculpture, several men are rowing a vessel, much larger than the boat in the previous figure.¹¹⁷ There are seven men with oars on the side of the barge facing the



Figure 46

viewer and the heads of two more can be seen peeking from behind the barrels on the opposite side. In front of the barge, facing the seven oarsmen, is another man who seems to be beating out the cadence for their strokes. There are five barrels

stored on each side of the barge and between them are stacked many *amphorae* covered in basketry to protect them from breakage during the journey.¹¹⁸ Once a ship or barge



Figure 47

reached its destination, porters would unload these barrels or *amphorae*. At the Piazzale delle Corporazioni at Ostia, a second- or third-century mosaic in Booth 25 depicts a man transporting an *amphora* from one ship to another (Figure 47). Based on its shape and

the dolphin on the prow, the ship on the right probably represents a sea-going vessel. The

¹¹⁶www.akg.de/wirtschaft/text/54088.htm.

¹¹⁷According to Ausonius' *Mosella* 39-42, boats were rowed downstream and towed upstream. The rowers face the bow of the boat to make their strokes more powerful. Edith Mary Wightman, *Roman Trier and the Treveri* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 191.

¹¹⁸K. D. White, *Farm Equipment of the Roman World* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1975), Plate 9.

porter is transferring the *amphora* to a smaller river vessel for transport up the Tiber River to Rome.

Products other than wine were transported by much the same methods. In *Going to Market* (Figure 48) a farmer passes by a shrine to Priapus (a god of fertility, here

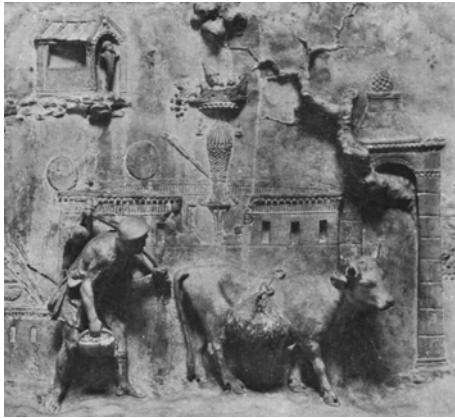


Figure 48

symbolizing the abundance of the farmer's crop) and enters the gate of a walled city. He and his ox are laden with the fruits of their labors. He himself is carrying a basket of produce in his right hand and with the left holds a hare over his shoulder. His ox, not yoked to a cart, carries sacks of produce strapped across his back. The

blessing of a deity can also be seen in a *lararium* found in the peristyle of a house at Reg. I. xiv.6/7 in Pompeii. This altar is painted with a scene of the loading of onions for which Pompeii was famous (Figure 49). In fact, Pompeii gave its



Figure 49

name to a particular variety, *Pompeiana cepa*, and Columella even gives instructions for preserving them. Several workers on a platform are weighing baskets of onions before they are carried down a ramp to a small boat. To the left, the personification of the

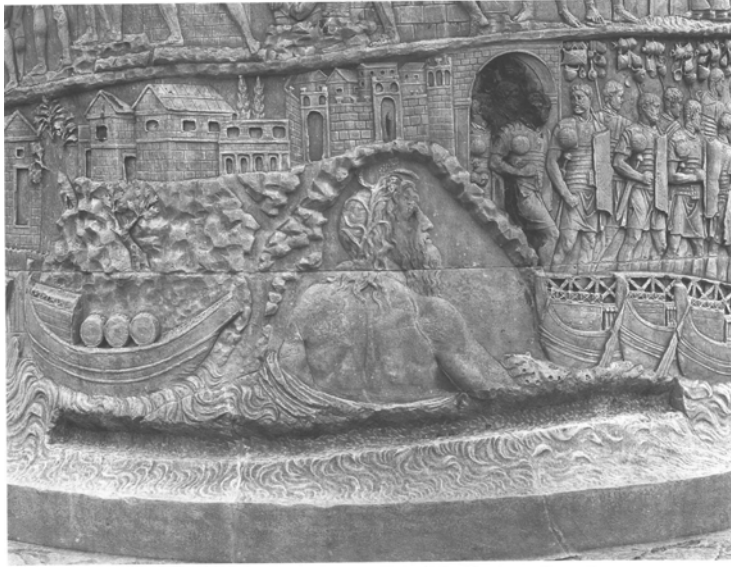


Figure 50

bearded Sarnus River
pours water into the
river to bless it.¹¹⁹ A
depiction of a river god
blessing a shipment can
be seen as well on
Trajan's column (Figure
50). In a gesture of
goodwill, the
personification of the

Danube rises from the river in front of a fortified city in Moesia Superior where a small ship carrying barrels of wine is moored in the harbor.¹²⁰ It is difficult to determine whether this scene represents the delivery of military supplies to the camp, a cross-river attack, or the transport of goods for sale, since there are no workers in the image. In the previous scene, two men (soldiers?) are loading barrels onto a small boat, next to which stands a soldier with a shield. In each scene, storehouses resembling those in the Thabraca mosaic and Moselle fresco (Figures 17 and 28) line the banks of the river.

The transport of grain was an entirely different matter and was controlled by the government. Grain was the most important crop since it was used to make porridge and

¹¹⁹Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 60; 356, note 12. Columella *Rust.* 12.10.1. Father Sarnus appears again in the *lararium* of the baker Papirius Sabinus (*Reg.* IX.iii.20), where he pours water from a vessel.

¹²⁰Lino Rossi, *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars*, trans. J. M. C. Toynbee (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 132.

flour for bread to feed the vast population of the empire. Since it was less expensive to import grain to the coastal areas of Italy by ship than to transport it by road directly from the fields in the interior, Italian grain was used to feed those living in the cities and towns in the central portion of the country in addition to the slaves and livestock on the farms themselves. It was more profitable for farms and estates along the coastal areas of Campania and Latium to grow grapes and olives than grain.¹²¹ Therefore, in giving advice about purchasing an estate, Cato states that first it should have a vineyard: *vinea est prima, si vino bono et multo est.*¹²²

Each emperor added to the amount of land available for the production of grain and kept it under government control. Each administrator in charge of the *annona*, or the dole, found new ways to attract merchants to transport the grain and to improve the ports at Ostia and Puteoli. In the Augustan era, North Africa exported sixty million *modii* of grain per year, with twenty million *modii* of grain from the province of Egypt alone. However, there was no government-owned fleet by which all of this grain could be transported, and Roman officials relied on private shipowners to move the vast quantities needed to feed the empire.¹²³ According to Suetonius, the emperor Claudius gave incentives to shipbuilders and owners to build larger ships and contract them to carry grain even during the winter months. He says, “to the citizen (is given) an exemption from the Papian-Poppaeian law, to the Latin (is given) the right of citizens, to women (is given) the right of four children,” *civi vacationem legis Papiae Poppaeae, Latino ius Quiritium,*

¹²¹C. A. Yeo, “Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 77 (1946): 241.

¹²²Cato *Agr.* 1. 7.

¹²³Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 231-33.

feminis ius IIII liberorum.¹²⁴ At Ostia in the Piazzale delle Corporazioni, the mosaic found at the entrance of Booth 21, the office of the Karalis businessmen (Figure 51), shows a sailing vessel flanked on each side by a *modius*. The inscription reads NAVICUL(i)·ET·NECOTIANTES KARALITANI, “the shippers and traders of Karalis,” with the object of their business being grain clearly depicted by the two *modii*.

Once grain reached the harbor it was off-loaded by *saccarii* who carried the grain in sacks from the large freighters onto smaller river barges for the trip up the Tiber River to Rome. There is no evidence that carts were allowed in the courtyards of



Figure 51

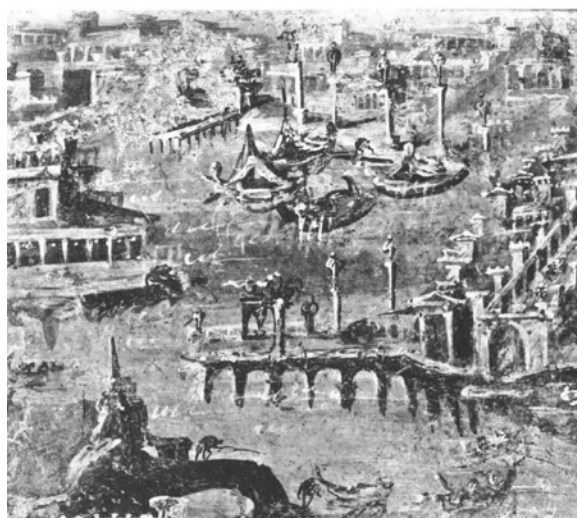


Figure 52

Ostian warehouses, since the ramps there were designed for men to carry the loads.¹²⁵ Whatever could not be transported to Rome immediately was taken to warehouses for storage. According to K. D. White, the fresco from Herculaneum, *Harbor at Puteoli* (Figure 52), illustrates many storehouses along the waterfront. In

¹²⁴Suetonius *Claud.* 18-19.

¹²⁵Geoffrey Rickman, *Roman Granaries and Store Buildings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 8.

the foreground is the harbor with an arcaded mole behind which are ships at anchor or at berths. In the background is the town with its warehouses lining the wharfs.¹²⁶

The painting of the *Isis Giminiana* (Figure 53), found in an Ostian tomb outside the Porta Laurentina, shows the loading of the ship with sacks of grain, carried by *saccarii* who



Figure 53

approach on a ramp. The master Farnaces stands at the rudder, while in the center of the ship a man pours grain from a sack marked *res* (“goods”) into a *modius* as the corn measurer Arscanius

supervises. A second corn measurer rests from his labors in the bow of the ship with a full *modius* marked *Feci*, “I have finished.” The mast in the center shows no sign of a sail, but is perhaps intended instead for ropes by which the vessel would be towed up the river to Rome (cf. Figure 45).¹²⁷ In the Hall

of the Measurers in Ostia’s warehouse district, there are several mosaic representations of these corn measurers (Figure 54). In this mosaic, a *saccarius* comes forward with a sack of grain as the corn measurer himself stands near the *modius* with his leveling stick as three men watch. The child counts the number of sacks of grain with the tallies he holds in his left hand. Unfortunately, the inscription is



Figure 54

¹²⁶White, *Greek and Roman Technology*, 109.

¹²⁷Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 294.

damaged and cannot be read, but another inscription in the same building (*Corpus Mensurum*) identifies it as the headquarters for the Measurers' Guild.¹²⁸

Once grain arrived in the city, it needed to be processed into flour or baked into bread. Although some grain was milled before leaving the countryside, most of it was processed in the city at its mills/bakeries. In Pompeii alone (population estimated at ten thousand), there were over 110 mills.¹²⁹ In addition to the *mola trusatilis* (hand-mill) and watermill (discussed in Chapter One), there was also the *mola asinaria* turned by slaves or animals. In the *Brutus*,¹³⁰ the orator Marcus Tullius Cicero gives the date of 160 BC for the advent of rotary mills, but the comic playwright Plautus writes of mills and mill-houses as punishment for slaves. It is probable, therefore, that they were known before Plautus's death in 184 BC.¹³¹ This type of mill, generally turned by donkeys or horses, was composed of two parts: the *meta*, a bell-shaped stationary lower stone over which the *catillus*, or hollow hour-glass shaped upper stone, revolved.¹³² An ancient riddle described the workings of this type of mill:

*Ambo sumus lapides, una sumus, ambo iacemus.
Quam piger est unus, tantum non est piges alter:
Hic manet immotus, non desinit ille moveri.*¹³³

We are both stones, we are one, we both remain in place.
As lazy as is the one, the other is not lazy. This one remains
immovable, that one does not stop being moved.

¹²⁸Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, 313.

¹²⁹Jan Theo Bakker, *The Mills-Bakeries of Ostia* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1999), 13. This is the estimate given by Bakker for the population at the time of the eruption of Vesuvius.

¹³⁰Cicero *Brutus* 60.

¹³¹L.A. Moritz, *Grain-mills and Flour in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 67.

¹³²White, *Greek and Roman Technology*, 65.

¹³³"Symphosii Aenigmata, no. 286 li" in *Anthologia Latina*, ed. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1982), 187.

The *mola asinaria* illustrated on a sarcophagus relief from the vineyard of Sassus at the Porta Latina (Figure 55) shows the *catillus/meta* on the right turned by a blindfolded mule.



Figure 55

Barely visible to the left of the mule are the remnants of a figure spurring on the animal with a whip as two other workers pour and measure the

grain.¹³⁴ The poet Apuleius describes this very scene when Lucius, the main character of his *Metamorphoses*, says that he saw “in the mill there were several pack-animals turning millstones of varying dimensions by repeatedly circling them.... I was blindfolded and at once pushed on the curving course.”¹³⁵ When Lucius tried to wander from the prescribed path, he was beaten by workers with sticks.

A similar relief from Tomb 78 in the necropolis of Isola Sacra near Ostia depicts a horse-driven mill (Figure 56; late first-century).

This brick tomb, built by Tiberius Claudius Eutychus for himself, his family and his freedmen, shows the *catillus/meta*, above which there is a beam with a hopper into which the grain would be poured. The blindfolded horse to the right of the mill appears to be walking forward in

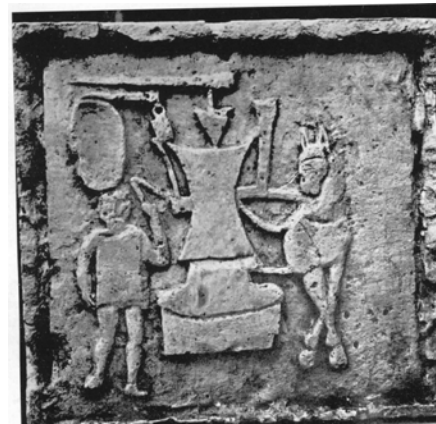


Figure 56

¹³⁴Paola Ciano Rossetto, *Sepolcro del Fornaio Marco Virgilio Eurisace a Porta Maggiore* (Rome: Istituti di Studi Romani, 1973), 45.

¹³⁵Apuleius, *Met.* 9.11-13.

a clockwise direction as illustrated by his crossed legs. The tunic-clad worker to the left of the mill stands under a basket or sieve hanging on the wall and appears to hold a whip. Above the worker and attached to the same beam as the funnel is a bell which would ring with every rotation of the mill to alert the overseer that the animal was still working.

Not only the mills, but also utensils used in the mill/bakery were depicted on tombs.

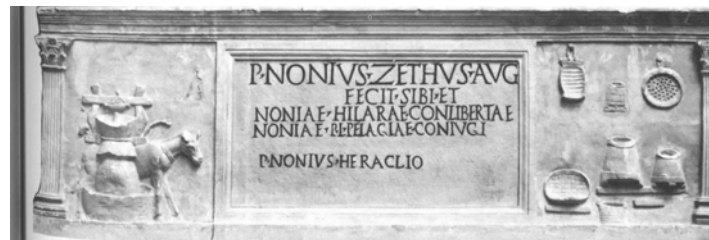


Figure 57

On the left side of the sarcophagus of the miller Publius Nonius Zethus from Ostia (Figure 57) there is a more realistic image of the donkey-turned mill with its funnel and bell, but this mill has a trough around the base to catch the meal falling from above. In contrast to other reliefs, there is no human worker in this illustration, but to the right of the inscription are several of the miller/baker's tools: two *modii* (one larger than the other), some rods for leveling the grain in the *modius*, a basket, a sieve, and various other containers perhaps used for baking.

The most elaborate of all of the bakers' tombs is the monument of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces and his wife Antistia (late first century BC) found at the Porta Maggiore in Rome (Figure 58). As one of the miller/bakers contracted by the Roman state to provide bread for the people of Rome, Eurysaces chose to depict on his tomb the entire process of creating bread from grain. The frieze begins on the south side of the monument (viewing from right to left) with the processing of grain into flour. In the first scene, men deliver grain in sacks to the bakery while toga-clad officials at a table record on tablets the amount delivered. In the next scene, two donkey mills grind the grain into

flour; troughs around the bases catch the falling meal. Nearby, two slaves with sieves stand at a table and sift the meal so that the flour is fine, while at the next table another toga-clad individual, probably a government official, checks the quality of the product.

The north side of the monument illustrates the baking of the bread into loaves.

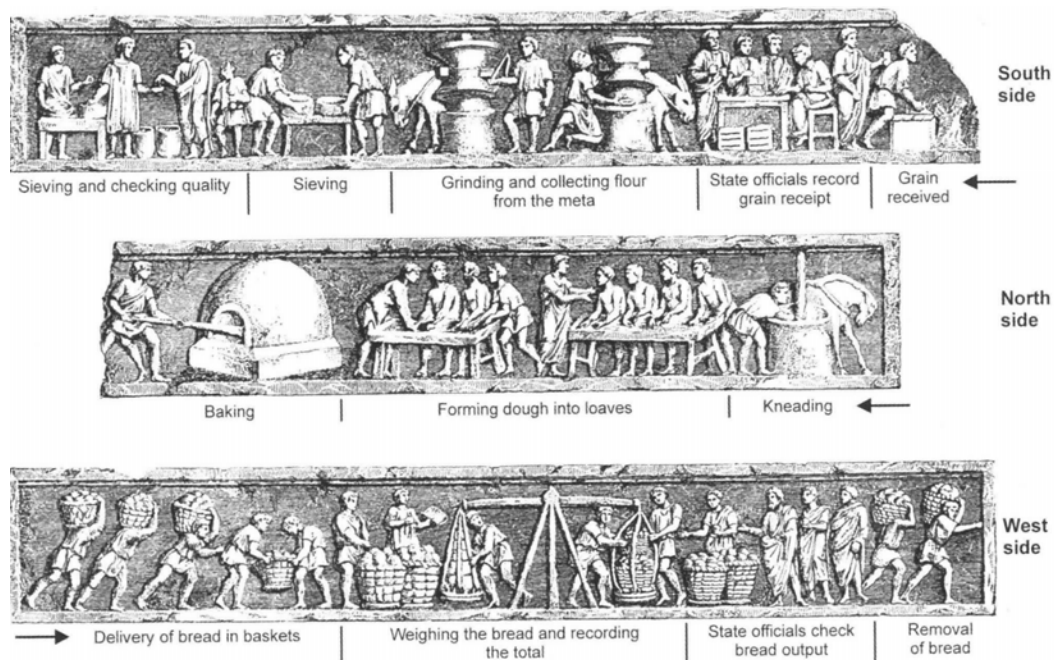


Figure 58

Unlike those who kneaded small amounts of dough by hand for personal use, professional bakers used machines to knead the large quantities of dough required for their businesses. Again viewing from right to left, the first scene illustrates the use of a horse-driven machine used to knead the dough. The horse is harnessed to a pole placed in the center of a large trough in which there must be some sort of horizontal beam to mix the dough. A worker reaches into the trough, perhaps to add ingredients or to free the arms from the mixture. Although the images on the monument are very detailed, there is no portrayal of the actual ingredients being placed into the kneading trough. At two tables nearby, eight

workers form the dough into loaves under the watchful eyes of another government official. The bread is then placed into a beehive-shaped oven reminiscent of the one depicted on the rustic calendar from Vienne (Figure 31), and the worker uses the same type of tool to maneuver the loaves. In the last set of images on the west side of the monument, the loaves of bread are carried in baskets to government officials who weigh the baskets and record the amounts. In the last scene, the baskets of bread are being carried away for delivery.¹³⁶

Another type of food-processing recorded on funeral monuments is butchery. According to Columella it was standard to keep sheep on a farm¹³⁷ and Varro asks who would cultivate a farm without swine.¹³⁸ It is known from archaeological remains that the Romans ate a wide variety of meats, including beef, mutton, goat, boar, hare, dormice, and a large assortment of poultry and fowl. A Roman could shop for his meat at the *Forum Boarium* (Cattle Market) or *Forum Suarium* (Pig Market), which were supplied from nearby estates, or could purchase it from the *quaestors* who sold leftovers from public sacrifices or gladiatorial games in order to supplement the treasury. The emperors sometimes distributed meat from the sacrifices and games as gifts and also had meat thrown into the stands during the games. In the third century, the emperor Aurelian added pork and wine to the bread dole.¹³⁹ Meat, especially bacon, also made up a portion of the Roman

¹³⁶Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 358-65.

¹³⁷Columella *Rust.* 7.6.5.

¹³⁸Varro *Rust.* 2.4.3.

¹³⁹Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 395-96.

soldier's rations along with bread, wine, salt, and oil. And, of course, cooked meat could be purchased from street vendors, shops, and at inns.¹⁴⁰

The animals to be used for meat were sometimes butchered on the farm and the already processed meat then transported to the city, or the live animals were driven to the



Figure 59

city on the hoof and sold to a *lanius* (“butcher”) who would slaughter them at the *laniena* (“slaughterhouse”). These buildings, including holding pens and the actual *abattoir*, were usually

placed on the outskirts of town because of the strong smell of the animals and meat processing. In addition to the *lanius*, there was also a *macellarius* who would butcher previously slaughtered animals and sell the meat at the *macellum*.¹⁴¹

Images depicting the activities of butchers can be found on several funeral monuments in Rome and Ostia. Many details of a butcher shop are given on a second-century marble relief (Figure 59), found at Rome, in which the butcher holds a raised cleaver above some pork ribs resting on a chopping block (*caudex*). There is a bowl on the floor in front of the block to catch the blood and fragments, and there are several different cuts of meat hanging on the beam above: a pig's head, lungs, stomach, bones, a haunch, and more ribs. Behind the butcher a set of scales for weighing the meat hangs on

¹⁴⁰Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 125-26.

¹⁴¹Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 398.

the wall underneath a larger cleaver, while in front of him, in a tall-backed chair, sits a female bookkeeper (perhaps the butcher's wife) holding her tablet of accounts.¹⁴²



Figure 60

In a comparable image found at Isola Sacra (Figure 60), a butcher, raised cleaver in hand, stands at a block ready to chop a piece of meat. Just as in figure 59, several of the same cuts of meat hang from a beam above and there are scales on the wall behind the



Figure 61

butcher. Missing from this illustration is the seated woman; however, two live female pigs (The teats are represented.) approach from the left of the relief and at least one more from the right (a portion of the right side is missing). Perhaps this indicates that the man is a *lanius*

who will slaughter the pigs before butchering them and not just a *macellarius*. Another second-century relief made of Italian marble (Figure 61) from the tomb of Titus Julius Vitalis was found in the wall of a building in Trastevere (Rome), although its provenance

¹⁴²Natalie Boymel Kampen, *Image and Status: Roman Working Women in Ostia* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1981), 118. It is noteworthy that this woman represents the only clear image of a bookkeeper (*libraria* or *amanuensis*) in Roman art.

is not known. This monument is similar to the others in that it depicts the butcher in the same working stance with the meat portions hanging from a beam, but it also names the butcher and provides a portrait of him as well. The inscription *Semper Ebria* indicates that his cuts of meat were “always juicy.”

The previous three reliefs depicting butchers have all been identified as funerary



Figure 62

monuments based upon their provenance. A fourth relief (Figure 62, second century), incomplete on the left side and of unknown origin, could be another funerary relief or, depending upon its original location, a shop sign. Using the same imagery as seen in the three reliefs above, this piece also shows a butcher preparing to cut a piece of meat with

the cleaver he holds in his raised right hand. In this scene, however, in front of the chopping block on which the butcher prepares to cut a haunch of meat, there stands a customer with an outstretched hand, perhaps in the act of explaining how he would like the portions cut. To the left are two other men above whom hang the heads of pigs. As will be discussed later, shop scenes with vendors and customers are common on funeral monuments, but they are also found on shop signs.

Although the Romans did not have all of today’s technology, they did advertise their shops and goods in many ways. As evidenced by the Piazzale delle Corporazioni in Ostia (Figures 47 and 51), businessmen often placed mosaic signs on the thresholds of their establishments to advertise their services. Even though there were market squares in

the city of Rome itself, there was no true business district and shops were located in all areas of town. According to the historian Livy, the censor Titus Sempronius bought the house of Publius Africanus and the adjacent stores and butchers' shops to build the Sempronian *basilica*.¹⁴³ Nor does there seem to have been a taboo against renting part of one's home to a merchant. Although archaeological finds are rare, plaques advertised goods and services in many towns. One such plaque, a terra-cotta goat indicating a retailer of milk, was found in the wall of a shop-front at the baths north of the forum in Pompeii.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps the relief of the butcher (Figure 62) was hung beside or above the entrance of a shop as well.

Not surprisingly, wine was advertised in several shops and taverns in Pompeii, a town situated in the fertile Campanian area known for its vineyards. The wineshop in *Reg. IX.ix.6/7* on the Via di Nola was situated near the gates of the city for ease of delivery of wine and goods from the countryside. In this shop, 114 *amphorae*, many with inscriptions, were found during the excavations.



Figure 63

Porters Delivering an Amphora (Figure 63) can be found *in situ* above the entrance to a wineshop (*Reg. VII.iv.16*) not far from the terra-cotta goat plaque near the Forum. This tufa relief depicts two men carrying on their shoulders an amphora strapped to a pole, thus illustrating how wine would be delivered to the purchaser's home after the sale had

¹⁴³Livy 44.16.10-11.

¹⁴⁴Thomas Henry Dyer, *Pompeii: Its History, Buildings, and Antiquities*, 2^d ed. (New York: Scribner, Welford, and Company, 1870), 85.

been concluded.¹⁴⁵ A fresco showing the delivery of wine using an animal-skin container (Figure 44) was possibly the sign for a tavern found near the Forum in Pompeii (*Reg.* VI.x.1). The merchant is pouring wine from the leg/spigot into an *amphora* of the same shape as that found in Figure 63. In a fresco more reminiscent of a modern billboard, *Ad Cucumas* (Figure 64) exhorts the potential consumer in Herculaneum to find his favorite type of wine “At the Bowls.” The artist has painted six jugs of wine and has labeled each with the price of wine served in the shop.

Another liquid sold in jars was *garum*, the ever-present fish sauce used all over the Roman Empire. In the previously mentioned wineshop on the Via di Nola in Pompeii (*Reg.* IX.ix.6/7), archaeologists found seven



Figure 64

urvei, containers for fish sauce. Whether the contents of these particular vessels were for sale or family use is unknown since the amount was small, but fish sauce was sold in the city of Pompeii. The Faustus family, known to be dealers in *garum*, owned a house on the Via Stabiana (*Reg.* I.ii.1) on the rear wall of which there was a painting (now destroyed) of

¹⁴⁵Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 219-21. In wineshop IX.ix.6-7 there were *amphorae* of local vintages as well as the famous Surrentine and Falernian wines which Martial so praised in his list of wines (*Ep.* 13.108-25). DeFelice disagrees with Jashemski regarding the tufa relief of the porters at VII.iv.16. Since there is no counter as evidence that this was a shop, he states that it was used instead as a meeting place for porters. John DeFelice, *Roman Hospitality: The Professional Women of Pompeii* (Warren Center, PA: Shangri-La Publications, 2001), 269.

a pool full of fish.¹⁴⁶ In the secondary atrium of another house in Pompeii (Reg. VII.xvi.12-16), there once was a black and white mosaic pavement with an *urceus* or *garum* jar at each corner of the *impluvium* (Figure 65, c. AD 25-35). The *tituli picti* on the *urcei* are



Figure 65

different but three of them identify the owner of the house as Aulus Umbricius Scaurus, a very wealthy *garum* dealer. One inscription states that the contents are *liquamen optimum ex offici[n]a Scauri*, “the best fish sauce from Scaurus’ business.” This mosaic would have served as an advertisement to visitors that the owner was a dealer in fish sauce.¹⁴⁷

However, not all signs advertised liquid substances. Another very simple shop sign (Figure 66), found in a



Figure 66

bakery in Pompeii, depicts a donkey mill. This round relief shows a donkey yoked to a *mola asinaria* of the same type as illustrated in Figures 55-57. However, this mill image is more stylized than realistic in form and does not appear as if

¹⁴⁶Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 111.

¹⁴⁷Robert I. Curtis, “A Personalized Floor Mosaic from Pompeii,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 88, no.4 (1984), 557-61. The *tituli picti* on the other three *urcei* are G(ari) F(los) SCO[M](bri)/SCAURI/EX/OFFI[C]I/NA SCAU/RI (the flower of *garum*, made from mackerel of Scaurus, from the business of Scaurus); LIQUA(men)/FLOS (*liquamen*, the flower); and G(ari) F(los) SCOM(bri)/SCAURI (flower of *garum*, made from mackerel of Scaurus).

it could stand on its own because of the rounded shape of the base. It is interesting to note that although there were over 110 mills in the city of Pompeii, this is the only shop-sign yet to be found for a mill/bakery. In Ostia, near the forum and the river, a more elaborate advertisement (Figure 67), rare in the form of a still-life, can be found in a large *thermopolium* on the Via di Diana (I.ii.5). Here an artist painted green olives, a turnip, eggs



Figure 67

or peaches in a glass jar, and two red cheeses (or watermelons) on the wall above a table, thus depicting for the customer the types of food that he could purchase in the establishment.¹⁴⁸ The image of the

fruits and cheeses recalls the words of the Syrian hostess to her guest in the *Copa*, a poem of unknown origin found in the *Appendix Vergiliana*. The *copa* invites a traveler to rest and partake of her hospitality as she lists what foods she has to offer:

*Quid iuvat aestivo defessum pulvere abisse
quam potius bibulo decubuisse toro?...
sunt et caseoli...cerea pruna...et rubentia mala,
sunt et mora cruenta et lentis uva racemis,
et pendet iunco caeruleus cucumis.*¹⁴⁹

What helps a tired man to retire from summer dust
more than to recline thirsty on a couch?
there are even little cheeses, and waxy plums, and red apples,
there are both blood-red mulberries and grapes in sticky clusters
and a green cucumber hangs from a reed.

¹⁴⁸Hermansen, *Ostia*, 130-31. In this tavern, excavators found three bronze hooks that could have been used to hang such food items. In the middle of the room was a *dolium* large enough to hold two hundred gallons of wine.

¹⁴⁹*Appendix Vergiliana. Copa* 5-6, 17-22.

Except for the cheeses, the items in the *copa's* list are not exactly the same as those painted in the fresco, but they give a similar glimpse into the types of foods one could have purchased at a tavern. The fact that there is no meat in the fresco or in the list may refer to the laws prohibiting the sale of meat in taverns and cook-shops.¹⁵⁰

Images of vendors selling their wares in shops, at counters, and at sidewalk stands appear throughout the empire and show a wide range of foodstuffs for sale. Hundreds of small shops scattered throughout Pompeii were open to the street with their counters facing the sidewalks; shutters were used to secure the shops when closed. Since there were none of the zoning laws so prevalent in today's society to separate the residential areas from the commercial ones, vendors could also sell their wares in the forum, at portable sidewalk stands, and near the amphitheatre. In fact, in many of the homes of the wealthiest citizens in Pompeii and Herculaneum, the rooms at the front of the house facing main thoroughfares were often rented to shopkeepers. This practice would supplement the income of Rome's elite during the times of the year when there were few returns from country estates.¹⁵¹ Graffiti found on the walls indicate that poulterers sold

¹⁵⁰Hermansen, *Ostia*, 130, 200-03. According to Cassius Dio (60.6.7), the emperor Claudius closed taverns where the guilds met and prohibited the sale of cooked meat in the ones that remained open. This particular tavern on the Via di Diana is known to have been the guild seat of the *lenuncularii* (floorplan, Appendix 6). However, Suetonius (*Claudius* 40) says that during a Senate debate about wine-sellers and butchers, the emperor Claudius mentions that in his younger years he had been able to buy snacks in the taverns, for *quis potest sine ofula vivere* (who is able to live without morsels)? It seems that the butchers wanted a monopoly on the sale of meat.

¹⁵¹Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Elites and Trade in the Roman Town," 259-61. In his study of Pompeii, Wallace-Hadrill discovered that of the thirty houses averaging 800m² with *atria*, peristyles, and surviving decorations, thirteen had no commercial space. However, these thirteen are located away from main thoroughfares, whereas the other seventeen are located on the Via dell' Abbondanza, Via Stabiana, and Via Nocera. This same mix of residential and commercial seems to be suggested by the excavations at Volubilis (Morocco), although other towns throughout the empire need to be studied further. See Garnsey, P. D. A, "Urban Property Investment," in *Studies in Roman Property*, ed. M. I. Finley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 129-36.

their meat along the Via di Nola and Via Stabiana. According to the graffito beside its door, the shop of Felix (*Reg.* I.viii.1) on the Via dell' Abbondanza belonged to a *pomarius* (fruit vendor). The orchards in Pompeii, such as the one at *Reg.* I.xxii, would have provided produce for shops and fruit peddlers.¹⁵² Funerary inscriptions indicate that many food vendors were women: Abudia Megiste sold grain at the Middle Stairs in Rome,



Figure 68

Aurelia Nais sold fish at the Warehouses of Galba, and Pollecla sold vegetables on the Via Nova.¹⁵³ Food was also sold at the baths and at town fairs (*mercatus*) after large public games. In Rome, markets were held after the *Ludi Apollinares* (July 14-19), the *Ludi Romani* (September 20-23), and the *Ludi*

Plebei (November 18-20), although the exact location of the markets is not known. Traces of booths have been found near the amphitheatre in Pompeii, and inscriptions in the city specify the locations of the stalls.¹⁵⁴ Although the main theme of the Pompeian

¹⁵²Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 12, 265; CIL 4. 1768, 1769.

¹⁵³CIL 6.9683, 9801, 9684.

¹⁵⁴Joan Frayn, *Markets and Fairs In Roman Italy: Their Social and Economic Importance from the Second Century BC to the Third Century AD* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 5, 134. Food at the baths is mentioned by Martial (*Ep.* 12.19). Seneca, who lived above the baths, states that he could hear the food vendors hawking their wares at the baths, *omnes popinarum institores mercem sua quadam et insignita modulatione vendentis* (*Ep.* 6.56.2). Dates for the markets can be found in CIL vol. 1, part 1. The *Fasti Maffeiiani* are given on p. 225, with the days after the *ludi* marked "*merk.*" The dates for the *Fasti Antiates* are given on p. 248, with the days after the *ludi* marked "*mercatus dies.*" Inscriptions giving the locations of the amphitheatre stalls in Pompeii can be found in CIL 4.1096, 1096a, 1097a, 1097b, 1115. For traces of the booths found in the excavations of Pompeii, see M. Della Corte, *Casa ed abitanti a Pompeii*, 3^d ed. (Naples: Faustino Fiorentino, 1965).

fresco *Conflict between the Pompeians and the Nucerians* (Figure 68; Reg. I.iii.23) is the public brawl that took place at the amphitheatre in AD 59, it illustrates the sale of foodstuffs at concession stands during public games.¹⁵⁵ In the foreground of the painting are small food tents and trestle stands being overrun by those involved in the fight. It is not

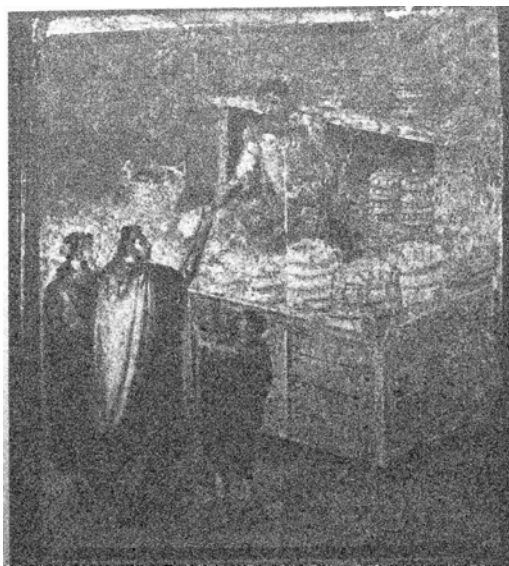


Figure 69

possible to determine from the image the types of foods being sold.

Representations of vendors from all over the empire utilize the same iconography in the arrangement of the scene regardless of whether the salesperson is male or female. The figure behind the counter is the seller who usually gestures towards the goods for

sale. The buyer stands to the front or side of the counter. *Distribution of Bread* (Figure 69), a first-century AD Pompeian fresco from Reg. VII.iii.30, depicts the sale of bread. A vendor stands behind a wooden counter on which loaves of bread are stacked. Behind him is another counter and an upper shelf both containing more loaves and to his side is yet another counter with a basket of cakes. This man is standing, in the usual attitude for a vendor, with

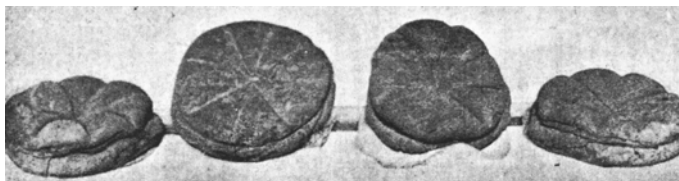


Figure 70

¹⁵⁵Tac. *Ann.* 14.17.

his arm outstretched to give a loaf of bread to one of his three customers. The loaves, just like the carbonized ones excavated from ovens in Pompeii, are scored in wedge-shaped sections from the bread mould (Figure 70).¹⁵⁶

Poultry Vendor (Figure 71) is a late second-century Italian marble relief found on the ground at the entrance to a shop on the Via dell Foce in Ostia (*Reg.* III). The female



Figure 71

vendor, dressed in a tunic to show her working class status, stands at the temporary counter made of a row of cages and

offers an unusual variety of goods for one stall. Rabbits' heads and chickens protrude from the bars of the cages, while on the makeshift countertop are two bowls of fruit and a tall basket. It is possible that this may contain snails since on the wall behind the basket hangs the image of a snail, perhaps as a signboard for its contents. Otherwise, only the small hole near the top of the basket might identify it as one for snails, for, according to Apicius (*de re coquinaria* 7.16), snails were kept in containers with holes. In front of a beam holding birds of unidentifiable species stand three customers, while the vendor hands his

¹⁵⁶Betty Jo Mayeske, "Bakeries, Bakers, and Bread at Pompeii: A Study in Social and Economic History," Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1972, 47-48. There is some dispute as to whether the bread in the fresco is being sold or given out in the government dole.

purchase (or change) to the first man in line.¹⁵⁷ On the other end of the counter are two monkeys, evidently not an unusual sight in Roman shops:

*Pendere ad lanium quidam vidit simium
Inter relictas merces atque opsonia.*¹⁵⁸

A certain man saw a monkey at a butcher's shop
Climbing among the leftover merchandise and food items.

These animals would have been a source of entertainment for customers and passers-by.

Poultry Vendor is unusual in that the woman has many different items for sale at one stand (produce, poultry, rabbits, and snails), and it also depicts the monkeys used for entertaining

customers. *Woman*

Cleaning Game (Figure

72) is unusual as well

because it may

actually illustrate a

female butcher and

not just a meat

vendor. Now in the



Figure 72

Torlonia Museum in Rome, this luna marble relief of unknown provenance shows two women: one sits at a table or basin with its leg carved in the shape of an animal foot and a second woman stands behind her holding a napkin. The seated woman is either plucking

¹⁵⁷Kampen, *Image and Status*, 52-59, 139. Varro speaks of several varieties of snails and also says that snails were fattened in jars with holes to provide for air-flow. These jars were lined with must and spelt (*Rust.* 3.14.5).

¹⁵⁸Phaedrus 3.4.1-2.

or bleeding a goose that hangs from the wall in front of her. On the wall behind both women are two pigs (one gutted), a hare, and three geese. In contrast to the temporary counter of the *Poultry Vendor*, the establishment in *Woman Cleaning Game* seems permanent and, perhaps it conducted business with an upper class clientele as indicated by the Corinthian column in the middle of the image, the elegant table and chair, and the womens' stylish clothing.¹⁵⁹

Not all depictions of vendors portray urban market scenes. The *Pilier du Cultivateur* (*The Farmer's Monument*) from Arlon, Belgium illustrates on two of its sides four scenes of



Figure 73

agricultural life with the farmer and his wife depicted on a third side. At upper right of this late second-century limestone funeral monument there is a cart and driver, and at the bottom the image shows a vendor displaying a basket of fruit to a customer. At lower left, some peasants are hoeing a field, while at the top (Figure 73) a vendor sells produce at a temporary counter very similar to that in *Poultry Vendor*. This counter rests on a trestle under which are three wicker baskets full of fruit. Behind the counter are a male

vendor and his female assistant, ostensibly the couple for whom the funerary monument

¹⁵⁹There is some dispute concerning the date of this relief. G. Zimmer (*Römische Berufsdarstellungen*, p.98) dates it to the third century but N. Kampen (*Image and Status*, p.154) gives an eighteenth century date. It is possible that the relief is an eighteenth-century copy of a Roman original.

was built. The customer stands at the end of the counter as the vendor gestures to the fruit; his assistant arranges the fruit at the other end of the table. It is possible that the farmer is selling his goods at a rural market or on his own estate. It is noteworthy that although this monument is in Belgium, the visual vocabulary of the relief is similar to that found in *Poultry Vendor* from Ostia, since the counter is arranged in a similar manner and the salesperson's gestures are the same.¹⁶⁰



Figure 74



Figure 75

Illustrations of beverages being sold in varying quantities are prevalent in all parts of the empire and are also similar to each other in their visual arrangement regardless of whether they depict rural or urban settings. In *Junius* (Figure 74) from the calendar mosaic in the House of the Months (Figure 14; Thysdrus), two men standing behind the counter of a temporary

wooden refreshment stand serve a drink to a traveler wearing a cape; there is no evidence for the location of the stall. Above the heads of the men hang containers. In a

¹⁶⁰Natalie Boymel Kampen, "Social Status and Gender in Roman Art: The Case of the Saleswoman," in *Roman Art in Context*, ed. Eve D'Ambra (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993), 119-20. There is another Ostian relief of the same time period which depicts a female vegetable vendor in the same pose. Although it does not portray the customer, the vendor is in the act of displaying to someone (the viewer?) her wares which rest on a similar trestle table over a basket. See image in Appendix 6.

comparable scene from a funeral monument in Dijon, France, *Wineshop* (Figure 75) depicts a female serving wine to a customer, maybe a traveler, wearing a cloak. Above her head



Figure 76

hang containers of varying shapes and sizes and to her left, assorted glasses are arranged on the counter.¹⁶¹ To the right of the wineshop is a butcher shop with sausages hanging above and a pig's head on the counter. A large

barrel, perhaps of lard, stands in front of the shop.¹⁶² *Junius* and *Wineshop*, both dating from the third century but from different parts of the empire, each portray the server above the customer and behind a counter with an opening through which the drink is poured and served. Although separated by a great distance and used for different purposes, these images utilize the same artistic motifs.

Recurrent motifs can also be seen in *Cupids as Wine Merchants* (Figure 76) and the *Cella Vinaria* (Figure 77), both of which illustrate the sale of a large quantity of wine directly from the cellars of the merchants to their customers. In *Cupids as Wine Merchants*, a fresco in the *oecus* of the House of the Vettii in Pompeii, two cupids pour wine from an *amphora*, and another cupid hands the cup of wine to the customer for sampling. Several

¹⁶¹Stéphanie Marin-Kilcher, "Le vin et la Suisse romaine" in *Archéologie de la vigne et du vin en Gaule et dans les provinces voisines: Caesarodunum, Tome 24* (Paris: De Boccard, 1990), 204. The funeral relief of Pompeianus Secundus of Augsburg provides a similar scene. On the wall behind the female wine merchant are barrels from Gaul and northern Italy as well as other serving vessels. The customer stands below as the merchant fills the container.

¹⁶²Joan Liversidge, *Everyday Life in the Roman Empire* (New York: Putnam, 1976), 102.

amphorae are stacked in the corner on the left. In other images from the same room (cf. Figure 25), cupids press grapes to make wine and deliver the wine to the merchants. In the second-century relief *Cella Vinaria* from Ince Blundell Hall near Liverpool, England,



Figure 77

two workers in the center ladle the wine into an *amphora*. At the top right, a clerk keeps the accounts in a notebook while at the bottom a customer samples the wine. In both the fresco

and the relief, not only is the tasting of the wine by the potential buyer important, but other scenes from its production and sale are significant as well.

Tavern scenes can also be found in other areas of Pompeii and the empire. The wall painting *Scene in a Wineshop* (Figure 78) from Mercury Street in Pompeii (*Insula*. VI, x.1)

depicts four male travelers sitting on benches as they eat and drink wine served by the man to the right of the image. The table in front of them holds serving plates and above the heads



Figure 78

of the travelers, sausages, hams and other food items hang on hooks from the wall. The men rest on backless benches of the type that Martial describes in *Epigram* 5.70.3 as *sellariolis popinis* (little cook-shop seats) and not on couches considered appropriate for dining. The painting is found in Room b (Appendix 7) of the *insula* also containing a

“fast-food” counter with *dolia* at the front of the shop for those who did not wish to sit down to eat (Room a).¹⁶³ Also in the same insula is the fresco of a wine delivery mentioned earlier (Figure 44).

Harbor and Tavern (Figure 79) illustrates an establishment similar to Room a of the



Figure 79

wineshop in Appendix 7 but this relief is located on Tomb 90 at Isola Sacra (c. AD 270). There are two scenes on this tomb: to the left of the image is a harbor with a lighthouse where a larger ship (carrying unseen *amphorae*?) is being towed to shore by a smaller one. Perhaps the man to whom this tomb belongs was both a shipper and a tavern owner. To the right, a servant hands a cup of wine to one of two travelers seated at a simple (wooden?) table as a dog (a common funeral motif) begs for scraps. Behind the servant is the typical *popina* or *thermopolium* counter with a place below for a fire with which to heat hot water and three stepped shelves above for storing glasses and other vessels.¹⁶⁴ The floorplan for Room a, Appendix 7 also shows both the counter with recesses for *dolia* and the shelves.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³Mau, 402-03. However, the table seems elaborate for a wineshop of inferior quality.

¹⁶⁴Kampen, *Image and Status*, 44-49.

¹⁶⁵Cf. also Room 8 of the floorplan of the guild of the *lenuncularii* (Appendix 6).

The same type of counter and opening for a fire is depicted on the front of a second or third-century grave-pillar relief, *Wine Merchant* (Figure 43), from Trier. Although found in another part of the empire, it uses the same visual vocabulary as the fresco from Pompeii and the tomb relief from Isola Sacra. Two travelers are seated on benches (with backs) to the right of the image, and a servant is handing a cup to one of them. The table at which they sit seems to be made of stone. Again, behind the servant, there stands a counter with the familiar opening for the fire with which to heat the *dolium* above. The artist chose not to depict shelves with glasses, but instead has shown vessels of varying sizes hanging from hooks above the counter and a barrel and wicker-cushioned *amphora* standing in front (cf. Figure 45). Reminiscent of *Harbor and Tavern* (Figure 79), the owner of the tomb must have dealt in both the transport and sale of wine, since below the tavern scene is an ox-drawn cart with a barrel of wine.

Although it contained actual taverns, the *Praedia Iuliae Felicis* on the Via dell'Abbondanza in Pompeii (Reg. II.4.1-12) did not include any tavern scenes among its many frescoes. However, it did possess one of the largest market scenes, the *Forum Frieze*, in its vestibule, only a few fragments of which remain *in situ* (floorplan Appendix 7). One of the largest areas excavated at Pompeii, this spacious and luxurious property was named for the advertisement found on an external wall:

*In Praediis Iuliae Sp(uri) F(iliae) Felicis
 Locantur Balneum Venerium et Nongentum
 Tabernae Pergulae Cenacula ex Idibus Aug
 Primis In Idus Aug Sextas Annos Continuos Quinque/
 S(i) Q(uinquennium) D(ecurrerit) L(ocatio)
 E(rit) N(udo) C(onsensu)*¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶CIL 4.1136.

On the property of Julia Felix, daughter of Spurius, are located the bath of the Venerii and the 900 (nobles?), shops, brothels (or just upper rooms?), and dining rooms from the next Ides of August to the sixth Ides of August for five continuous years. If the five years expire, the lease will be with only an agreement.

Baths, shops, taverns, apartments, a garden with four fishponds, and marble bridges have



Figure 80



Figure 81

been excavated, as well as the main structure itself. At the end of a portico is a frieze, a large fresco of rough paintings depicting the types of activities found in the forum; there are people reading public notices, a beggar, a scribe, and many vendors with their wares spread on makeshift trestle-tables or on the ground. Bread, fruit, and soup are among the items being sold along with cloth, shoes, pots and pans.¹⁶⁷ In the *Bread Peddler* (Figure 80)

¹⁶⁷Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 12, 48.

from the south wall of the vestibule, a customer is selecting rolls from the basket offered to him by the vendor. Both men lean over a trestle-type table on which baskets of rolls are displayed; a larger basket of rolls sits on the ground at the customer's feet. Behind the customer is another merchant selling pots and pans as his assistant works at an anvil. The vendor in the *Soup Seller* (Figure 81, east wall of the vestibule) stands beside a kettle heating over a fire in a basin; in the kettle is a long-handled serving spoon. He is talking to a traveler with a walking cane while two other customers (one holding tongs and the other a smaller vessel) wait to be served. To the far left of the image is a female selling fruit. Painted on the same wall is a man serving fried foods and soups (Appendix 7).¹⁶⁸

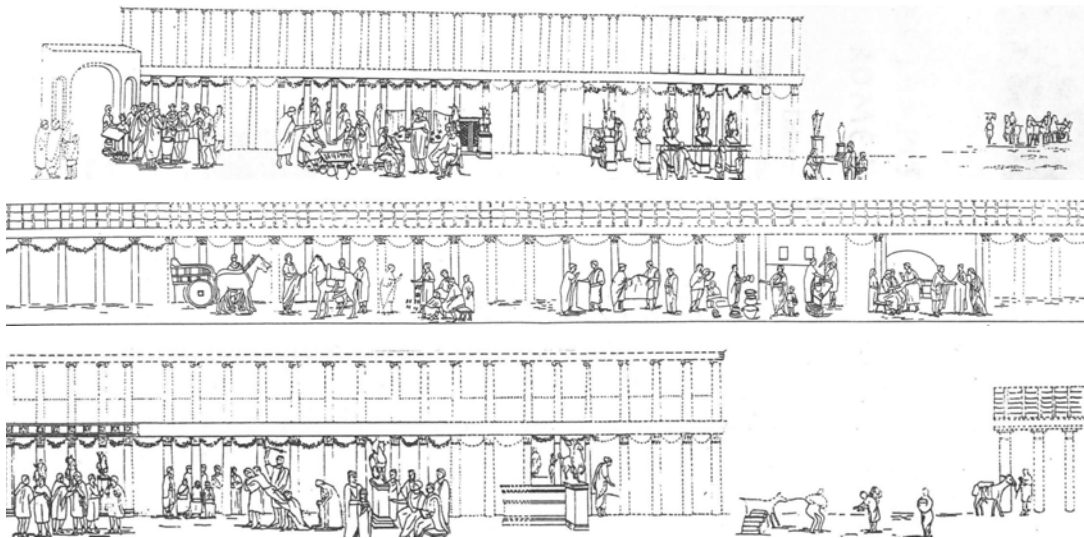


Figure 82

The archaeological remains and images found at the property of Julia Felix present the observer with a miniature view of Roman merchants within a city or town, and at the same time they utilize much of the visual vocabulary of food in Roman art as

¹⁶⁸Helen Tanzer, *The Common People of Pompeii: A Study of the Graffiti* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939), 28-30.

described above. The *Forum Frieze*, as reconstructed by Christopher Parslow (Figure 82), shows an empty donkey-pulled *plaustrum* reminiscent of those found in Figures 40 and 41. In this *insula* (for it covers a city block) excavations have uncovered a graffito advertising the offerings of the property, although no frescoed or sculpted-relief shop-signs have been unearthed. The *Forum Frieze* shows the buying and selling of food and the pots and pans for making food—all displayed on trestles or the ground by male and female vendors who gesture towards their wares just as salespeople in images from other areas of the empire. There are, as well, *thermopolia* containing their tell-tale counters with openings for pots of food and taverns with *triclinium* benches. Julia Felix was not ashamed that trade was the source of her wealth; in fact, she proclaimed it with the advertisement on the outside wall and *Forum Frieze* decorations. Just as the vestibule painting in Petronius' *Satyricon* 29 shows the visiting Encolpius the rise to wealth of his patron Trimalchio, the interior decoration in the house of Julia Felix was meant to convey a message to the visitor. Perhaps she intended for her guests (probably middle-class people) to see themselves in the images of the frieze.¹⁶⁹ A luxury home with its fishponds and frescoes (it also contains still-life paintings in other rooms), the home of Julia Felix illustrates the common mix of the residential with the commercial found in ancient Roman towns.

¹⁶⁹Christopher Parslow, "The 'Forum Frieze' of Pompeii in Its Archaeological Context," in *The Shapes of City Life in Rome and Pompeii*, eds. Mary T. Boatwright and Harry B. Evans (New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1998 [2000]), 129. Cf. also the frieze of Eurysaces in Rome depicting his life as a baker (Figure 58).

CHAPTER 3

IN THE HOME

Although many citizens and travelers in cities all over the Roman Empire frequented *tabernae*, *thermopolia*, and *popinae* for their meals, these establishments were considered to be of questionable reputation. The best place to dine was with family, friends, and clients at home. The Roman elite regarded dining as an experience to be savored and enjoyed, not an activity to be rushed or easily dismissed. *Triclinia* (dining rooms) or Corinthian *oeci* (dining rooms with colonnades on three sides) were strategically situated in the home so as to provide the best view of gardens, water-features, and game parks. There were dining rooms for different seasons with summer rooms being more open to the elements than the ones used in winter.¹⁷⁰ Cicero felt that the plan and decoration of the home should reflect a man's social and political status and, therefore, should represent the best he could offer his guests.¹⁷¹ Excavations of homes in Italy and in the provinces have shown that the most highly decorated rooms were the public ones, such as *atria* and *triclinia*. Some homeowners even placed their *triclinia* on an axis with the

¹⁷⁰Katherine Dunbabin, "Triclinium and Stibadium," in *Dining in a Classical Context*, ed. William J. Slater (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 124-29. The area between the columns in an *oecus* was usually no wider than that in a *triclinium*, e.g., House of the Labyrinth (Reg. VI.11.9/10) and the House of Meleager (Reg. VI.9.2) in Pompeii. According to Varro (*Rust.* 1.13.7), men of his day preferred to have their summer dining rooms face the cooler east while the winter rooms faced west.

¹⁷¹Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 4-5; Cicero, *de Off.* 1.138-39.

front entrance so that the decorations could be viewed as soon as one entered the door.¹⁷² Once inside the dining room, the ornamentation was purposefully oriented not for the guest to view upon arrival, but so that the diner could appreciate the works of art at leisure as he reclined at the table.¹⁷³

As the Romans expanded overseas and trade among the provinces began to thrive, luxuries were imported for the tables of the wealthy, and Seneca mentions *epulas quas toto orbe requirunt*, “banquets which they seek out from the whole world.”¹⁷⁴ However, Roman satirists tend to discuss these expensive items in terms of excess while warning the reader against gluttony. In *Sermones* 2.6, Horace gives the ingredients for both a lavish city banquet and a modest country meal: costly African snails, Falernian wine, boar, hare, and shellfish at the feast in a city home, but mundane eggs, ham, cabbage, and sausages in the country one.¹⁷⁵ In discussing the vices of the emperor Vitellius, the historian Suetonius relates that he gave (and caused to be given for him) very lavish banquets and even dedicated to the goddess Minerva a dish which consisted of the brains of pheasants and peacocks, flamingo tongues (Figure 83), lampreys, and pike livers.¹⁷⁶ Martial says of the flamingo,

¹⁷²Simon P. Ellis, “Power, Architecture, and Décor: How the Late Roman Aristocrat Appeared to His Guests,” in *Roman Art in the Private Sphere: New Perspectives on the Architecture and Décor of the Domus, Villa, and Insula*, ed. Elaine K. Gazda (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 119.

¹⁷³John R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 BC-AD250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 16.

¹⁷⁴Ludwig Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire*, vol. 2, trans. J. H. Freese and Leonard A. Magnus (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 147. Sen. *Ad Helv.* 10.3. See also Juv. *Sat.* 11.14: *gustus elementa per omnia quaerunt*, “they search through all the elements for appetizers.”

¹⁷⁵J. C. Bramble, “Martial and Juvenal,” in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature: The Early Principate*, vol. 2, part 4, ed. E. J. Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Reprint 1995), 123-24. Hor. *Sat.* 2.6. Varro (*Rust.* 3.14.4) mentions that African snails were the largest ones. Juvenal (*Sat.* 5. 97-98) says that the provinces supply Rome’s kitchens.

¹⁷⁶Suet. *Vit.* 13. *Pink Flamingo Prepared for Cooking* is part of a third-century mosaic found in a *triclinium* at Thysdrus.

*Dat mibi pinna rubens nomen, sed lingua gulosis
nostra sapit. Quid si garula lingua foret?*¹⁷⁷

A red wing gives me a name, but my tongue provides the
flavor for delicacies. What if my tongue were talkative?

As the Romans extended their empire, they imported more than just exotic foods to their cities. Soldiers returning from their campaigns in Asia Minor in the second century BC took home with them foreign slaves as cooks along with the idea that cooking is an “art.” According to Pliny, Roman *matronae* no longer needed to work in the kitchen since slaves could do the task and prepare unusual dishes for the increasingly lavish tables of their owners.¹⁷⁸ Even cooks from *popinae* became important, as this funerary inscription attests:

*(L)atet hoc Amemone sepulchro fama ultra fines
patriae popinaria nota quam propter multi Tibur
celebrare solebant.*¹⁷⁹

Amemone the cookshop keeper lies in this tomb,
famous beyond the boundaries of her country,
because of whom many along the Tibur were
accustomed to celebrate.

Even though it was common for inhabitants of towns and cities to take meal to the bakers to be cooked, many homes did have their own kitchens.¹⁸⁰ These rooms were



Figure 83

¹⁷⁷Mart. *Ep.* 13.71.

¹⁷⁸Friedländer, 146; Pliny *HN* 18.107; Livy 39.6.

¹⁷⁹CIL 14. 3709.

¹⁸⁰Hor. *Sat.* 4.37-38. Horace mentions slaves and women coming home from the ovens.

generally very small with a hearth and a tripod under which a charcoal fire could be lit.¹⁸¹

A scene of kitchen work, *Man at the Oven* (Figure 84, second or third-century), is found on a funerary relief dedicated to a cook by his students.¹⁸² In this image, the cook kneels in front of a stone stove to stoke the fire with wood. A covered pot stands on the flat surface above the fire as the smoke drifts upwards from the opening. This type of scene is



Figure 84

portrayed again on a third-century relief of kitchen workers making *defrutum*, the boiled must used as a preservative for wine and also in Roman recipes (Figure 85). On the right, slaves pour *mustum* from an *amphora* into a *dolium*; a second worker fills a smaller

vessel with which to carry the liquid to the pot on the stove. Yet another worker kneels in front of the stove and lifts the lid to glance into the pot.¹⁸³ Similarly, a third-century relief from the tomb of the

Secundinius family at Igel (near Trier, Germany, Figure 86) displays a kitchen-bakery with several



Figure 85

slaves preparing a meal. At the left of the bottom register, one slave kneads dough at a

¹⁸¹Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 91.

¹⁸²Eugenia Salsa Prina Ricotti, *L'Arte del Convito nella Roma Antica* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1985), 216.

¹⁸³Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 378-79.

table under which there are empty flour-sacks. Above this table hang molds for the dough. The slave in the center is taking flour from a sack placed on a low stool. On the right, the viewer is able to see the front of the brick stove with its arched opening stoked with firewood or coals. The slave on the far right appears to be pouring water into the large skillet held by the other slave.¹⁸⁴

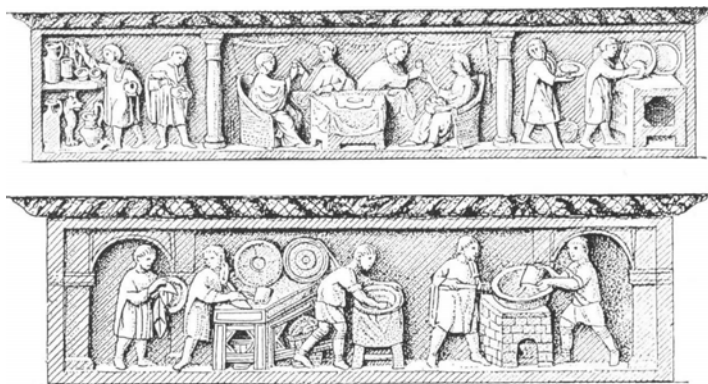


Figure 86

Yet another
funerary relief (Figure 87)
shows a comparable
kitchen scene with one
cook stoking the fire of

the stove on top of which is a large uncovered vessel with some type of round vegetables, perhaps the turnips of which Martial says *in caelo Romulus esse solet*, “Romulus is accustomed to eat (them) in heaven.”¹⁸⁵ In the middle of the scene, another slave chops a haunch as

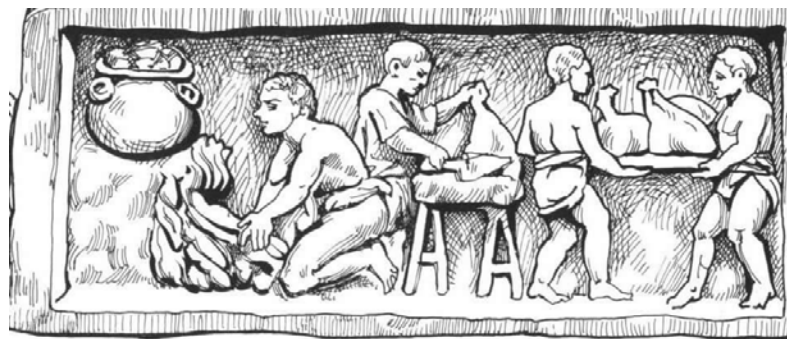


Figure 87

two other slaves enter
carrying more meat
on a large platter.
Perhaps the meat is
intended for the stew
on the stove,

¹⁸⁴ Émile Éspérandieu, *Recueil général des bas-reliefs, statues, et bustes de la gaule romaine*, vol. 6 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1915), 439.

¹⁸⁵ Mart. *Ep.* 13.16.

although large cuts of meat were also cooked in baskets suspended in cauldrons. The cooking of a suckling pig can be seen on a Roman tomb relief originally found in the foundation of a fourth-century cathedral in Bonn, Germany (Figure 88). On the left, a servant carries in the pig on his back, while on the right, a bearded man holding a skimmer with six holes tends a cauldron hanging by an iron chain from the ceiling. The objects in his right hand are unclear, but are perhaps slices of meat.¹⁸⁶



Figure 88

Several of the implements used in preparing food are depicted on a second-century black and white frieze on one side of the peristyle in a villa in Marbella, Spain (Figure 89, second-century). The exact location of the dining room in this partially excavated home is unknown, but if the villa follows the type of Roman floor-plan where the dining room is on the main axis with the entrance, this frieze would lead a guest from the door to the *triclinium*.¹⁸⁷ To the far right of Section 2 there is a tripod on which to place a cauldron to raise it above the fire, followed closely in Section 3 by a representation of a grill. Section 5 illustrates an *anthepsa*, a heater for warming water to mix with wine, and even depicts the sparks emitted from its side. This device, also known

¹⁸⁶ Émile Éspérandieu, *Recueil général des bas-reliefs, statues, et bustes de la gaule romaine*, vol. 11 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1938), 77, 80-82

¹⁸⁷ Katherine Dunbabin, "Scenes from the Roman Convivium: *Frigida non derit, non derit calda petenti* (Martial xiv.105)," in *In vino veritas*, ed. Oswyn Murray and Manuela Tecuşan (London: British School at Rome, 1995), 257-60.

as a *miliarium*, could be very elaborate, but the one depicted here is the basic type consisting of a lower portion containing the coals and an upper portion in which the water (or the wine itself) could be heated and then dispensed by means of a pouring spout.¹⁸⁸

Varro states that guests dining in the *triclinium* in his aviary sat around a small lake and

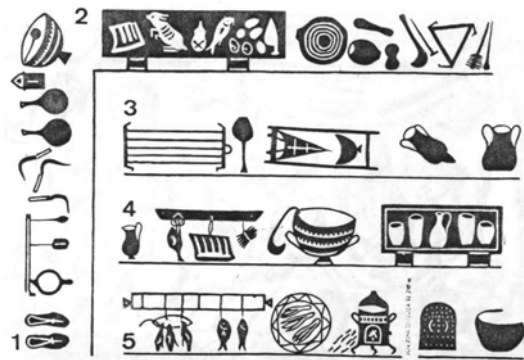


Figure 89

could serve themselves from a floating table containing not just food items, but hot and cold water to mix their wine according to their own personal taste.¹⁸⁹

Also among the items used for cooking, the artist has illustrated several serving utensils, eggs, fish, and vegetables. The

stalks of asparagus bound together in the image are also depicted on several Pompeian frescoes, such as *Asparagus and Cheese* (Figure 90, c. AD 20-79) from the Temple of Isis (Reg. VIII.7.28). In this painting a large bunch of asparagus stands beside a shepherd's

crook and surrounded by

cheeses in wicker baskets.

Perhaps the crook was the

artist's attempt to show that

the asparagus was a wild

variety, since cultivated

asparagus was not especially

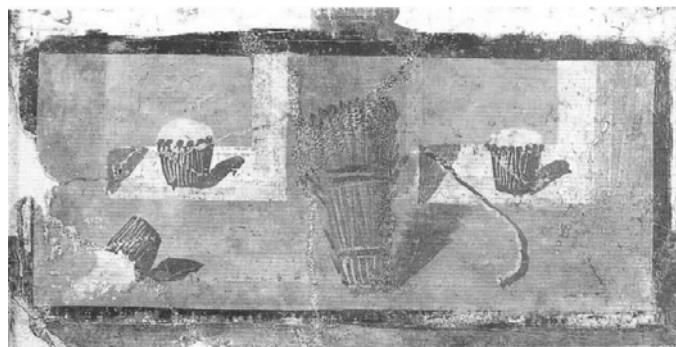


Figure 90

¹⁸⁸Curtis, *Ancient Food Technology*, 374.

¹⁸⁹Varro, *Rust.* 3.5.15-16.

prized.¹⁹⁰ Also in the Marbella fresco are images of cuts of meat similar to those depicted in scenes of butcher-shops. It is possible that the middle image in Section 3 is a basket for cooking large sides of meat, as seen in Figure 88; however, it is also possible that the hanging vessel is some sort of strainer, perhaps for cheese.

Images of various types of meat, especially pork, can be seen in *lararia* paintings in two of the kitchens in Pompeii.¹⁹¹ In the kitchen of the wine-merchant Sulpicius Rufus (*Reg.* IX.ix.b,c) there are several *in situ* paintings (Figure 91) above the hearth and next to the images of the Lares, the household gods whose duty it was to protect the home's stores of food. Here the artist has portrayed two pots with lids, reminiscent of the pot seen in Figure 84. Above the pots he depicted a



Figure 91

pig's head, a spit piercing three pieces of meat, two sausages, another spit piercing an eel, and five birds hanging from a cord. Perhaps the birds portrayed are thrushes, the inspiration for this couplet written by the poet Martial:

*Texta rosis fortasse tibi vel divite nardo,
at mihi de turdis facta corona placet.*¹⁹²

Perhaps a garland woven from roses or rich
nard pleases you, but one made of thrushes
pleases me.

¹⁹⁰Mart. *Ep.* 13.21. Milk was left to drain and thicken in wicker baskets or molds (*Col. Rust.* 7.8).

¹⁹¹Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 115-18. Of the 571 *lararia* excavated at Pompeii, sixty-eight are in gardens and another sixty-one are in peristyles. At Herculaneum, six of the forty-six are located in gardens. Since some of these homes also had garden *triclinia*, perhaps the devout wanted to have the shrine nearby so that they could make their offerings daily.

¹⁹²Mart. *Ep.* 13.51.

By comparison, five thrushes on a hoop (Figure 92) also appear on the same third-century *triclinium* mosaic as the flamingo from Thysdrus (Figure 83), and there are three on the hoop in the one from Marbella, Spain (Figure 89).

In the kitchen of the House of Pansa (*Reg.* VI.vi.1, Appendix 8) there existed a *lararium* painting (Figure 93) of the same type. This large house with several dining rooms occupies an entire block near the forum and contains two shops, two bakeries, and even a room with three donkey-mills, an oven, a kneading

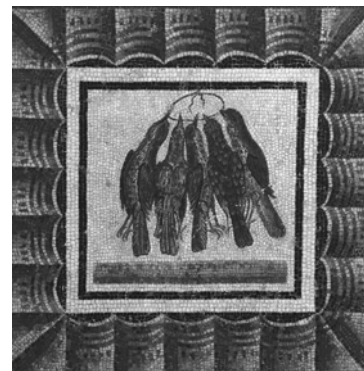


Figure 92

trough, and a large work-table. Therefore it would have been extremely important to the owner for his kitchen to be blessed by the Lares. In the center of the fresco, a female holding a cornucopia, the symbol of abundance, is among those making a sacrifice. On

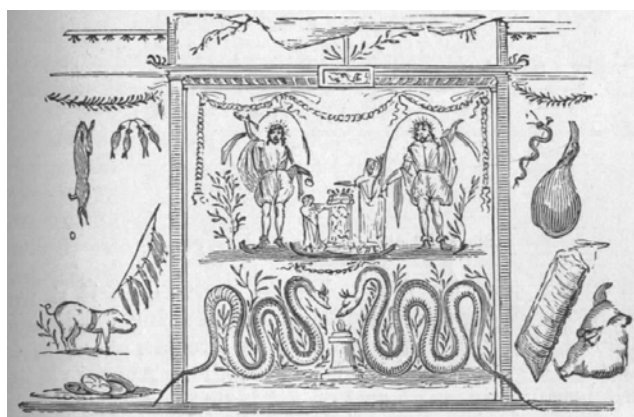


Figure 93

each side of the painting are images of foods, mainly meat, which might have been cooked in the kitchen. To the left can be seen a hare, a string of four birds (cf. Figure 92), a string of fish, a live pig (with a waist band to

show he is a sacrifice), and a platter of loaves of bread. To the right the artist has depicted an eel on a spit (cf. Figure 91), a ham, a hog's head, and a side of meat (perhaps ribs).

Near the House of Pansa stands the House of Sallust (*Reg.* VI.ii.4, Appendix 8), a residence to which minor changes were made to convert it into an inn. Shops on the

street side sold food, but the counters face inward towards the hallway of the home. In the garden, smaller than that in the House of Pansa, a trellis provided shade for the L-shaped outdoor *triclinium* with its couches and round table; a nearby hearth would have been used to prepare the food or keep it warm. On the back wall of the real garden was a painted one complete with a fountain and above which the artist rendered types of food much like those found in the *lararia* mentioned above (Figures 91 and 93).¹⁹³ In writing about his Tuscan villa (*Ep.* 5.6.35-39), Pliny the Younger describes just such a vine-covered dining room among the several his home affords. He tells of a garden path through boxwoods mixed with fruit trees at the upper end of which is a marble alcove. There, water pours through pipes in the bench into a basin, and, when he dines, the plates of food float in the water. One section of the room is shaded by vines and cooled by several fountains. A fragment attributed to Varro confirms that in the summer it was popular to dine outdoors and states *ad focum hieme ac frigoris cenitabant; aestivo tempore in loco propatulo*, “people used to eat in winter and cold weather by the hearth, in warm weather in an open space.”¹⁹⁴ In Pompeii excavations have uncovered *triclinia* with walls enhanced by paintings of trees and vegetation so as to provide the appearance of a larger space. In some houses, artists placed these frescoes along the back wall of the garden so that visitors could view them immediately upon entering the atrium of the home.¹⁹⁵ The House of the Fruit Orchard in Pompeii (*Reg.* I.ix.5) has a small peristyle garden but garden paintings cover the walls of two small rooms off the atrium. Images of birds, roses and poppies,

¹⁹³Dyer, 318-25, 336. This frieze is no longer extant. A drawing can be found in François Mazois, *Les ruines de Pompeii*, vol. 2. (Paris: L’Imprimerie et Librairie de Firmin Didot, 1824-1838), plate 37, Figure 1.

¹⁹⁴Varro *de Vita Populi Romani*, lib. 1.13.3 *ap. Nonius* 83.16.

¹⁹⁵Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 55-56.

lilies, oleander and myrtles intermixed with strawberry, lemon, and cherry trees decorate the room to the east. A room from the portico contains similar images, including plum and fig trees as well. Lucius Lucullus imported the cherry tree (Figure 94, c. AD 40-50)



Figure 94

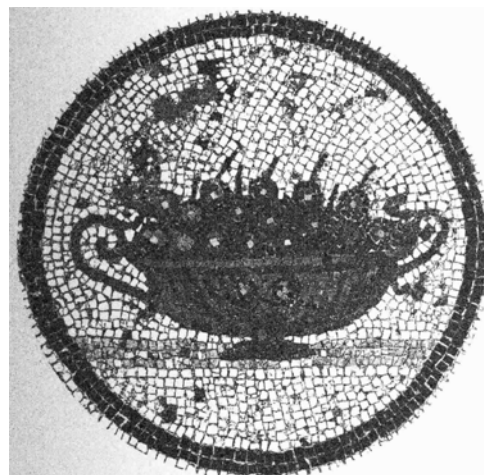


Figure 95

from Pontus in 74 BC, and, according to Pliny the Elder, the Campanian variety was held in much esteem.¹⁹⁶ *Bowl of Cherries* (Figure 95, third-century), a much later depiction from the mosaic floor of the *triclinium* of the House of Africa in Thysdrus, shows that the cherry was still regarded as a luxury item.¹⁹⁷

Across the street from the House of the Fruit Orchard at the House of Polybius (Reg. IX.xiii.1-3), archaeologists have unearthed fragments of pots with four holes

¹⁹⁶Annamaria Ciarallo, *Gardens of Pompeii*, trans. Lori-Ann Touchette (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2001), 15,18; Pliny HN 15.30.102. Pliny mentions twenty-nine varieties of figs (HN 15.19.69 ff). Varro (*Rust.*1.2.6) comments, *Non arboribus consita Italia, ut tota pomarium videatur?* “Is not Italy covered with trees so that the whole land seems to be an orchard?”

¹⁹⁷This mosaic, located in the House of Africa (Figure 1), also includes circular medallions of pears, figs, and dates.

(Appendix 9) used for transporting and transplanting lemon trees which had also been recently cultivated in Italy (Figure 96, c. AD 40-50). In his *Historia Naturalis* 12.16, Pliny the Elder discusses pots with breathing holes for the roots, and he states that they are planted *fictilibus in vasis dato per cavernas radicibus spiramento*, “with the roots given breathing



Figure 96

space by the cavities of earthenware pots.” Along the wall of the garden near the fragments are nail holes, suggesting that plants were grown there on trellises, a method consistent with the growing of lemons in modern Italy.¹⁹⁸

The younger Pliny also describes a dining room in the summer portico of his Tuscan villa where he and his guests could recline and overlook his vineyards. Below it was located another enclosed portico resembling a grotto, a

place that would have been naturally cooler in the hot summer months. This type of underground room was not unique, for the Emperor Augustus had built one for his wife Livia at Prima Porta near Rome. The decorations of the four walls of this subterranean room (Figure 97; c. 20 BC) consist of a garden scene broken only by the one door at the entrance. Among the evergreens, roses, and poppies, the artist chose to represent trees bearing such fruits as pomegranates, quinces, dates, and strawberries.¹⁹⁹ A lattice fence completes the image of a real garden.

¹⁹⁸Pliny *HN* 17.98; Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 29, 284-85.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 29, 41, 79.

Gardens and garden rooms provided ambience for dinner parties; therefore, homeowners enhanced them by including arbors, fountains, cascades of water, statuary,

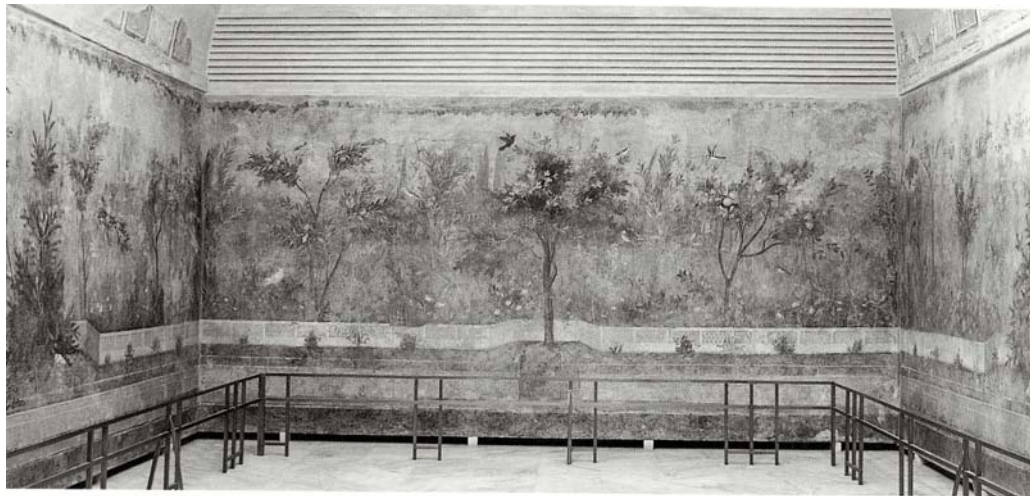


Figure 97

and fishponds. Some homeowners painstakingly placed windows so that the ponds would be visible from inside the house. In Pompeii, the atrium and *tablinum* windows of approximately forty houses provided a view of the fishpond, while twenty *triclinia* contained the ponds themselves.²⁰⁰ The building of the aqueduct at Pompeii during the reign of Augustus allowed inhabitants to make use of plants requiring more water and to increase the number of fountains and ponds, making them the focal points of lavish gardens. The garden of the House of Pansa (Appendix 8) had a pond, the interior of which was painted with water-plants and fish; in its center was a fountain.²⁰¹ The Praedia of Julia Felix (Appendix 7) with its fruit trees and other plantings was no exception. The use of water provided a *locus amoenus*, a charming place or soothing atmosphere for dining,

²⁰⁰Higginbotham, *Piscinae*, 32.

²⁰¹Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 32-33. Unfortunately, the paintings are no longer extant.

and in the center of this garden stands a long channel of four connecting fishponds, all of which could be crossed by marble bridges.²⁰² The House of Loreius Tiburtinus on the Via dell'Abbondanza (*Reg.* II.ii.5, Appendix 1) was remodeled after the earthquake of AD 62 to resemble a miniature villa complete with a sixty-five foot long portico which shaded a small canal beside a *biclinium* with a fountain. Fish were painted on the upper basin of the *nymphaeum* below which was a long watercourse of several fishponds similar to those found at seaside villas.

Even though not all inhabitants of Pompeii could afford such extravagance, they could give the illusion of a country villa by having fishponds painted on their garden walls.

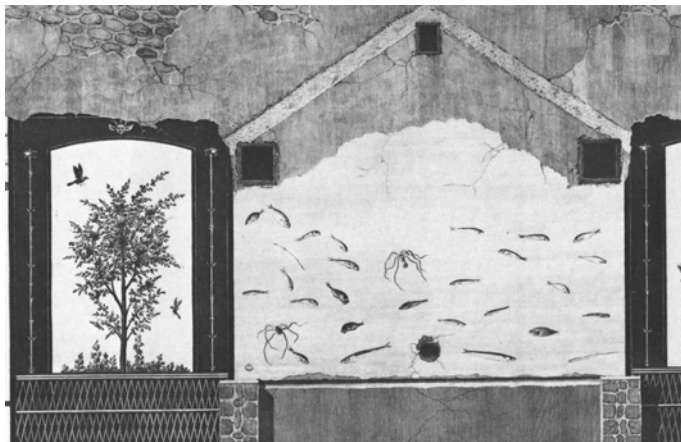


Figure 98

One such example is the courtyard of the kitchen and dining room of the House of Apollo (*Reg.* VI.7.23), which contained a watercourse with a wall painted with birds, a fishpond and a park.²⁰³ The Villa of Diomedes had on the

rear wall of its peristyle a painting (Figure 98, now destroyed) of a fishpond above an actual pool. The blue water of the pond was filled with salt-water fish such as wrasses, a moray eel, two octopuses, and some mollusks. On either side of the painted pond, a framed panel represented a window through which one could see birds and fruit trees. At

²⁰²Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 2, 86-87.

²⁰³Zanker, *Pompeii*, 146-58.

the House of the Centenary (*Reg. IX.viii.6*), the *nymphaeum* south of the peristyle has a raised balustrade painted with water filled with similar sea creatures such as eel, lobster, mollusks, octopus, and mullet (Figure 99).²⁰⁴ Other walls of the *nymphaeum* are decorated with scenes of gardens and game parks.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, these scenes are not confined to Italy but extend to other areas of the empire. In the actual dining room of a second-



Figure 99



Figure 100

century villa at Gùrgi (Tripoli, Africa) and in the center of a mosaic of fish and fishermen (Figure 100), an eel fights with an octopus in a scene very reminiscent of the Pompeian octopus fighting the lobster (Figure 33).²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 108-12. The House of the Vettii has a small room south of the vestibule containing a frieze of painted fish. Again, wrasses, mullet, and lobster are depicted.

²⁰⁵Zanker, *Pompeii*, 189.

²⁰⁶Artists of the period were very accurate in their depictions of marine life. By comparison, the writer Apuleius (*Apol.* 39) studied fish by dissection and even coined Latin words for Greek terms relating to marine animals.

In addition to water features, statuary added to the ambience of the garden area. In keeping with the aquatic theme, Julia Felix included a small statue of a crab in a seashell fountain among her water-features. In the House of the Small Fountain (*Reg.* VI.viii.23)



Figure 101

the water for the fountain poured from the mouth of a silenus. At the edge of the pool was a bronze statue of a fisherman sitting on a rock with his fishing pole and his basket for caught fish beside him (Figure 101). The owner of the House of the Ephebe (*Reg.* I.vii.10-12/19, Appendix 9) placed in his garden a fountain statue of the fruit-goddess Pomona bearing a platter of

fruit (Figure 102). The water trickled from the platter and ran down four steps to the pool below. From there it ran down again to provide a jet of water that sprang from the center of a small table in the *triclinium*. Also in the garden were four small silver-plated statues of *placentarii* (sweets vendors) holding silver serving trays (Figure 103).²⁰⁷

Meals could be served after the setting had been meticulously arranged. For many people breakfast and lunch were generally small meals, so dinner was the main meal of the day. Breakfast, taken upon arising, usually consisted of dry bread (sometimes dipped in wine) or a few raisins or olives. Pliny the Younger mentions that his uncle's daily routine involved meeting with Emperor Vespasian before dawn and then partaking of a light easy

²⁰⁷Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 92. See also Figure 2 from the House of the Small Fountain.

meal as was the custom of the ancestors, *levem et facilem veterum more*. Martial scolds Caecilianus for arriving at his house during the fourth hour, a time that is too late for breakfast but too early for dinner. Lunch, eaten around eleven o'clock in the morning,



Figure 102



Figure 103

might consist of cold meat, salad, or cheese.²⁰⁸ Dinner was taken at various times but could begin anytime after three o'clock and could last until the early hours of the next morning depending upon the occasion and the participants. Pliny writes that

his uncle *surgebat aestate a cenā luce, hieme intra primam noctis*, “used to rise from dinner in the summer while it was still light and in the winter within the first hour of night.”²⁰⁹ But, not everyone practiced moderation, and revelers, such as Encolpius and his companions in Petronius’ *Satyricon*, went home drunk after midnight from a night of feasting.²¹⁰ This main meal of the day consisted of at least three courses just as it often does today: *gustatio* (appetizers), *mensae primae* (main courses), and *secundae mensae* (dessert). A wide variety of foods were eaten as appetizers, including eggs, vegetables, herbs, fish, oysters, snails, and

²⁰⁸Harold Whetstone Johnston, *The Private Life of the Romans*, revised by Mary Johnston (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, and Company, 1932), 224. In early times and in the country, there was a *vesperna*, or country supper, which might consist of leftovers from a larger mid-day meal and produce from the farm. Pliny *Ep.* 3.5.10; Mart. *Ep.* 8.67.

²⁰⁹Pliny *Ep.* 3.5.13. Martial mentions dining after going to the baths at the eighth hour. *Ep.* 10.48 and 11.52.

²¹⁰Petron. *Sat.* 79.

dormice (a delicacy). For the main course (there could be more than one depending on the size of the feast), guests might partake of a selection of meats, poultry, and delicacies along with wine, while the dessert course would provide an assortment of fruits and sweets.²¹¹ All of this would be brought in by slaves, as others attended to the guest's every need.

In the corridor leading to the dining room of the fourth-century House of Bacchus



Figure 104

in Complutum (modern Alcalà de Henares, Spain; Appendix 10) there is a mosaic of six almost life-sized servants with napkins over their left arms and wine-cups in their right hands (Figure 104). Three different types of cups are depicted; perhaps they are for serving *mulsum*, an aperitif made of wine sweetened with honey.²¹² The mosaic of the servants offering wine invites guests to enter a dining room beautifully decorated with a mosaic of the Four Seasons at the entrance to the room. Once inside, one finds the outlines of the dining couches marked in mosaic tiles on the floor; in the center of the space, the drunken Dionysus and five men treading grapes beckon guests to recline and

²¹¹Barbara Flower and Elisabeth Rosenbaum, trans., *The Roman Cookery Book: A Critical Translation of "The Art of Cooking" by Apicius* (London: George C. Harrap and Co., Limited, 1974), 20. Martial mentions that although his contemporaries started their meals with lettuce as an appetizer, men of previous times ate it as a dessert. *Ep.* 13.14.

²¹²Dunbabin, "Scenes from the Roman Convivium," 252.

enjoy the meal.²¹³ In *Cupbearers Serving Drinks* (Figure 105), a similar mosaic representation from the House of the Cupbearers in Dougga (third-century; modern Thugga, North Africa), two large slaves pour wine from *amphorae* for guests as two more slaves approach.



Figure 105

One brings
flowers in a
basket but the
other carries a
ewer and towels,
probably to wash
the feet and

hands of the guests. In the *Satyricon*, Trimalchio requires his guests to wash before they change *triclinia* for another round of drinking.²¹⁴ *Preparations for a Banquet* (Figure 106) depicts several servants carrying banqueting implements here and there. In this second-century North African mosaic from Sidi-bou-Said (near Carthage), a tunic-clad servant at top-left carries a basket as the larger figure in the center bears a (wicker?) tray with smaller bowls of



Figure 106

²¹³Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, 152.

²¹⁴Blanchard-Lemée, *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 79. The *amphorae* are inscribed with the Greek letters PIE (wood) and ZHCHC (you will live).

fruit and loaves of bread. A servant to the right, only the arm of which is still visible, transports an *authepsa* much like the one in Figure 89 from Marbella, Spain. Both heaters have three legs and the same general shape with a spout for pouring, however the number of handles is different (one on the Carthaginian version versus two small ones on the Spanish one).

Once preparations had been completed, the banquet could then begin. Originally, Romans sat at the table but, after the war with Corinth in the second century BC, they adopted the Greek manner of reclining at meals. In traditional Roman dining rooms of the Republic and early Empire, older family members and guests reclined on their left elbows on three couches (*lecti*) in a U-shaped arrangement around a center table, but according to Suetonius and Tacitus children sat in chairs at the open side. Columella says that slaves also sat at tables, but certain slaves were allowed to recline on holidays.²¹⁵ The Secundinii family's funerary monument at Igel shows not only the scenes of servants preparing and serving food, but also the family at the table (Figure 86). However, this is the older style of dining where the men reclined and the women sat in wicker chairs.

Stone dining couches in the U-shaped configuration are located in many of the *triclinia* found in homes and gardens in Pompeii. The House of the Cryptoporticus (*Reg. I.vi.2-4*; Appendix 10) has three sloping masonry couches arranged in the typical U-shaped formation. In addition to these *lecti*, there are benches along the ends of the couches and the walls, most likely intended for less important guests and children.²¹⁶

²¹⁵Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 89. Suet. *Claud.* 32; Tacitus *Ann.* 13.16; Col. *Rust.* 11.1.19.

²¹⁶Dunbabin, "Triclinium and Stibadium," 123.

Banqueting Scene (Figure 107) from the House of the Triclinium in Herculaneum (*Reg. V.ii.4*) provides an image of a typical banquet. This fresco portrays more clearly for the viewer the arrangement of dining couches in the U-shaped formation. The *lecti* were traditionally placed along the side and back walls of the room, and here can be seen two of



Figure 107

the three with the pillows and draped coverings which would have made the couches more comfortable. Apuleius mentions cloths such as these in his *Metamorphoses* and states that the couches of the hostess Byrrhena were draped in golden coverlets.²¹⁷ On the couch to the left (*lectus imus*) are three people with the host closest to the corner of the room; he is facing the guest

in the place of honor, the *locus consularis*, on the middle couch (*lectus medius*, to the right of the fresco).²¹⁸ Therefore, the host and guest could talk comfortably, and if this dining room was facing a garden, the *locus consularis* would provide the guest with the best view of flowers, ponds, fountains, and statuary.²¹⁹ Also in the fresco are slaves, one with wine and one holding a man who is vomiting. A third slave is unfastening a guest's shoe, a

²¹⁷Apul. *Met.* II.19. There is a second fresco in the same dining room which depicts wall-hangings as well as seat coverings. Dunbabin, "Triclinium and Stibadium," 133.

²¹⁸Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 90.

²¹⁹The Roman architect and writer Vitruvius specified the proportions and perfect layout of a dining room, stating that the dining area should be twice as long as it was wide with a view to the outside of the room. Additionally, winter dining rooms were to be on the west side of the peristyle, those for spring and autumn should be on the east, and the ones used in summer should be on the north side. Clarke, *Houses of Roman Italy*, 13-14; Vitruvius *de Arch.* 6.4.11.

common practice whereby a guest's feet would be washed and dried before partaking of a meal. Of course Petronius' ostentatious host Trimalchio sends his slaves to wash the hands of his guests with water cooled with snow.²²⁰

Beginning in the third century, scenes of banquets became more prevalent in North African mosaics than in earlier times. The mosaic *Banquet Scene* (Figure 108) from a fifth-century Carthaginian *oecus* (at Douar-Chott) is composed as an oval instead of the

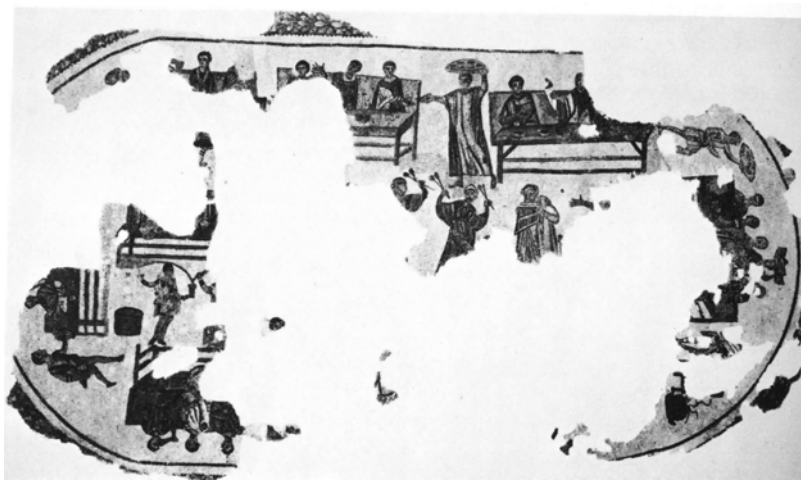


Figure 108

more characteristic rectangular mosaic form and illustrates all of the components of a banquet from kitchen to after-dinner entertainment. The

majority of the center portion is unfortunately missing, but several scenes survive. Around the edges of the mosaic are representations of eight wooden high-backed couches on which three guests are sitting upright, or perhaps cross-legged, instead of reclining. In front of them are tables set with serving bowls and servants enter the scene carrying platters with various food items and cups of wine; as was the custom, there are no individual plates. In the center, the artist represented a servant preparing to carve a roast

²²⁰Johnston, *Private Life of the Romans*, 233; Petron. *Sat.* 31.

with a large knife and another watching a pot on the fire. Dancers and acrobats depict the types of entertainment found at such a large feast.²²¹

Another type of dining couch was the *stibadium*, a semi-circular table used in an apsidal-shaped dining room, which would seat a maximum seven guests each. Owners of homes with large dining areas sometimes arranged three *stibadia* in a tri-foil configuration similar to the U-formation found in earlier *triclinia*. Although this type of couch was



Figure 109

known in the first century AD, the *stibadium* at the House of Adonis (Reg. VIII.iii.15) is the only one unearthed so far in Pompeii.²²² The emperor Domitian constructed an

apsidal dining room in his Domus Augustana, but this type of arrangement did not become popular in private homes until the third century. By the fourth century, it was extremely popular in the provinces.²²³ However, it may have been originally used as a type of outdoor dining arrangement with the word itself being derived from the Greek *stibades*, “leaves or foliage.” The House of the Ephebe in Pompeii has a frieze in its outdoor *triclinium* that depicts a Nilotic scene with two groups of diners sitting in a *sigma* arrangement. In one image (Figure 109), five banqueters sit under a pergola and behind a

²²¹ Blanchard-Leme , *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 79.

²²²Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 346, note 1. Pliny the Younger mentions having a *stibadium* in the garden of his villa (*Ep.* 5.6.36).

²²³Ellis, “Power, Architecture, and D cor,” 119.

fountain; in the other eight pygmies also enjoy their meal near a fountain. The tomb of the aedile Caius Vestorius Priscus located outside the Porta del Vesuvio (also in Pompeii, c. AD 75) depicts an outdoor banquet scene in a *sigma*-style arrangement with the diners sitting under a canopy.²²⁴

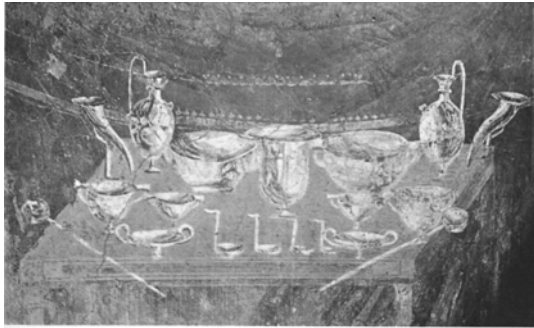


Figure 110

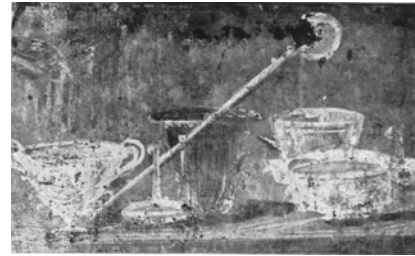


Figure 111

After dinner might come the *commissatio* or “drinking bout.” Romans were generally moderate in their consumption of wine during dinner, but after dessert had been consumed, the wine flowed freely. During this part of the evening, a Master of Revels was chosen to decide how much water the slaves would mix with the wine in the crater. It was then ladled with a *cyathus* into two-handled drinking cups (*pocula*).²²⁵ Representations of the implements for mixing and serving wine can be found in two frescoes from Pompeii. In the tomb of the same Caius Vestorius Priscus mentioned above, the fresco (Figure 110) on the interior of the precinct wall depicts a very elegant table set with nineteen silver serving utensils for drinks, but there are no plates for food. Except for the single *crater* for mixing the wine, all of the other pieces represented are in pairs: wine pitchers, *rhytons* (the

²²⁴Dunbabin, “*Triclinium and Stibadium*,” 134.

²²⁵Johnston, *Private Life of the Romans*, 235-36.

horn-shaped cups on stands), large double-handled bowls, and *cyathi* (long-handled ladles



Figure 112

for mixing). There are two pairs each of *simpula* (smaller ladles for serving) and *pocula* (two-handled cups).²²⁶ A less ornate version of this fresco can be found to the right of the entrance of the House of the Lararium (Figure 111, Reg. I.vi.4, first-century). This painting illustrates only one small *crater*, three cups, and one *cyathus*. The inclusion of

this table in the tomb and the home is a visual reminder of the importance of hospitality in the political and social life of the Romans.

Elegant silver serving pieces such as the ones seen in the tomb of Vestorius Priscus are also represented in *Banquet with a Courtesan* (Figure 112) from Herculaneum. In this scene, a *crater*, a *cyathus*, a *simpulum*, and two *pocula* stand on a small round table beside the couch on which a man reclines next to a seated courtesan. In his hand, the man holds a *rhyton*. *Banquet in a Lararium* (Figure 113), a no longer extant fresco, shows less elegant tableware but depicts after-dinner *commisatio*. The painting was located in the large kitchen near the southwest corner of the small atrium at the House of Obellius Firmus in Pompeii (Reg. IX.xiv.2, 4). This crudely done painting was situated to the left of the niche

²²⁶Eric M. Moorman, "Le tombeau de Caius Vestorius Priscus à Pompeii," in *Au royaume des ombres: la peinture funéraire antique*, ed. Nicole Blanc (Paris: Musée et sites archéologique de Saint-Romain-en-Gal-Vienne et Réunion des musées nationaux, 1998), 100.

for the statues of the Lares and Penates; on the right is an illustration of the pig found in other *lararium* paintings. This image depicts six people, three male and three female, reclining at a table as a seventh gives a toast. Three of the figures recline on each side of a



Figure 113

four-legged table, their arms outstretched to grasp cups. The standing male holds a cup raised in each hand; perhaps one is for water to mix with wine in the other.²²⁷

According to Pliny the Elder, after-dinner drinks were often emptied in one gulp, and guests tended to become more and more inebriated as the evening

progressed.²²⁸ A less formal representation of the *commissatio* is the *Drinking Bout in the Arena* (Figure 114, c. AD 200), part of a third-century mosaic from a house in Thysdrus. This image depicts five men sitting at a *stibadium* as a slave offers a cup of wine. There is a small four-legged table on which are pitchers and next to it stands a larger vessel, probably filled with wine for their revels. The image can be identified as



Figure 114

²²⁷Boyce, *Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii*, Memoirs of the American Academy at Rome, vol. 14 (Rome: American Academy at Rome, 1937), 31. According to Boyce, the gender of the figures can be determined by the difference in skin pigment.

²²⁸Pliny *HN* 14.139.

being connected to the sodality of the Leontii because it is surrounded by millet stalks and one man is wearing a four-point crown.²²⁹ The drunken man to the far left says to his companions, *NOS NUDI FIEMUS*, “We will all become nude,” while the companion beside him states, *BIBE REVENIMUS*, “Drink; We have returned.” However, many Romans frowned upon this type of behavior.

Even the debris left by banqueters was portrayed in mosaics. Pliny refers to a mosaic from the palace at Pergamum illustrating an unswept floor or *asaroton* executed by a second-century BC artist named Sosus.²³⁰ One such depiction (Figure 115, second-century), originally discovered on the Aventine Hill in Rome, illustrates

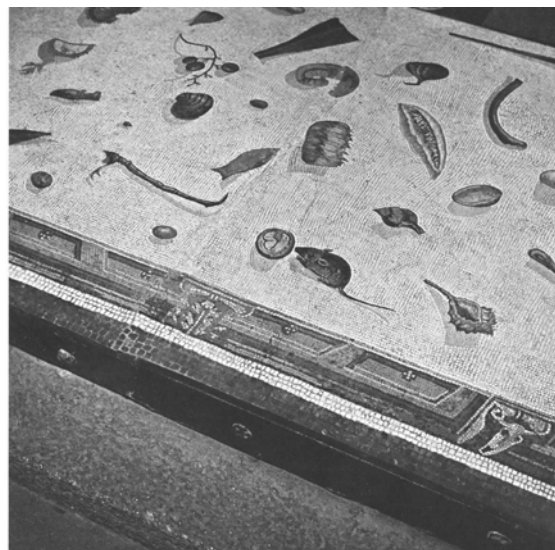


Figure 115

chicken bones, eggshells, grapes, cherries, and shells from snails, lobsters, and oysters, in addition to lettuce leaves and olive kernels. The artist added a whimsical touch to this pavement, for in the midst of all of the detritus is a small mouse sniffing a walnut shell.²³¹ Art imitates life with this type of mosaic, for at a house on the Via Nocera in Pompeii (Reg. I.xiv.2; Appendix 11) Wilhelmina Jashemski unearthed similar remains. Near one of

²²⁹Blanchard-Lemée, *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 73. Sodalities were funerary societies and also procured and maintained animals for the arena, hence the bulls in front of the table. p. 214.

²³⁰Pliny *HN* 36. 184.

²³¹Figure 115 represents only a portion of the now fragmented mosaic. See Appendix 11 for an image of all of the extant sections now in the Vatican Museum.

the two tables of an outdoor dining room she found the remains of a meal: clam shells, a snail shell, cow bones, and a boar bone.²³² However, Pliny notes that it was considered an evil portent if someone—especially a priest—dropped food on the floor during dinner.

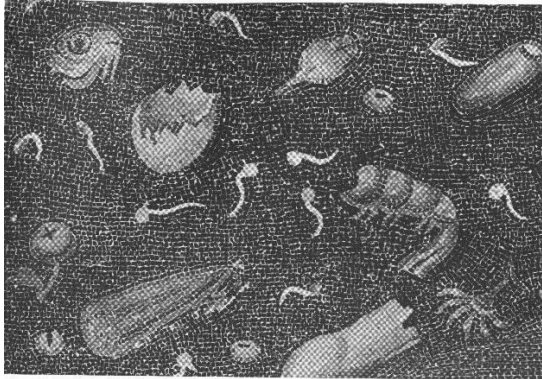


Figure 116

The dropped food had to be returned to the offender to clean and then burn as an offering to the Lares. It was also taboo to touch dishes which fell on the floor during a meal. Therefore, when a slave drops a silver serving dish at dinner and bends down to retrieve it,

Trimalchio orders the slave's ears to be boxed and the dish thrown back on the floor. At that time, another slave appears who sweeps the dish out of the room along with other debris from the meal.²³³

However, pavements such as this are rare; in fact, only four have been found in North Africa and few elsewhere. One such mosaic is located at the House of Saloni from second-century Uthina (Figure 116). Five of the six *emblemata* have images of food debris such as eggshells, vegetable pods, melon rinds, fish bones, shells from shellfish, and, at the top left, the head of a fish. A completely intact example is located at the House of the Months at Thysdrus (Figure 117, third-century).²³⁴ This mosaic is part of an entire

²³²Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, vol. 1, 94-6.

²³³Waldemar Deonna and Marcel Renard, *Croyances et Superstitions de Table dans la Rome Antique*, vol. 46, *Collection Latomus* (Brussels: Berchem, 1961), 50-53. Pliny *HN* 28.5.27, Petron. *Sat.* 34.

²³⁴Blanchard-Lemée, *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 78. The other two are from the Byzantine era at Sidi-Abich.

dining room floor design in the T + U configuration. The geometric shapes of the U-shaped portion would have been partially hidden by the *lecti* but the T-shaped section that marked the entrance to the room would have remained visible to the guests. The T-portion of the floor has images of fish, fruit, game, birds, and vegetables; at the base of the couches where spilled food would have landed, the artist illustrated the same types of

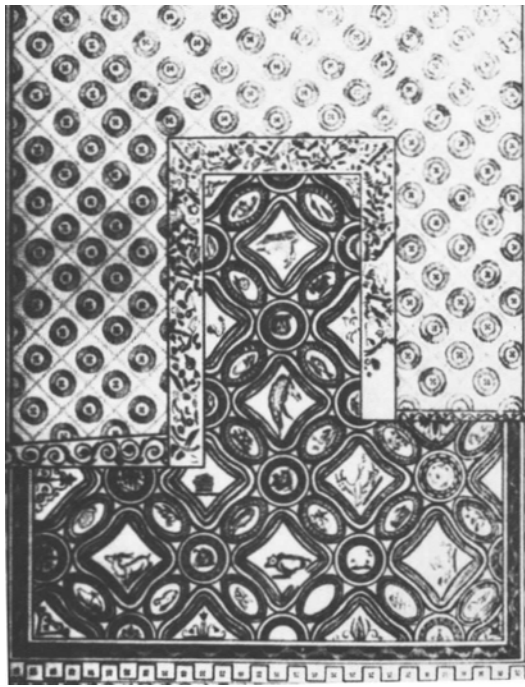


Figure 117

debris as found on other *asarota*: a gazelle or goat horn, chicken bones, seashells, fishbones, vegetables, and lobster claws, as well as fruits and cut flowers.²³⁵ The image of a gazelle can also be seen in a demi-lune mosaic at the entrance to the *triclinium* in the third-century House of the Arsenal at Hadrumentum (Figure 118; cf. Figure 39 from the same house). The gazelle (a luxury item) is crouching between two ducks and is surrounded by baskets of vegetables and fruits such as melons,

²³⁵Louis Foucher, "Une mosaïque de triclinium trouvée à Thysdrus," *Latomus* 20 (1961): 290-94. In the same house is a calendar mosaic of the months and four seasons (Figure 14).

citrons, and pomegranates. The whole image is bordered by millet stalks, again the symbol of the sodality of the Leontii.²³⁶ These images would signify for the dinner guest the bounty enjoyed by the host and his generosity towards his visitors.

Still-lifes, such as *Gazelle*, were based on Hellenistic models and served the same purpose as *asarota*. They began to appear in Pompeii at the end of the second century BC in mosaic works and during the second half of the first century BC in frescoes in both Pompeii and Rome. By the second century AD, they were popular in North Africa but there was a change in the old model to include several varying subjects instead of just two



Figure 118

or three related panels. African still-lifes were often placed within a border of vines or geometric patterns, sometimes even in “cushions” similar to quilts,” with subjects that

represented a typical dinner menu.²³⁷ These images, called *xenia*, would remind visitors of both the public and private generosity of the master of the house and would appeal to prosperous landowners and exporters of wine, oil, grain, and other foodstuffs.²³⁸

Although there are several representations of *xenia* extant from ancient Gaul, only one

²³⁶Blanchard-Lemée, *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 72-3. Juvenal mentions that he would not employ a carver who knew how to carve gazelle and other exotic items such as flamingo and antelope. Juv. 11. 136-40.

²³⁷Blanchard-Lemée, *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, 65.

²³⁸Kondoleon, *Domestic and Divine*, 128, 326.

still-life has been uncovered from Roman Britain; however, this fresco from the villa at Brading is of the Pompeian style.²³⁹

The poet Martial devoted all of Book 13 of his poetry to *xenia*, with foods presented roughly in the order in which they would have been served at a banquet. Written for the Saturnalia—it was published in December of AD 83 or 84—*Xenia* is the reminder of hospitality and the gifts given to guests. Pliny the Younger also mentions gifts given to guests (*Ep.* 6.31.14) and Vitruvius calls the provisions given to houseguests *xenia* (*de Arch.* 6.7.4), but only Martial uses the term in connection with the Saturnalia.²⁴⁰ Figure 119, *Dried Fruit* (Pompeii Reg. II.iv.3; c. AD 20-79), shows a moneybag beside a

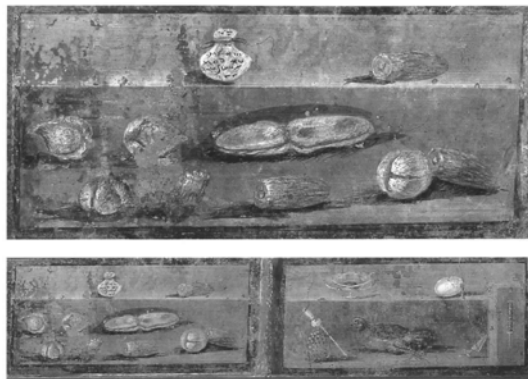


Figure 119



Figure 120

date on the upper level with dates and figs on the bottom level, all most likely Saturnalia gifts. Its companion piece depicts a drinking cup, an egg, a knife and a chicken. Dates and coins are also portrayed on *Fruit, Coin, and Vase*, a first-century fresco from the House

²³⁹Joceyln M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Britain under the Romans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 217.

²⁴⁰T. J. Leary, *Martial Book XIII: The Xenia* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, Ltd., 2001), 2-7. Sections 6-60 describe foods for the *gustatio*; sections 61-100 describe meat, seafood, and game for the main course; and sections 106-125 discuss the types of wines used at a *commissatio*. Saturnalia was a mid-December holiday celebrating the return of the sun after the solstice.

of the Deer in Herculaneum (*Reg.* IV.21, Figure 120). In the upper band of the painting there is a wooden shelf on which there stands a blue glass vase next to a plate holding dried figs and dates. Coins have been placed inside two of the dates (one gold, one silver). On the lower section of the painting are more dried fruits and a drinking cup half-full of red wine. The coins and dried fruit (no fresh fruit in winter) most likely symbolize Saturnalia gifts given by clients to their patrons. Martial complains about the poor quality of the thin silver vase he received as a Saturnalia gift from the praetor Paulus and adds that bringing a date on a skewer containing only an *as* is an insult.²⁴¹

Not every *xenion* was related to the Saturnalia, for some just represented the abundance enjoyed in the owner's everyday life. At Oplontis (modern Torre Annunziata)

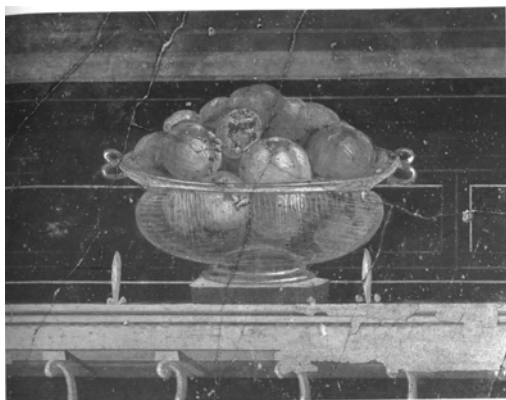


Figure 121



Figure 122

in the first-century Villa of Poppaea, there are two very finely detailed representations of fruit which can be found in dining areas of the villa. On the east wall of the *oecus*, the artist has depicted a transparent blue-glass bowl (Figure 121) filled with plums, quinces and other fruit while on the north wall of the *triclinium* there is a basket of figs (Figure 122).

²⁴¹Stefano DeCaro, ed., *Still Lifes from Pompeii: A Guide to the Exhibition*, trans. Federico Poole (Naples: Electa Napoli, 1999), 51; Mart. 8.33.

the parts of the banquet are here: olives and vegetables (artichokes and beans) for the appetizers, with pears and figs for dessert. The main course would have been lavish, for represented here are flamingo, antelope, fish, peacock, thrush, pheasant, chicken, hare, and seafood (shrimp, squid, and mollusks). Two flasks symbolize the wine for the *commissatio*, while below them three men play dice as part of the entertainment portion of the evening. The inclusion of people in a quilt mosaic is highly unusual.²⁴⁴

The Romans were very conscious of status and all that it entailed. Hierarchy was the rule of the day from the visit of clients to their patrons after breakfast to the type of slave one chose for a particular task at dinner in the evening. At all times the proprieties



Figure 124

had to be observed and, above all, one must keep up appearances. The entire blueprint of the Roman home was based on the premise that public areas should be showcases for one's rank.

Among the wealthy, ambience was everything; therefore, dining rooms were situated to provide the most beautiful view to the most honored guest. Banqueting scenes and still-life mosaics and frescoes—representations of the gifts or provisions given to one's guests—are generally found in *triclinium* areas. The House of Julia Felix in Pompeii is the quintessential example since it provided everything— a beautifully arranged garden

²⁴⁴Salamonson, *Tunisian Mosaics*, 93. Figures 83 (*Flamingo*) and 92 (*Hoop with Thrushes*) are part of this mosaic.

complete with fishponds, fountains, and statuary, while inside stunning frescoes adorned the walls. In addition to the *Forum Frieze* discussed in Chapter Two, beautiful *xenia* decorated the house as well. *Still-life with Thrushes* (Figure 124) provides a glimpse into a possible dinner menu. There are eggs on a platter, ready to be served as appetizers, above which hangs a group of thrushes for the main course. To the right is the pewter wine-jug and on the left stand the bronze vessel and a spoon to be used to mix the wine with water for after dinner drinks. On the wall to the far right hangs a fringed towel or perhaps a napkin with which a guest could carry away leftovers from the feast. Everything has been painstakingly considered so as to provide the ultimate experience for the guest. With the décor of her home, Julia Felix has achieved a beautiful and relaxing atmosphere for her visitors—the aspiration of every Roman host.

CONCLUSION

Decoration of the home has always varied according to geographic location and the prevailing attitudes and preferences of a particular culture. Additionally, in designing a work for a particular client and a particular space, an artist may create a work to reflect the homeowner's way of life and the social climate in which he lives.²⁴⁵ Since the Roman Empire spanned several centuries and three continents, the assumption that the artistic styles of the Romans (and the many provincials) remained constant throughout that period or were identical in every part of the empire would be inaccurate. However, common motifs pervade the art of the period, especially in the depictions of food production and consumption. What the Roman people chose to represent on their walls, floors, and tombs provides the modern viewer with a perspective into what was important to them on a daily basis.

In the first three centuries AD, Rome and Italy were at the center of the political and administrative life of the whole empire, while each provincial town was responsible for its administration on the local level. The provincial nobility who lived in these towns also owned surrounding villas and country estates.²⁴⁶ In the first century, along with wine and oil, these estates provided two-thirds of the empire's grain, with one-third of the

²⁴⁵Lise Bek, *Towards Paradise on Earth: Modern Space Conception in Architecture, A Creation of Renaissance Humanism*. Analecta Romana Istituti Danici, Supplement 9 (Denmark: Odense University Press, 1980), 15-16

²⁴⁶Mireille Corbier, "City, Territory, and Tax," In *City and Country in the Ancient World*, ed. John Rich and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1991), 211-12.

supply coming from Egypt alone.²⁴⁷ Especially during the second and third centuries, the citizens of African cities and towns displayed their *Romanitas*, and their pride in the agrarian source of their wealth, by lavishly decorating their homes with mosaics such as *Allegories of Rome and the Provinces* (Figure 1). These centuries, essentially peaceful ones with no major military conflicts in the area to halt or affect production, were economically prosperous because of the continued exportation of grain, wine, and oil. After a short decline in building at the end of the third century, there was a resurgence in the fourth coupled with a renewed interest in artistic representations of large rural *latifundia* in urban settings. Images of these great estates, such as the one at Thabraca (Figure 17), and elaborate illustrations of the agricultural workings of farms (Figure 4) were essential to homeowners as displays of both their *Romanitas* and their source of wealth. Depictions of lavish banquets (Figures 106 and 107) and still-lives of exotic foods (Figure 83) were also important for displaying to visitors one's importance in social and political spheres. Therefore, in order to impress their guests, landowners chose to place their most intricate—and correspondingly valuable—mosaics in *triclinia* and public spaces.²⁴⁸

This same trend of Romanization occurred in every part of the western empire as Roman power spread. By the second century, a Gallo-Roman style of mosaics had evolved, with the cities of Vienna (Vienne) and Lugdunum (Lyon) in the Rhone Valley and Augusta Treverorum (Trier) of the Moselle region being particularly renowned. These pavements, typically in the form of small figural panels (Figure 14), contrast with the earlier purely Gallic style of geometric works, and portray the region's interest in its

²⁴⁷Salomonson, 1.

²⁴⁸Dunbabin, *Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, 12-26.

exportation of wine. This interest in the production and transport of wine became a common theme on many sculptural reliefs found on tombs throughout the area (Figure 46).²⁴⁹ Although Spain had a tradition of geometric mosaics before the arrival of the Romans, figural pavements, especially those depicting marine scenes, became more prevalent as Roman influence spread. Even though mosaics were uncommon in Britain before the arrival of the Romans in the first century, pavements were well-established as an art form within a few decades of its conquest.²⁵⁰ These mosaics included representations of the four seasons similar to those found in North Africa. According to Tacitus' *Agricola*, the army encouraged the citizens of Britain to show their *Romanitas* by building and living in the Roman style:

*Hortari privatim, adiuuare publice, ut templa fora domos extruerent,
laudando promptos, castigando segnes: ita honoris aemulatio pro
necessitate erat.*²⁵¹

He encouraged them privately and helped them publicly
to build temples, fora, and houses, by praising the enterprising and chastising
the lazy: thus the emulation of honor was a necessity.

This commentary exemplifies the transformation that took place in each of the provinces in turn as Roman control spread and increased. Citizens, particularly those in powerful government positions in their areas, proudly displayed their source of wealth and power by adapting their own arts to those of their conquerors.

Depictions of food production and consumption were important to wealthy individuals living in Italy as well, for they also took pride in their way of life and in their

²⁴⁹Unfortunately, not many frescoes have survived except at Pompeii. However, some wall paintings in Gaul also depict rural estates of urban homeowners (Figure 28).

²⁵⁰Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, 74-88.

²⁵¹Tac. *Agr.* 21.1.

empire. The abundance of frescoes and mosaics found at Pompeii and Herculaneum shows the opulence of their way of life and provides evidence that the production of wine and *garum* were important to their social status (Figures 26 and 65). In Rome, the elaborate tomb of Eurysaces, with its illustration of the entire bread-making process, suggests that it was a source of pride for him to be a part of the state's distribution of bread. However, in contrast to the numerous portrayals of agrarian life found in the provinces (e.g., plowing, harvesting, and threshing), not one fresco or mosaic in Pompeii shows the actual act of plowing; there exists only one painting of a farmhouse, and that with an idle plow. Although grain was grown in the region of Campania, ancient literary sources do not mention grain being grown near Pompeii itself.²⁵² Since two-third of Rome's grain came from Africa, it would not have been as relevant to the Pompeian elite to portray such activities on their walls. Instead of servants plowing fields, they chose to portray a more visually appealing scene—*erotes* harvesting and treading grapes used to make Campania's famous wine. Even more plentiful, though, are the still-lives and banquet scenes that would display to visitors the wealth of the homeowners without showing the mundane details of actual food production.

From the mosaics, sculptural reliefs, and paintings analyzed, it seems likely that pattern-books in some form circulated within Italy and the provinces. The bowls of fruit found as still-life frescoes on Pompeian dining room walls correspond to pavements on African floors (Figures 95 and 122),²⁵³ and Italian *xenia* “quilts” depicting the parts of a

²⁵²Willem Jongman, *The Economy and Society of Pompeii* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, Publishers, 1991), 102-06. Varro says that the earth in Campania was easy to plow (*Rust.* 1.20.4) and Cicero states that the territory of Capua was *subsidium annonae*, “an aid to the dole” (*Leg. Agr.* 1.21).

²⁵³The mosaics of the House of Africa (Figure 95) also include a basket of figs.

meal were imitated as well by African mosaicists. Marine scenes of similar composition exist in Italy, Africa, and Britain—all in areas in which fishing would have been a major part of the economy. Although the types of fish may vary from one mosaic to another, the central motif remains the same—an octopus locked in battle with another sea animal (Figures 33 and 100) or a simple depiction of fish without further embellishment. Even the sculptural reliefs found on tombs in various parts of the empire show parallel images of the transport of wine by barrel (Figures 42 and 43). Moreover, the same iconography can be found in sculptural relief on the thresholds of shops in Ostia and on tombs in Gaul (Figures 71 and 73)—the vendor holds one hand outstretched toward the customer who stands in front of the table of goods for sale. Although these images are not exact replicas, they are similar enough in style and iconography to suggest that there may have been more at work than the simple dissemination of themes from direct contact. Rather, books of drawings probably existed that provided artists and homeowners with “motifs” for the decoration of homes and tombs. When taken in conjunction with the comments of Pliny the Elder that the drawings of the fifth century BC painter Parrhasios were used to instruct artists of his day, the similarities in the archeological remains of mosaics, paintings, and sculptural reliefs throughout the empire could suggest that these “pattern books” did exist:

*Et alias multa graphidis vestigia exstant in tabulis ac membranis eius, ex quibus proficere dicuntur artifices.*²⁵⁴

And nevertheless many traces of his drawings exist on tablets and on parchments, from which artists are said to learn.

²⁵⁴Pliny *HN* 35.68.

Whether these books existed, or whether ideas were disseminated by masters to apprentices in workshops, the utilization of similar conventions and motifs in a variety of media to depict the many aspects of food production and consumption provide evidence that the elite considered food as an important source of wealth and one by which they could express their dedication to the ever increasing empire.

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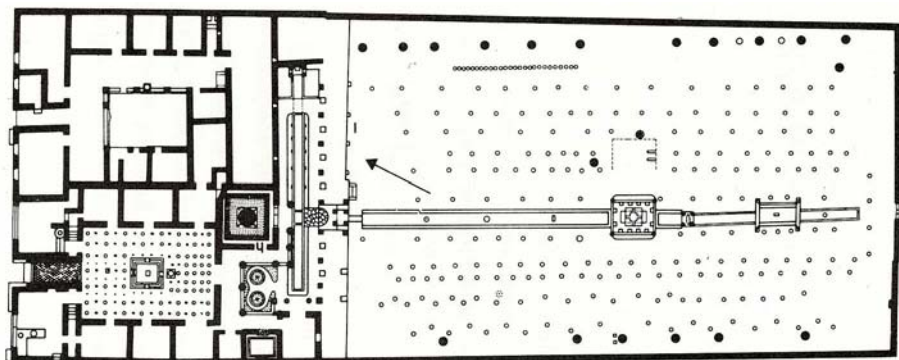
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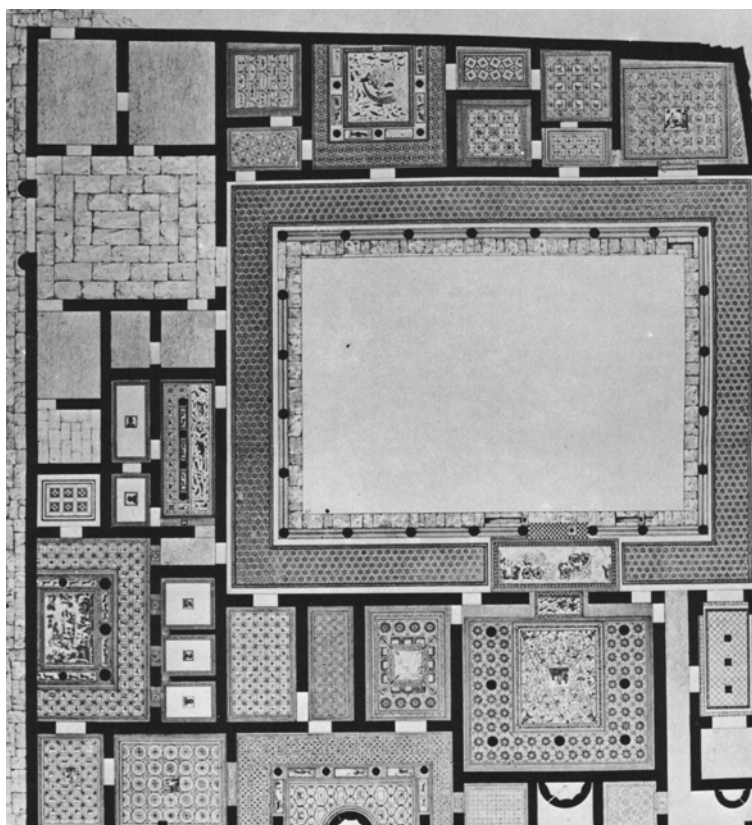
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

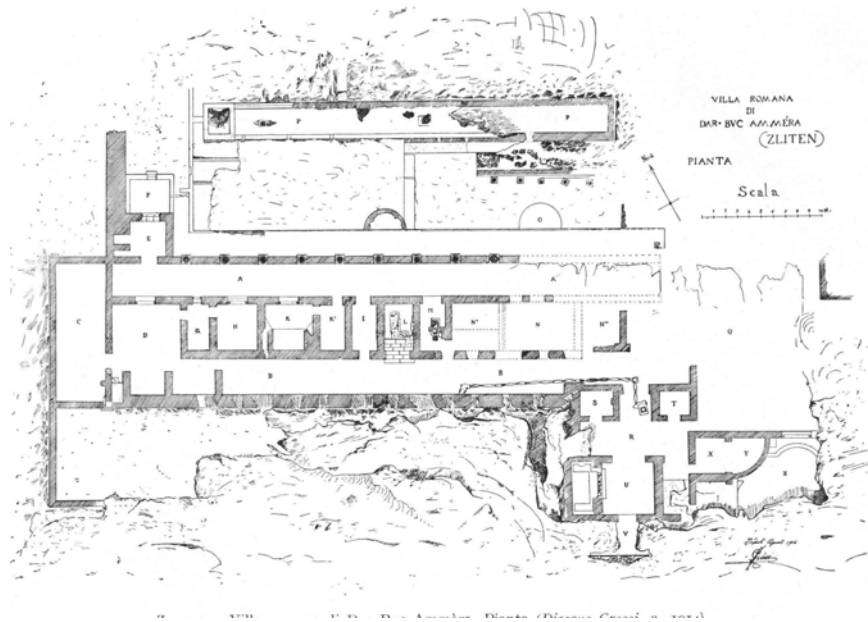


Floorplan: Miniature Villa.
 (From Zanker, *Pompeii*, p.146, Figure 73)

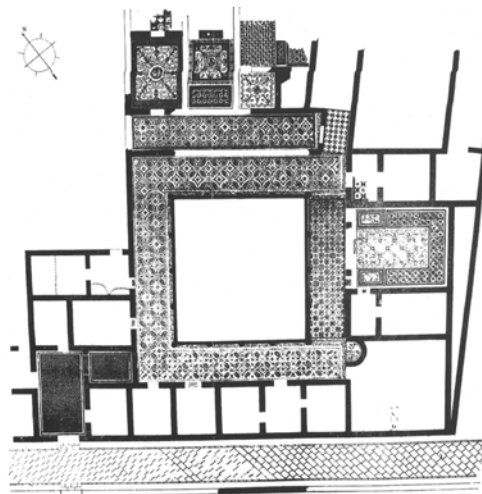


Floorplan: House of the Laberii.
 (From Dunbabin, *Mosaics of Roman North Africa*, plate 4)

APPENDIX 2

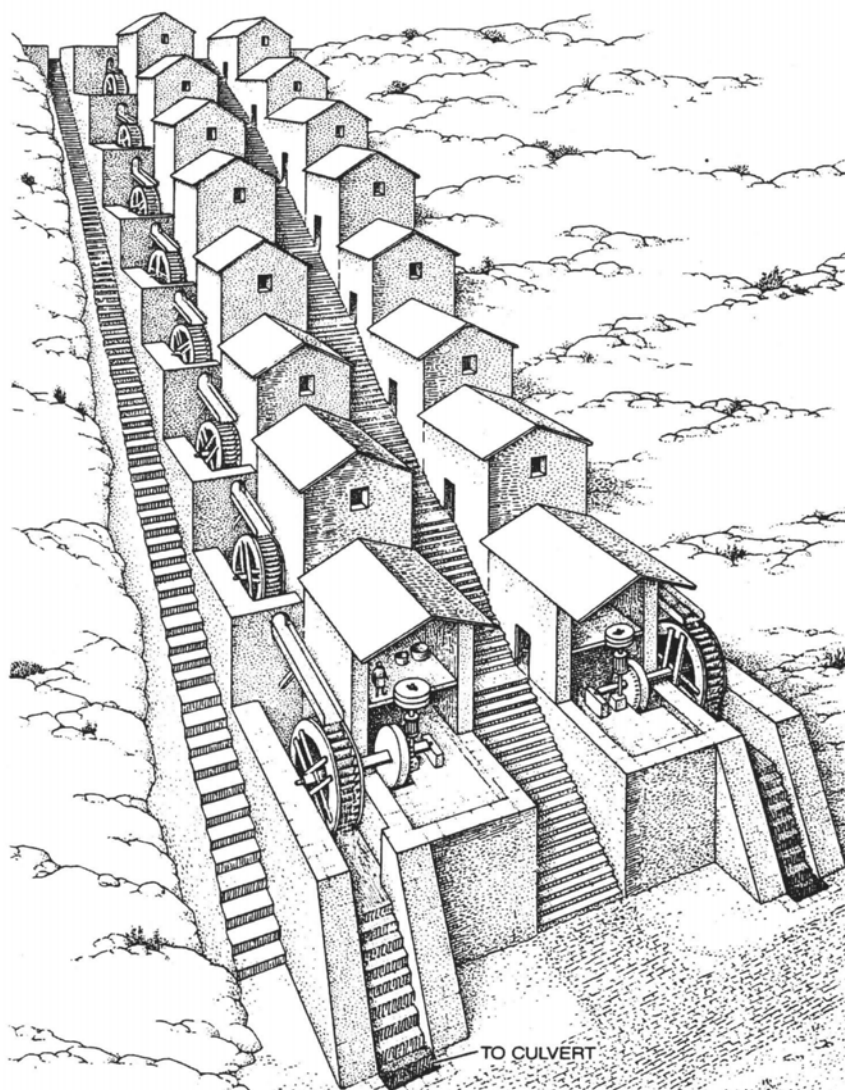


Floorplan: Villa at Dar Buc Amméra
(Aurigemma, *L'Italia in Africa*, Plate 116)



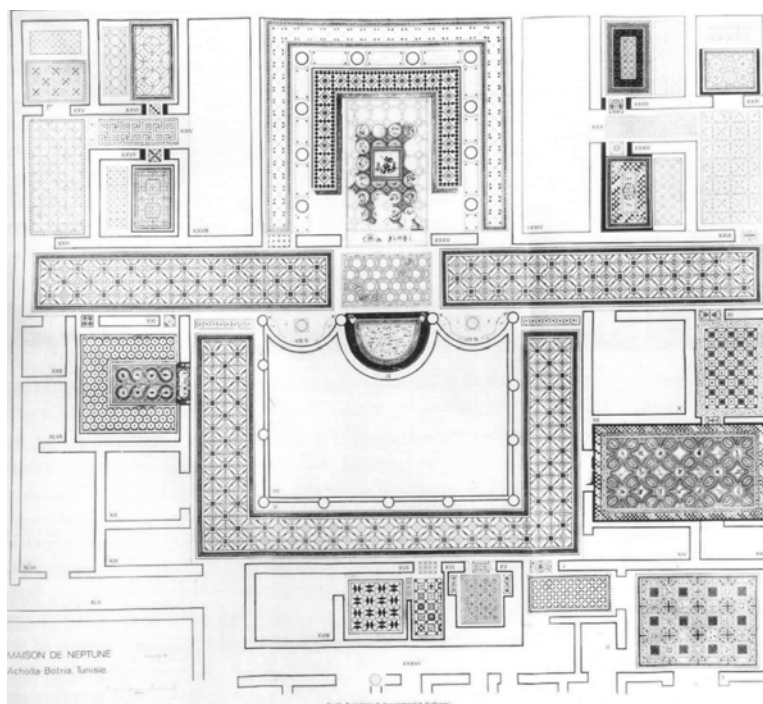
Floorplan: House of the Dionysian Procession
(From Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, p.108, figure 107)

APPENDIX 3



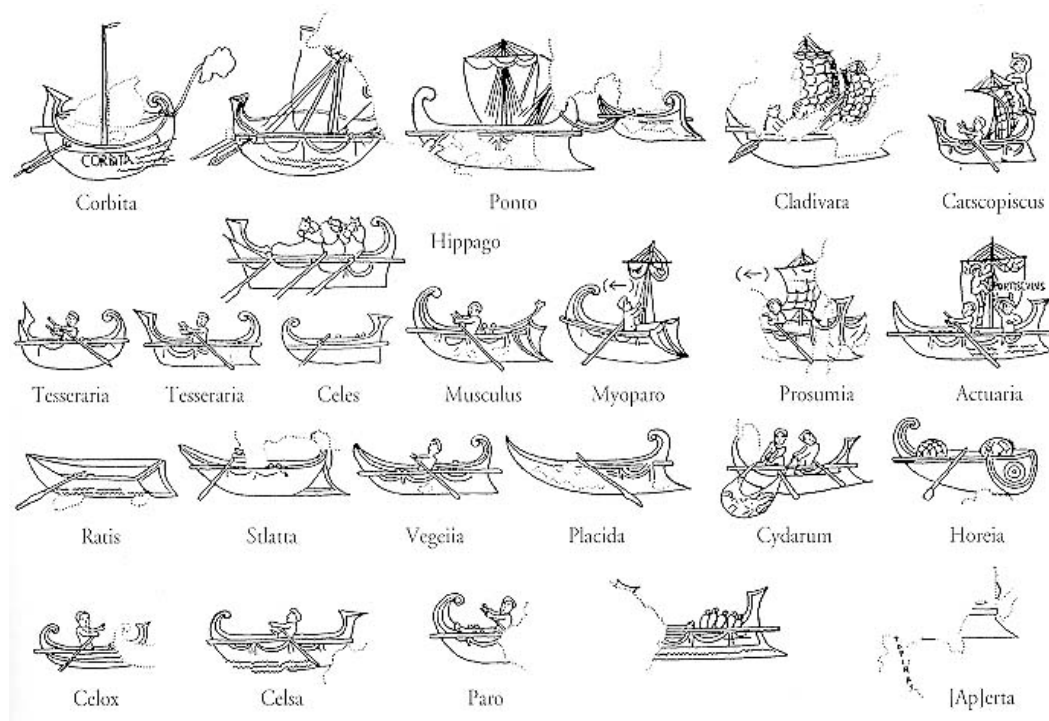
The Barbegal Watermill
(From Hodge, "A Roman Factory," p.109.)

APPENDIX 4



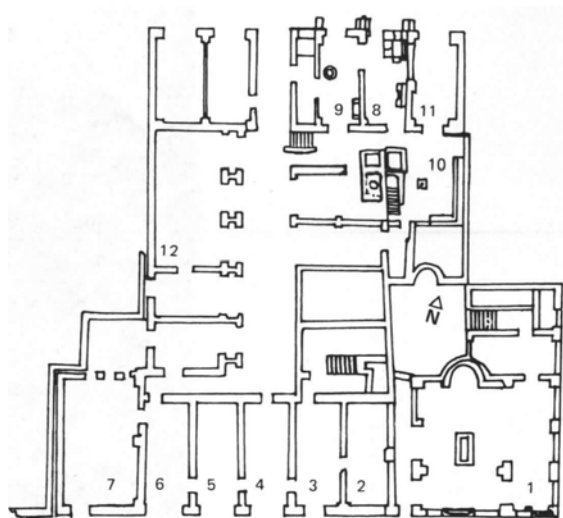
Floorplan: House of Neptune at Acholla
 (Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, p. 311, Figure 309)

APPENDIX 5



Catalogue of ships from the mosaic at Althiburus, Tunisia,
 3rd century (from P.M. Duval)
<http://index.waterland.net/Navis/Musea/Ostia/Homepage/SchiffstypenIt.htm>

APPENDIX 6

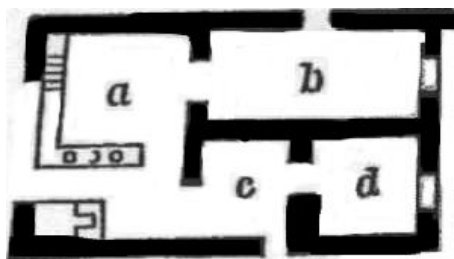


Guild of the *Lenuncularii*
 (From Hermansen, *Ostia*, p. 116, Figure 46)

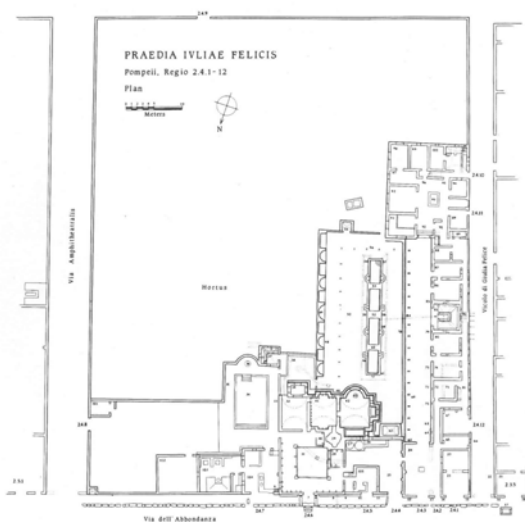


Vegetable Vendor
 (From Kampen, *Image and Status*, p. 139, Figure 40)

APPENDIX 7



Mercury Street Wineshop
(From Mau, *Pompeii*, p. 402, Figure 233)

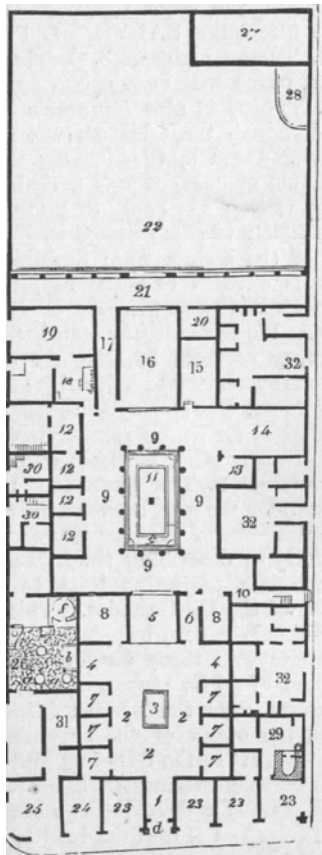


Floorplan: Praedia of Julia Felix
(From Parslow, *Pompeii*, p. 109,
Figure 29.)

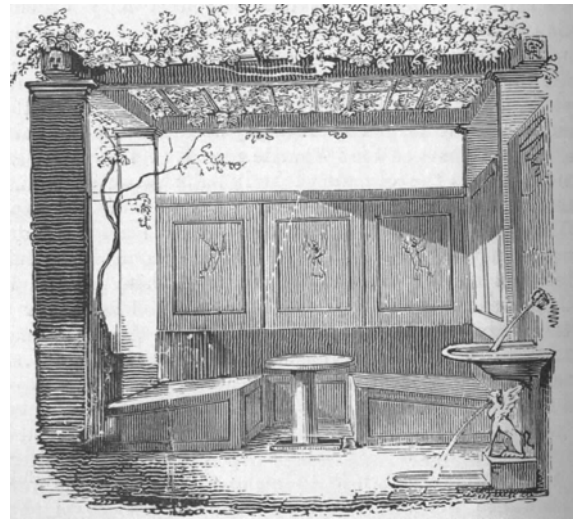


Seller of Fried Foods
(From Tanzer, *Common People of
Pompeii*, p. 30, Figure 16)

APPENDIX 8

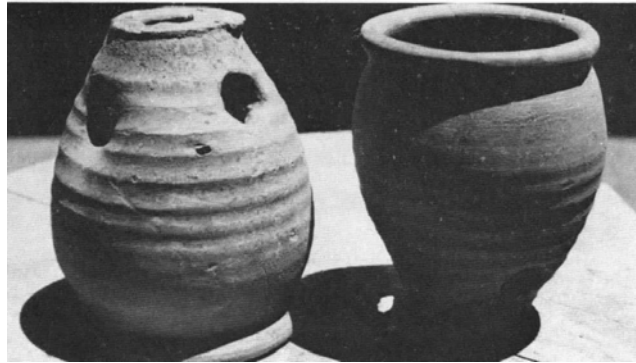


Floorplan: House of Pansa
(From Dyer, *Pompeii*,
p. 319)



House of Sallust, drawing of the *triclinium*
(From Dyer, *Pompeii*, p. 329)

APPENDIX 9

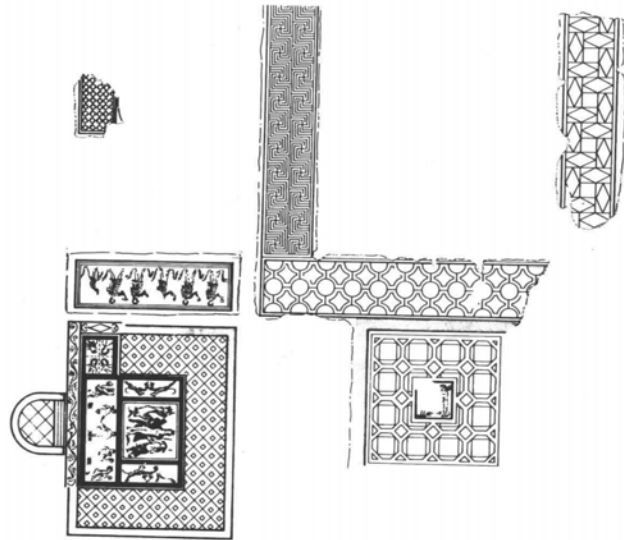


Lemon pots from the Garden of Hercules
(From Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, p. 93, figure 145.)



Triclinium of the House of the Ephebe
(From Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*, p. 93, Figure 145.)

APPENDIX 10



Floorplan of mosaics: House of Bacchus
 (From Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, p. 154, figure 158.)



Triclinium of the House of the Cryptoporticus
 (From Dunbabin, "Triclinium and Stibadium," Figure 6.)

APPENDIX 11



Excavation remains, House I.xiv.2
 (From Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii and Herculaneum*,
 p.95, figure 150.)



Asaroton in the Vatican Museum
 (From Deonna and Renard, *Croyances et Superstitions*, plate 13.)