

Art of the Meal: portraits of wine, cuisine & culture in Renaissance Italy & France

Art of Wine depicted by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Botticelli

Historical Background:

Renaissance: humanism's rediscovery of classical Greek & Roman arts & culture

Origin: transition from the Middle Ages to modernity

Outcome: new social changes in art, architecture, politics, science, literature

Began **Florence** by Medici & 1452 migration of Greek scholars and their texts

Dante and paintings of Giotto; later Leonardo (born 1452) & Michelangelo

Age of Discovery: 1492 Columbus & Portuguese sea route to India

Global outlook; Explorers brought knowledge of Africa and the Americas

Massive **wealth** from trade : spices, precious metals

'Columbus exchange': food, plants, animals exchanged between colonies & Europe

Commercial Revolution; trans-oceanic trade, new technologies via the Renaissance

International companies: East India Co. Stock underwrote Dutch & French trading co.

Banking: Rich Florence, Lucca, Siena, Venice, Genoa dominated banking in Europe

Merchant Class: traders & merchants rise over feudal landowners; double entry book

Culinary becomes Modern:

Dining as culture: response from living in small-groups to large-groups cities

Social graces: main meal moves from morning daylight after work to evening

14th C. Europe had traded with India & China for luxuries: cotton, silk, spices; later

wealth came from the Americas' silver, gold, sugar, cotton, and rum

Renaissance Table Etiquette ~ Origin of Manners as means of reinforcing social order and distinguishing the privileged class from everyone else.

Style & behavior: The newfangled fork began in Italy; manners teach well-to-do

Printing & **cookbooks:** 14 C. Renaissance closed the book on medieval Italian cooking

Urbanity & elegance: new technology advances: cookbooks and images of style circulate via new printing books

Social climbing via the Table: Conspicuous consumption; elaborately staged cuisine of show off rich and famous. Dutch and Flemish paintings showed abundant wealth.

Specialization: dozens of cook, kitchen workers, carvers, *Bottigliere-wine stewards*; *trinciante* (meat carver). Scalco as impresario. Banquets had music, theatre, acrobats, belly dancers, if outdoors - fireworks finale.

WINE PAIRING Became modern. "Classics" emerged a relationship of region's cuisine and its wines. Lamb and red wine of Bordeaux. Italian wine, "food friendly" with bright acidity. Tannic Italian wines harmonized with boldly flavored Italian foods. Snow chilled white wine. Italians dined with wine which was safer than water

Otium

A Life of Cultured Leisure

For wealthy Romans, *otium*, or leisure, presented a chance to forget the concerns of city life, to abandon worry about politics or business (*negotium*), and, according to the Roman author Pliny the Younger, to set aside the need to dress formally in a toga. A seaside estate such as the Villa dei Papiri was the perfect place for an escape of this kind. Its owners could host elaborate banquets where guests were surrounded by art, sating both their gastronomic and their intellectual appetites. They could read poetic and philosophical texts that provided pleasure and stimulated learned debate. Many Romans styled parts of their luxurious residences after ancient Greek spaces in order to display their erudition and philhellenism (admiration for Greek culture). Sculptures of famous statesmen, writers, and thinkers offered models for emulation. Abundant water features and gardens adorned with images of deities, heroes, and athletes evoked mythical landscapes and Greek religious sanctuaries. Pliny and others considered the pursuit of *otium* in their villas essential to a more honest and inspired life.

The Renaissance: When dining became modern and a social event
Banquets: held to enhance prestige of a host or reinforce social bonds or political allegiances. Inspired by Greek & Roman tradition