

## In the Kitchen of a Wealthy Domus

A senator expects to hold many dinner parties for important guests, and wants to display his wealth by serving luxurious meals. His kitchen, therefore, is large and well equipped.

The Roman cook has a wide variety of cooking utensils. Unlike the elaborate glass, metal, and pottery utensils used in the *triclinium* for serving meals, cooking pots are simply and strongly constructed to stand up to continual use and temperature changes.

The kitchen has several stoves. A large brick-built stove is used for cooking food in bronze or earthenware pots over charcoal. The pots—some open, some with close-fitting lids—are placed on metal tripods or pottery stands so that they do not rest directly on the fire, which might cause them to crack.

A fireplace burning a mixture of wood and charcoal and fitted with a rotating spit is used for roasting larger cuts of meat. Whole pigs or large birds can be cooked in this manner. A portable earthenware oven fired by charcoal is used for baking bread, pastries, and cakes.

### The luxury of fresh water

Since this house is connected to the public water supply, the kitchen slaves have the luxury of fresh water for cleaning fruit and vegetables, as well as cleaning pots, pans and knives. However, the latrine next to the kitchen, making use of the running water, is really only reserved for family use; the slaves must make do with the nearest public latrine.

A collection of *amphorae* and jugs sits in one corner awaiting use. The jugs have thick sides and narrow necks with small openings to keep liquids cool in the summer heat. Beside them are sacks containing ground wheat, chickpeas, and such dried fruits as dates and grapes.

Although the cook has a variety of herbal flavorings available, the most popular Roman seasoning is *liquamen*, also called *garum*. Made by allowing fish entrails and small whole fish to rot and ferment in salted vats under the sun for anything up to three months, *garum* sounds horrible, but it goes into many dishes, including desserts.



This busy kitchen has the benefit of running water from the public supply, useful for washing up—and for flushing the home's adjacent latrine.

A portable earthenware oven.

### Fact box

Roman food had little in common with modern Italian food. Rice, pasta, and tomatoes were not yet known, and Romans had little liking for garlic.



A cooking pot sits on an iron stand to avoid direct contact with flaming charcoal.

Below: Commonly used pottery vessels.

