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Eating the Empire: Intersections of Food, Cookery and Imperialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain

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Past & Present, Volume 198, Issue 1, 1 February 2008, Pages 71–109,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtm054>

Published: 01 February 2008

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Near the close of the eighteenth century, John Roach, publisher and travel-

guide author, proudly declared that London taverns were venues where visitors 'are to be met [with] all the most delicate luxuries upon earth, and where the fortunèd voluptuary may indulge his appetite, not only with all the natural dainties of every season, but with delicacies produced by means of preternatural ingenuity'.¹ By then the edible produce of imperial trade pervaded British society, as these one-time luxuries moved down the scale of affordability to become semi-luxuries and, in some cases, perceived necessities. Foods ranging from coffee to curry also became the empire's most ubiquitous symbols, and their advertisement, retail, preparation and consumption reflected and contributed to British discussions and perceptions of the empire.

...

The importance of food to the history of the early empire is incontestable. The English, and later British,...

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Online ISSN 1477-464X

Print ISSN 0031-2746

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