



As a busy trading nation, the Dutch Republic enjoyed tremendous economic success in the seventeenth century. Paintings of food and drink, collected by wealthy merchants and other prosperous citizens, describe the tastes and abundance of the era.

In the West Building's Dutch and Flemish galleries, savor two banquet pictures: Osias Beert's *Dishes with Oysters, Fruit, and Wine* and Willem Claesz Heda's *Banquet Piece with Mince Pie*.

Osias Beert the Elder, *Dishes with Oysters, Fruit, and Wine* (detail), c. 1620/1625, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund

who? what? how?

Osias Beert the Elder, *Dishes with Oysters, Fruit, and Wine*, c. 1620/1625, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund



1 Hungry for new foods

If you lived comfortably in Holland four hundred years ago, your daily meals would have consisted of bread and butter, cheese, fruit, fish, and stews of meats and vegetables.

With expanding international trade in the seventeenth century, a wider variety of foods became available. Dutch ships traveled to the far corners of the globe and brought back many luxury items: **salt** from France and Portugal; **grains** from Poland and Prussia; **raisins, dates, figs, nuts, and olives** from the Mediterranean; **sugar** from the Caribbean and Brazil; and **spices such as pepper, nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon** from Indonesia, the headquarters of Dutch trading.

Paintings of these rare and expensive delicacies were especially popular.

2 A feast for the eyes

Elaborate arrangements of exotic foods were created to delight the senses. As you examine these works, imagine how each food smells, feels, and tastes.

Artists recorded textures and surfaces of objects—the rough peel of a lemon, the translucence of glass, the softness of a linen tablecloth—with great detail.

The paintings were valued not only for their subject matter but also for the artist's skill. Carefully observing the natural world, artists strove to achieve an astonishing degree of illusion.

3

Tempting treats

Osias Beert's painting presents elegant sweets—those enjoyed on special occasions—carefully arranged on a tabletop in fine bowls and platters.

You are invited to select from:

- **freshly shucked oysters**
- **candied cinnamon bark and candied almonds**
- **quince jelly (stored in round wooden boxes)**
- **pastries**
- **dried raisins, figs, and chestnuts**

Which treat would you taste first?



4

Lavish banquets

Willem Claesz Heda specialized in banquet pictures. This one (below) evokes a wealthy merchant's dining room, with expensive serving pieces made of rare materials, and the remains of a sumptuous banquet.

Look for clues that this meal is over:

- **tipped goblets**
- **snuffed-out candle**
- **rumpled tablecloth**
- **half-eaten food**
- **platters resting at the table's edge**

The main course was mince pie, a special dish reserved for holidays and feasts. It was made of rich meat flavored with fruit, currants, raisins, and spices. Freshly cut slices of lemon added flavor.

As it does today, food played an important role in holidays and other festive occasions. What particular dishes do you eat on certain holidays?



William Claesz Heda,
*Banquet Piece with Mince
Pie*, 1635, National Gallery
of Art, Washington,
Patrons' Permanent Fund

book nook

These books about cooking can be found at your local library or bookstore.

Pancakes, Pancakes!

By Eric Carle | ages 3 and up

Still-Life Stew

By Helena Clare Pittman, illustrated by Victoria Raymond | ages 3 and up

Cooking Art: Easy Edible Art for Young Children

By MaryAnn F. Kohl and Jean Potter, illustrated by Ronni Roseman-Hall | ages 3 and up

Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers & Up

By Mollie Katzen and Ann Henderson | ages 3 and up

The Kids' Multicultural Cookbook: Food & Fun Around the World

By Deanna F. Cook, illustrated by Michael P. Klin | ages 6 and up

Honest Pretzels: And 64 Other Amazing Recipes for Ages 8 & Up

By Mollie Katzen | ages 8 and up

Kids Around the World Cook! The Best Foods and Recipes from Many Lands

By Arlette N. Braman | ages 8 and up

Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life

By Donna R. Barnes and Peter G. Rose | ages 15 and up

try this! activity

Cookies!

Many of the foods we eat today can be traced to the Netherlands. Cookies, pancakes, waffles, pretzels, and coleslaw are some of the dishes that were brought to America by Dutch colonists in the seventeenth century.

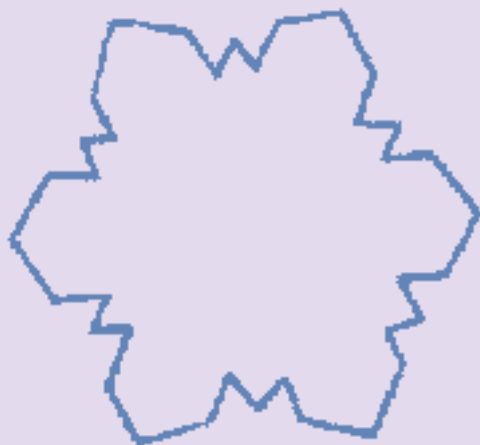
The first cookies were created by accident! Cooks used a small amount of cake batter to test the oven's temperature before baking a large cake. These little test cakes were called *koekje*, meaning "little cake" in Dutch. This is the root of the American word *cookie*.

Bake spice cookies

Below is a recipe for *speculaas*, Dutch spice cookies that are popular in winter. Ask an adult for help.

You will need:

- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups unsalted butter (or margarine), softened
- 3 cups sifted flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cloves
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground ginger
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup slivered almonds (optional)



- 1 In a small bowl, combine the sugar and milk. Stir until smooth.
- 2 In a large bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, and nutmeg. Then, blend in the butter until the mixture has the texture of meal.
- 3 Add the sugar and milk mixture to the large bowl.
- 4 Add the almonds.
- 5 Mix all the ingredients well.
Tip: use your hands to knead the dough.
- 6 Shape the dough into a log. Wrap in foil or wax paper and refrigerate overnight (at least 8 hours).
- 7 Roll out the dough, making sure to get it pretty thin. (The dough will be hard and may need to sit out for a few minutes before it can be rolled out.)
- 8 Cut the dough into shapes with cookie cutters. (Often these cookies are shaped like windmills.)
- 9 Place shapes on a greased cookie sheet and bake at 350° for about 10 to 15 minutes (depending on dough thickness).
- 10 Remove and cool. The cookies should be crispy.

Eet smakelijk! Eat well!