**Teaching notes on MCR Roman food**

**Preparation**

Note that this session can include the optional food tasting and/or cooking.

*Notes for the food tasting*

All of these ingredients are available from large supermarkets

* Pecorino or goat’s cheese
* bread, preferably a rye sourdough or similar dark, densely textured, chewy bread
* herbs: sage, rosemary, thyme, mint
* honey: with comb in if you can get it
* caroenum: you can make your own by reducing red grape juice. Alternatively, you can use red grape juice
* figs: fresh if in season, dried if not.
* pomegranate: if in season
* liquamen: use Thai fish sauce
* chick peas: tinned and drained

*Notes for the cooking*

Quantities will depend on how many pupils are cooking.

Melon and mint

* melons (1 per group)
* mint (1 bunch per group)
* runny honey (1 bottle/pot for whole class)
* white wine vinegar (1 bottle for whole class)
* black pepper in mill

Equipment: chopping board, sharp knives, measuring spoons, whisk, measuring jug, large bowl, small bowl, serving dish.

Hypotrimma

* lovage seeds (available online and in really big supermarkets, otherwise use caraway seeds)
* mint (1 bunch per group)
* raisins (1 bag per class)
* pine kernels (1 bag per class)
* cream cheese (e.g. Philadelphia, 1/2 pot per group)
* date syrup (available from large supermarkets and health food shops) (1 bottle per class)
* runny honey (1 bottle/pot for whole class)
* fish sauce (1 bottle for whole class)
* white wine vinegar (1 bottle for whole class)
* olive oil (1 bottle for whole class)
* grape juice (1 bottle/carton for whole class)
* bread (as above, 1 loaf per whole class)

Equipment: mortar & pestle (ask around staff to see who could loan), measuring spoons, sharp knife, chopping board, serving dish.

**Slide 1**

Learning objective: To discover ingredients and recipes available to the Romans

**Slide 2**

We start this week’s lesson with a quiz on what ingredients Romans had at their disposal. The variety of foods available wasn’t the same as today for many reasons, some of which we’ll explore here. Foods will appear and the pupils should vote on whether a Roman cook would have them.

* *cheese* – YES, in fact the English word ‘cheese’ comes from the Latin ‘caseum’
* *tomatoes* – NO, this plant is native to the Americas and was only brought over to Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries
* *dormice* – YES, they’re cute but they were considered a delicacy
* *sugar* – NO, the processes to refine sugar from cane or beet were not invented
* *pumpkin* - YES
* *sweetcorn* – NO, again, this was brought over from the Americas
* *acorns* – YES, but only if you were very desperate! Not really everyday food, most often eaten in times of famine.
* *pasta* – NOT REALLY, as this was a 14th century invention, but they did make types of dough which they would then boil or fry
* *wheat* – YES, and lots of other grains too, like barley and rye, which could be milled into flour and made into bread
* *potatoes* – NO, another plant native to the Americas
* *honey* – YES, and this was the main source of sweetness
* *milk* – YES, and from different animals, e.g. sheep, goats

**Slides 3—7**

These slides explore Roman foods in a little more detail, plus show some modern English words that derive from the Latin. You can do your food tasting alongside these slides (see notes at the beginning of this document).

*Slide 3* panis (bread)

A Roman staple, it would be more like a heavy sourdough than the industrially produced white sliced loaf we’re used to today. It’s where the word companion comes from.

*Slide 4* Dairy

Milk products were an important source of nutrition, but from sheep and goats milk as well as cows milk. ‘Ova’ gives us the word ‘oval’ and ‘lactose’ is the sugar derived from milk.

*Slide 5* Meat & fish

The most popular meat was pork, although meat was a luxury. Wild birds such as partridges and ducks could be captured and eaten. Fish was plentiful as was seafood including oysters. The words ‘carnivore’, ‘aviation’ and ‘Pisces’ all have links with these food words.

*Slide 6* Fruit & Vegetables

Along with beans and pulses, this formed a large part of the Roman diet. Olives (and their oil) were very important (as they are today).

Figs are a staple fruit that grow well in a hot climate and are useful because they can be dried to last (remember - no refrigeration, freezing or canning).

The pomegranate is another fruit that grows well in the Mediterranean climate. It was also seen as a symbol of fertility.

You’ll be able to see the direct connection between the Latin and the English words.

*Slide 7* Flavourings

The Romans were skilled at making their food taste delicious with various natural flavourings.

Honey (mel) was used as source of sweetness, as was caroenum (boiled-down grape juice or wine, also known as *defrutum*).

Salt (sal) was important not just for its flavouring properties but also for its ability to preserve food. For this reason, soldiers were sometimes paid in salt, hence the word ‘salary’.

An interesting link between modern and ancient times, many of the herbs used today were used by the Romans. ‘Herbae’ gives us the word ‘herbivore’ (as well as herb!). Rosemary comes from the Latin ‘rosa marina’- rose of the sea.

Liquamen is a liquid made from leaving salted fish to ferment in the sun. Very smelly! Our nearest modern equivalent is Thai fish sauce.

**Slide 8**

Introduces some Roman recipes. The first two can be made in the classroom and the third needs a stovetop. All these recipes are included in the worksheet.

**Slide 9**

The plenary slide:

**Question 1** Name an ingredient that Romans didn’t have. [sugar, tomatoes, maize, potatoes]

**Question 2** What English shape word comes from the Latin word for ‘egg’? [oval]

**Question 3** What is liquamen? [fermented fish guts!]