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Food and norms in 13th–16th century Estonia: meat and meat products

Inna Põltsam-Jürjo
inna.jurjo@tlu.ee

Centre of History, Archaeology and Art History,
Tallinn University, Uus-Sadama 5a,
10120 Tallinn, Estonia

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to give an overview of the norms that determined dietary patterns in medieval and early modern Estonia. The focus is on meat and on the social and cultural norms related to meat-eating. In particular, written sources shed light on what kind of norms and customs shaped the local food culture. The production and selling of groceries was subject to fixed regulations and monitored by officials. Furthermore, *control over one's appetite was imposed by church and public authorities.* In one way or another, every person allowed themselves to be guided by those transcultural or local norms and value criteria.

KEYWORDS

Medieval Livonia, meat, meat products, fasting, famine, medieval feasts, sumptuary law.

Introduction

The food culture of ancient Estonia can only be studied on the basis of archaeological evidence. The appearance of written sources in the 13th century and onwards, however, offers new opportunities both in terms of methodology and subject matter. One issue that written sources shed light on is the normative side of food culture, but also people's daily lives in general – everything that has to do with contemporary attitudes, taboos, prejudices, and standards. In medieval Livonia, which roughly encompassed the areas of today's Estonia and Latvia, these were first and foremost the norms set by the Christian church, but also standards for food processing and trade that developed in towns. Power relations and social hierarchy had an impact as well, for social standing in itself generated food culture norms, shaping the notion of a social-class-appropriate diet, i.e., what kind of eating habits were suitable for one class or another. It is also impossible to overlook the dietary guidelines stemming from contemporary medical science and folk medicine, meant to safeguard people's health and physical wellbeing.

The Danish-German conquest of the 13th century was followed by the redistribution of food resources in medieval Livonia, pertaining to agricultural lands, fishing waters, grasslands, pastures, apicultural grasslands, forests, etc. As time went on, some social groups were deprived of certain food resources, or at least their access

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to these resources was restricted; this had a significant impact on the utilization of natural produce, especially hunting and fishing, but also apiculture and foraging. For example, in ancient Estonia, fishing waters were divided between villages and other smaller communities; after the Danish-German conquest, however, the new lords regarded fishing as their prerogative (Põltsam-Jürjo 2021, 25–26). On feudal lands, only the vassal of the land had the right to fish, while peasants were allowed to fish for an extra fee. According to Livonia's oldest knight law, fishing in someone else's private waters was punishable by a fine of one mark (Kahk 1992, 157). While hunting likely remained available to everyone in Estonia in the first few centuries after the conquest, over time, the right to hunt became more restricted. Hunting became the exclusive privilege of the nobility and game meat a delicacy and luxury (Põltsam-Jürjo 2013, 53, 55; Kreem et al. 2022, 112). Restrictions were likely first adopted in private manors and only for big game, but by the beginning of the 16th century, peasants in some areas were even forbidden from hunting rabbits (Johansen 1925, 50, 60). Without any restrictions, peasants were allowed to catch forest birds. Towns established by the conqueror-colonists developed their own specific ways of acquiring food. Even though people living in towns got most of their food from their own households, towns still depended on villages for produce, more precisely on leftover produce from villages within a 20–30 km radius of the town (Põltsam-Jürjo 2013, 41–43). Feudal lords, the nobility, and the clergy also depended on produce from the village.

During medieval times, the amount and rate of taxes collected on agricultural products increased (Ligi 1968), which in turn potentially decreased the variety of food available to rural peasant families, leading to situations where there simply was not enough nutritious food. The afore-described developments meant that after the conquests of the 13th century, albeit not immediately, food options of the peasant population of medieval Livonia, and therefore most of the population, became not only more limited but also more unstable and more manipulable. At the same time, the legal status and economic circumstances of medieval Livonian peasantry also deteriorated (Kahk 1992, 171–177). In medieval times, daily food consumption was no longer only and directly dependent on crop yields and hard work, but was also affected by market prices and requirements, the (economic-)political decisions of lords, international agreements, etc.

Still, with the 13th century conquest, food culture in medieval Livonia became more diverse. New social classes and new centers of secular and religious authority, such as monasteries, order and episcopal castles, towns, manors, etc., all changed and added to food production, commerce, and consumption, and in this way also influenced the norms and standards related to food. A person's food options, palate and appetite – all of this was subjected to comprehensive and ever stricter control. This affected both the upper and lower classes of society. Rules and regulations shaped food processing, as well as food commerce in domestic and international markets. A close connection to Western European markets through the Hanseatic trade brought tendencies from elsewhere to the local medieval Livonian market (Kahk 1992, 235–249).

Written sources give us an idea of several norms set by secular and religious authorities that affected food culture in medieval Estonia, including how external compulsion regulated and controlled people's menu and appetite. Written sources also offer information on general standards set for food items and products. There is some information on the practices and principles of medieval agriculture, including animal husbandry. However, information found in archival materials remains rather one-sided, as these sources are mostly normative materials from towns, such as town privileges, town council regulations, *burspraken*, guild statutes, etc. In addition, most of the surviving medieval sources come from the largest town in Estonia – Tallinn. There is very little written information – normative or otherwise – on the eating habits of peasants or people living in manors and castles. Norms and regulations alone do not give the full picture of how people really ate; however, there are some sources – accounts, menus, town council regulations, wills, court protocols, inventories, etc. – that shed a more direct light onto what was actually consumed. Even so, medieval written sources do not allow us to reconstruct the daily menu of an individual; archeological findings, on the other hand, give us some insight – through the osteological and paleopathological analysis of medieval bone matter (Morrone et al. 2021; Malve 2018; Allmäe &Verš 2011). Indeed, even then the concrete individual is seldom identified. But a person's daily menu is recorded and preserved in their bones and teeth; therefore, the physical condition of a (medieval) person tells us of their unique eating habits.

Based on a study of archival materials, the article at hand looks at the norms and regulations that had an important role in shaping people's eating habits in medieval Livonia, or medieval Estonia, to be more precise. The main question of interest – albeit a difficult one to answer – is how productive and effective these external regulations and restrictions were in shaping people's eating habits and appetite. In this article, the main focus is on meat and on the social and cultural norms related to meat-eating. Meat clearly stands out among other food items, for, on the one hand, meat has had a deep and multifaceted cultural meaning throughout history, and on the other hand, there are various prejudices and taboos attached to it.

Keeping one's appetite in check: the church and medicine

The Christianization of the people of Estonia that came with the conquests of the 13th century changed the food ideology of the area. The Christian church began to strongly shape a person's food options, as well their overall attitudes toward nourishment and eating. We have no knowledge of the restrictions or limitations that might have characterized the eating habits of the people of Estonia in more ancient times. It is very likely that even during that time, preparing for or taking part in certain religious rituals involved a distinct food selection. The fact that food

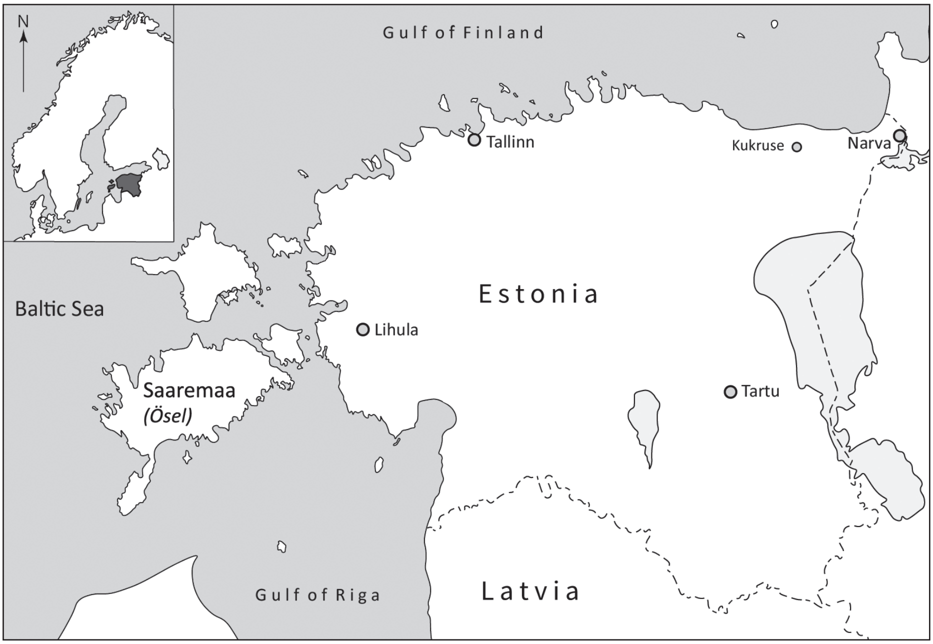

FIG. 1. Map of Estonia with the places mentioned in the text.

items had ideological meaning is evidenced by ancient grave goods. Archaeological excavations have uncovered food items that were sometimes buried with the dead in pre-Christian Estonia. For example, grave goods from the 12th–13th century burials near Kukruse manor in north-eastern Estonia (Fig. 1) included dairy products and eggs (Jonuks et al. 2018; Oras et al. 2018; Gunnarssone et al. 2020). Presumably, each of these items had symbolic meaning. Food played an essential role in the communication between the worlds of the living and the dead. At the same time, however, the general norms and ideologies that influenced people's daily food consumption remain unknown.

The medieval church shaped the eating habits of Christians mainly through fasting. Fasting-time restrictions meant that consuming the meat of warm-blooded land animals or any type of animal protein was forbidden; one was only allowed a meal a day, had to refrain from drinking alcohol and stay abstinent (Mennell 1987, 382). Altogether, animal products were forbidden for almost a third of the year. In principle, fasting was mandatory for all Christians, but in certain instances, exceptions were made. Fasting was not required in case of illness, poverty, famine – in situations where one simply did not have the option to pick and choose what to eat. Hard labor and performing one's official duties could qualify as reasons for exemption. Limiting one's food consumption or giving up food entirely was not a purpose in itself – through fasting, people aspired toward mental, spiritual goals.

The Christianization of medieval Livonia introduced Christian orders that established convents and monasteries across the land. According to order rules, fasting was more strict and more comprehensive for members than for regular people. Giving up meat was a testament to a person's humility; it was a sign of a person's willingness to remain (more or less) voluntarily outside "the society of the strong" (Montanari 1999, 26). Often, the members of religious orders were only allowed to eat meat if it was necessary for their health (Kala 2013, 149). Meanwhile, in the Bridgettine Order, meat was served four times a week outside of fast (Rajamaa 2018, 189). Until the reform of the 1470s, meat was also on the menu at the Dominican Monastery in Tallinn – e.g., for Trinity Sunday, the Brotherhood of the Blackheads used to donate to them a fatty wether (Kala 2013, 307–309). Members of the cathedral chapters of medieval Livonia also adhered to the rules of religious orders, at least during the first few post-conquest centuries. As such, fasting and limiting one's appetite were especially important for a considerable part of medieval Livonia's colonial, German-origin elite, therefore, it very much impacted on how they ate. Furthermore, the Teutonic Order and its Livonian branch were also essentially religious orders whose members led monastic lives (Militzer 2013, 13–14; Kreem 2022, 69–70). According to the Order's statute, there were three fasting days per week: Wednesday, Friday and Saturday (Bruiningk 1904, 190). Different rules, however, applied in wartime: knights of the order had to be well-nourished because fighting required a lot of strength and energy. By the Late Medieval Period, the number of order knights in burgs had increased substantially, rules of communal living were not followed, and their lifestyle could no longer be characterized as austere.

From 1346 onwards, the rulers of Estonia were all religious lords: bishops of Tartu and Saaremaa (Ösel-Wiek) and the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order. Ideally, all should have valued moderation and respected fasting-time restrictions. If and to what extent these principles were actually followed is impossible to say. The fact remains that even when fasting, the elite's food options were plentiful, even luxurious; for example, some dishes were prepared with expensive spices. It is also important to note that based on contemporary scholarly knowledge and understandings, waterfowl, seal, and beaver's tail were all considered as appropriate fasting-time foods (Mänd 2005, 226; Põltsam-Jürjo 2021, 43). Another change occurred in 1491, when the Pope allowed the consumption of eggs and dairy during fasting, something that had been forbidden earlier.

It is impossible to say how quickly the indigenous people of Estonia accepted and embraced the Christian church's rules of fasting. In 1241, the Bishop of Saaremaa entered into an agreement with his newly-Christianized subordinates under which they had to give up meat on Fridays, during Lent and on the vigils of the Apostles; additionally, four mid-week fasts had to be observed (after the sixth Sunday before Easter, after Pentecost, the Feast of the Cross, and the third Sunday of Advent) (LUB 1: 169). If a person did not adhere to these rules, they risked a considerable fine – half a mark of silver. Whether and to what extent the following of these rules could be reinforced and checked, especially in rural areas, is unclear; likely, it was neither very effective nor consistent. Provision 28 of the decisions made at the 1428 Riga provincial church council reasserted the requirement to observe fast on

Fridays and urged people not to postpone it to another day (LUB 7: 690). In time, fasting days did become customary for the Estonian peasantry, and even as late as in the 19th century, in many areas of Estonia, there were two established porridge days – Wednesday and Saturday – in addition to meat days – Thursday and Sunday (Moora 1991, 245). It is more than likely that this tradition can be traced back to medieval rules of fasting. The acceptance of fasting was likely made easier by the fact that, in a sense, it largely corresponded with the yearly cycle of food distribution and availability – during mating season from late winter to late summer, people generally did not hunt for meat anyway (Moora 1991, 188).

Fasting not only forced people to give up certain foods and limit their appetites, but it also imposed upon them a specific menu which was basically a mandatory diet of fish, grains, and vegetables. During medieval times, vegetables were not considered prestigious at all; the same, however, cannot be said about fish. The selection of fish was extensive and included some expensive and luxurious varieties (stockfish, herring, dried halibut, and sturgeon). It is therefore understandable that the upper classes preferred eating fish rather than vegetables during fasting. For example, a 1501 menu of foods served at the table of the Bishop of Tallinn included only one vegetarian dish – hemp puree; everything else was either fish- or seal-based (TLA 31.1.142, 22v–23; Põltsam-Jürjo 2021, 43). At a 1525 fasting-time social gathering organized by the Livonian Order master, beaver tail and at least six types of fish were served; vegetarian foods included bread, onions, nuts and apples, as well as exotic olives, almonds, raisins; almond purée prepared with Rhine wine was served as a special treat (Põltsam-Jürjo 2013, 131). In the fasting-time diet of the Estonian peasantry, vegetables were a staple. Chronicler Dionysius Fabricius wrote at the beginning of the 17th century: "During Lent, they hardly eat anything besides cabbage and radishes" (Fabricius 2010, 61). Ironically, the desire of the elite and the upper class for luxury and distinction caused them to have a much more unbalanced and unhealthy diet, at least in modern-day terms.

The medieval diet was very inconsistent throughout the year, as it was affected by the seasonal availability of foods, fasting periods, holidays, and other feasts. How inconsistent a person's diet was depended not only on their economic means but also on their social status, their occupation, physical condition, health, etc. The medieval church tried to influence people's eating habits outside fasting periods as well, by diligently teaching congregations that gluttony was one of the seven deadly sins (Koehler 1892, 51; Jürjo 2019, 99). One was supposed to be guided by the principle that the less you fill your stomach, the more you enrich your soul. Medieval society's poorer, unprivileged part adhered to this way of life quite easily, without pursuing it as a goal. For the lower classes, restricting one's food intake was generally not self-imposed, it was simply a fact of life caused by limited food resources or outright deprivation. During holidays and other celebrations, however, even the poor could take part in more copious and plentiful meals (Põltsam-Jürjo 2013, 134–135).

Contemporary medicine also dictated what and how much should be consumed; this certainly affected somewhat the eating habits of the Livonian elite, whether they were looking to ease their gout-related discomforts, avoid the plague, etc. Medieval medicine was based on an antique tradition, at the center of which was Galen's (ca 129 – ca 210) theory of the four humors (black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm) (Borst 1983, 492–493). A person's health depended on the balance of these humors, and this balance could be achieved and maintained by eating right (Woolgar 2007, 167–168). The theory of the four humors was closely related to the four temperament theory (choleric, melancholic, sanguine, and phlegmatic), which provided grounds for recommendations to eat according to one's personality. A person's age also prescribed what foods were appropriate. As a general principle, people were advised to eat lighter foods first and only then move on to heavier things. Diets had to be adapted to suit the season; for example, beef, pork, and lamb were appropriate in the winter, veal in the summer (Schrick 1484, vij, xc). Food-related recommendations were widespread during plagues (Nottbeck 1894, 450–469; Schrick 1484). In an epidemic, it was thought wise to season one's food with vinegar or to take vinegar on the side. Cheese and milk were to be given up, as well as pork and ox meat, for these supposedly produced heavy moisture. It was advised, on the other hand, to eat chicken, grey partridge, and other types of bird meat. Overall, it was thought best to simply eat less during a plague. Therefore, eating according to the rules and choosing the right foods (e.g., not eating meat), as well as limiting one's overall food intake as a ruling principle was a positive tendency, both from the viewpoint of the medieval church and medieval medicine.

Regulations on luxury

Medieval Livonia's sumptuary laws demonstrate that the secular authorities were interested in controlling and suppressing gluttony. City authorities introduced luxury regulations to limit any flaunting that was considered inappropriate for one's social rank (Mennell 1987, 382–383). According to the earliest known luxury regulation issued in Tallinn at the end of the 14th or at the beginning of the 15th century, the most spectacular wedding celebrations could host up to 120 guests, and a four-course menu of up to 60 dishes was permitted at the wedding feast (Stieda 1887, 87). A more modest wedding was allowed to have 40 guests and four courses. If a bride's dowry was insignificant, only a small supper was allowed. A regulation – or at least a draft of one – on the size of wedding parties was included in a 1538 Tallinn Town Council protocol (Põltsam-Jürjo 2013, 117). According to this, to weddings at the Great Guild, 80 town council members, citizens, and clerics, as well as 80 women and maidens, and 80 journeymen could be invited, while 55 barrels of food were allowed to be served, each estimated to feed four guests. The difference in measurement units used in the luxury regulations of different centuries makes it challenging to directly compare the amount of food permitted. The older regulation designated a platter of food for two, whereas the 1538 regulation a small keg of food for four people.

A Tallinn Town Council sumptuary law from around 1540 contains a menu of a wedding feast (TLA 230.1.Bs7, 15–16v; Pabst 1842, 220–229; Põltsam-Jürjo 2013, 118; Kala et al. 2014, 135–138). Dishes served at this wedding feast at the Great Guild included:

- First course: thick black sauce or soup. Yellow sauce or soup that had been customary earlier was not permitted, nor was fresh meat, including capon, cooked with horseradish.
- Second course: roast meat[1] accompanied by one type of wine (typically Rhine wine).
- Third course: ham, mettwurst, tongue.
- Fourth course: "rice, and not almond pudding".
- Fifth course: butter and cheese.
- Sixth course: apples, nuts, cakes.

It was permitted to serve a pot roast and cold dishes left over from the midday feast in the evening.

In this sumptuary regulation, the so-called permitted splendor of a wedding feast was determined by social status, and so the members of St. Canute's and St. Olaf's guilds had to settle for more modest wedding feasts than the members of the Great Guild. The variety of food served at artisans' weddings was more limited. For example, the members of St. Olaf's Guild were permitted to serve pot roast, one type of roast meat, ham, butter, and cheese. Thus, the modesty of the feast was determined by a smaller variety of meat dishes and delicatessen. Regulations addressing the lavishness of feasts had relatively little impact on how much was eaten, as only the choice and variety of food was prescribed. However, to some extent, the regulations likely discouraged overeating in general.

Appetite was also monitored and regulated by professional associations. The oldest statute of the Great Guild in Tartu from 1387 set limits to the numbers of dishes to be served at a banquet where the alderman and the elders of the guild hosted some members of their brotherhood, masked as devils (Mänd 2005, 110). The pertinent passage of the statute declared that the number of courses must not exceed four and the number of dishes sixteen. In general, the menus of guild banquets were fixed and deviations from set norms relatively minor. This is evidenced by the notable stability of the content of feast accounts over the years, even across different types of feasts (Põltsam-Jürjo 2013, 121). External constraint and supervision over people's appetites in medieval times was mainly dictated by the church, doctors, and public authorities. At the same time, the observance and existence of traditional diets and traditional festive foods also constituted a certain level of external constraint. This does not mean, however, that tradition restricted the variety of foods or called for moderation everywhere and always.

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[1] The steak was either mutton or beef.

Meat and feasting

In the Medieval Period, there were a lot of influential advocates for moderation in food consumption, but the mindset of the masses tended to be quite the opposite: people valued and craved for a lavish spread, a wholesome meal, and the opportunity to eat without restrictions. This attitude became especially apparent at celebratory feasts, and its most direct and distinct manifestation was the excessive, even barbaric consumption of meat.

In medieval times, meat was paramount, as tables were literally buried under meat dishes. For example, provisions for the 1421 All Souls' Day feast in Tallinn Town Council included: 22 hens, 21 geese, 5 1/4 sheep, 2 lambs, pot-roast beef, 12 tongues, 5 pork hams, 7 pairs of pig's trotters, 2 pairs of hind loins of boar (*2 par berschylde*), 2 pork roasts (*2 swyns braden*), 2 pork backs (roasts?) (*2 swyns rughe*) and pork belly (TLA 230.1.Ba2, 39–39v; Põltsam-Jürjo 2022a, 112–113). At least in the first decades of the 15th century, at this feast, the food selection was clearly dominated by pork and poultry. It is very likely that consuming boar and pork in honor of one's ancestors had a certain ritual significance. A feast not considerably less abundant was organized in honor of the Commander of Tallinn in 1547, where the following meat dishes were served: beef, 9 sheep, wether, lamb, roasted poultry (109 hens and 6 capons), and pork ham. The selection of fish included dried and salted cod, flounder, fresh cod and other types of fresh fish, crawfish (TLA 230.1.Ba6, 294–294v; Põltsam-Jürjo 2013, 128–129). Roast foods especially were a sign of rank. Not only did roasting require high quality meat but also a rich amount of fuel (Woolgar 2007, 184). In both cases, the amount of meat seems generous indeed, but unfortunately, it is not evident how many kilograms of meat per person it equaled. One thing, however, is certain – the amount could not have been small. According to accounts from 1530–1531, for the feasts at the Table Guild in Tallinn, an ox and 6 sheep were bought. Considering that the dead weight of an ox was about 167 kg and of a sheep 15 kg, and dividing it with the number of guild members and guests (ca 100), it becomes clear that every person could have expected around 2–3 kg of meat (TLA 191.2.3, 58, 62; Põltsam-Jürjo 2013, 133).

In medieval times, a wide variety of meats was commonly consumed: beef, mutton, goat, pork, veal, and different kinds of fowl. In addition to raw meat, there were other, processed items such as pork ham, smoked sausage, tongue, flitch, dried and salted meats, dried tongue, lard, etc. Throughout the Medieval Period, game (elk, hare, deer, wild boar, etc.) mostly belonged to the table of the elite. Various wild and waterfowl such as partridge, grouse, goose, duck, swan, etc. were also important. Medieval feasts were remarkable in terms of both the quantity and the variety of meat, and as such they were the truest representation of the so-called barbaric eating delight (Sombart 1913, 116). Meat as a food item was highly regarded not only for its flavor and nutritiousness but also for its prestige. Eating meat had profound meaning, especially for the ruling class – it was the symbol of power and authority (Montanari 1999, 23–27). It was customary for all social strata to offer (if possible) an abundance of meat at their feasts. In addition to meat dishes, different types of bread were eaten with food. This was common in all social classes in medieval Livonia. Big slices of bread were even used as plates in medieval times.

The fact that a meal was considered as celebratory or above-average only if it included meat is also evidenced by medieval poverty relief. During the biggest holidays, the Table Guild in Tallinn distributed a larger amount of meat than usual, so that during Christmas and Easter, the poor received twice the amount of meat and butter they would have gotten otherwise (Mänd 2007, 261, 270).

The role of meat as a festive food deserves our attention in the context of the Estonian tradition of celebrating Thursday as a holy day (Hiiemäe). There are written sources on this from the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods, but it is clearly an older, pre-Christian custom. During Christian times, on the other hand, Sunday became established as the day of rest in Livonia, as was the case elsewhere in the Christian world. Folklorists have drawn attention to the corresponding customs and traditions associated with Thursday and Sunday in ancient Estonian peasant culture. The equivalence of Thursday and Sunday is also evidenced by the choice of food – both days became known to Estonians as meat-days. This likely indicates that meat – also as a form of ritual offering – has long been closely linked to the celebration of holidays in this area.

In medieval times, eating meat had a profound symbolic meaning for the ruling class, but for the average person, it was a source of physical strength, energy, and might – qualities on which the legitimacy of power most relied on in those days. Mental attitudes, which linked meat closely to strength and power, were prevalent among the people of Estonia already before the 13th century conquest. In medieval times, eating meat was a clear social characteristic on which the upper class based its sense of power and superiority over other social strata. The life of medieval knights and warriors consisted of battle, hunting, tournaments, etc.; their moral ideals were founded on constant physical readiness and challenges. This kind of lifestyle imposed certain requirements on the choice of food. Meat was regarded as the source of masculinity, potency, and might; eating a lot of it was proof of an individual's value and greatness as a warrior. Women were not entirely pushed aside when it came to consuming meat; however, they were allowed to eat less of it and not as often as men (Setzwein 2004, 131). Acquiring meat was a different matter: slaughtering and chopping up meat was a man's job in medieval times as well as later, and it was the man of the house who carved the meat at the dinner table (Elias 2005, 239).

The prestige of meat in medieval times was tied to the act of killing and blood spilling, which was essential because meat was only considered edible if the beast had been slaughtered by a man – an animal who had met its death in any other way was not considered food (Kreem et al. 2022, 98). In the Medieval Period, but also later, meat was regarded as the supreme food item, even to the extent that other foods consumed by those who could not access meat were thought of as mere substitutes. This position influenced people's attitudes toward fish especially, which was very much seen as a substitute for meat. This does not necessarily mean that fish was considered a lesser food in general. For example, import fish was often viewed as a luxury good.[2] But in a situation where the common people mostly associated eating fish with poverty and hunger, it was difficult to regard it as a valuable food item, or to enjoy it (Põltsam-Jürjo 2021, 46–48). Local fish was relatively inexpensive compared to meat; therefore, provisions for a journey or a military campaign – i.e., mass catering in medieval Livonian terms – largely consisted of a wide assortment of fish rather than meat.

Compared to meat and fish, the prestige of vegetables as food was low; accounts of feasts do not reveal that menus would have included turnips, radishes, peas, beans, or anything of the sort. It has been thought that perhaps vegetables are missing from the accounts because they were cheap, but it seems more likely that there was simply no place for them at these highly meat-oriented feasts. Alas, there are no written sources on the role of vegetables in the everyday diet of the Livonian elite. On this, the osteological and paleopathological analysis of medieval bone matter offers more information, or at least tells us a bit about how balanced people's diets were, and of the food-related illnesses and diseases people suffered from.

Paradoxically, meat was not only important for celebrations but also became essential during famine. If crops failed and there was not enough flour to go around, meat could end up being the food item most available, even if it caused violations of laws, norms, or taboos. Lack of food forced people to steal and poach animals. Hunger compelled them to eat carrion and different types of beasts or birds that would otherwise be considered inedible. The Younger Chronicle of the Grand Masters of the Teutonic Order reports on the great famine of 1315–1317 in Livonia: "Weak with hunger, the poor ate beasts and carrion, whatever they could" (Vahtre 1960, 110, 111). The descriptions of famine in Livonia in the 17th century also feature scenes of people devouring dead animal flesh or carrion (Reimo 2021). According to a chronicler, hunger even forced people to commit the most inhuman acts: "Many people had died of starvation and their bodies lay around for a long time, but these carcasses were eaten without salt and bread" (Renner 1876, 75).

Standards for meat and meat products

The preparation and sale of meat and meat products as well as offering meat as tribute required certain uniform standards, including set designations, weight, and other measurements. The same applies to other food items, for example, bread and fish. Medieval measurement units are often very era-specific and understanding them requires expertise. For example, the Narva lamprey caught for export was measured in bunches: one bunch consisted of 20 spikes of fish, each spike had 15 lampreys on it, and therefore, a bunch was 300 fish (Kreem et al. 2022, 75). Converting the size of the lamprey bunch into modern-day weight measurements can only be approximate. With meat, one must keep in mind that the weight of the goods was mostly not mentioned, as business transactions were based on piece price. In medieval times, there were set norms and requirements for the appearance, quality, and price of the food for sale, but the particularity of these norms varied quite a bit depending on the product. For instance, the regulations for the preparation and sale of bread were a lot more detailed than for meat or fish – for bread, the shape, consistency, and price were all fixed (Põltsam-Jürjo 2012, 19–25). For some food items, there were also standards of flavor. For example, in Tallinn, sellers faced a fine if they sold beer that was not as good as the product they had presented for degustation beforehand (Põltsam-Jürjo 2020, 136–139). Different standards mainly originated in towns because that is where professional food production started developing.

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[2] Inhabitants of Livonia had access to fresh marine as well as freshwater fish; therefore, the variety of fish in their diet was plentiful (Baltic herring, pike, salmon, smelt, flounder, bream, lamprey, sturgeon, cod, etc.).

The establishment of towns in medieval Livonia was a significant turning point in the history of local food culture. Not only trade, but also crafts and production, including the production of food for sale, developed in towns. In medieval Livonian towns, bakers and butchers were the first to establish guilds. The oldest surviving statute of the butchers' guild in Tallinn dates back as far as 1394 (LUB 4: 1365; Kala et al. 2014, 46–48). Guilds helped increase the level of professionalism of the masters and this, in turn, ensured better production quality. The work of professional masters introduced new food products to medieval Livonia, among them goods that were soon known and consumed all over the country.

Town masters introduced German traditions and German food culture to medieval Livonia. Tallinn Town Council ordered that bakers bake their bread according to German examples (Põltsam-Jürjo 2012, 19–20). At the same time, however, the statute of Tallinn's butchers does not regulate the preparation of meat products in any way, it only regulates the sale of fresh meat. Butchers also traded with smoked sausage, smoked ham, ox tongue, and dried and salted meats – yet there were no regulations that required butchers to prepare their sausages according to German examples. It is possible that for meat the competition between the local food culture and the guilds' production was not as fierce as it was for bread and beer.

In the interest of consumers, quality control of foods produced in towns was in the hands of the town authorities. Town council appointed officials checked if rules and regulations were followed and fined those who violated them. Strict quality requirements applied to meat. The reason is obvious – rotten meat could easily become a health hazard. According to the 1394 statute of Tallinn's butchers, meat sold at meat counters not only had to look fresh and adequate, but its origin also had to be known (LUB 4: 1365; Kala et al. 2014, 46–48). Butchers were not allowed to buy livestock from bloodletters, surgeons, or lepers. Trading with dead or sick animals was punishable. Bloody or blue meat was not to be sold. Between Easter and St. Michael's Day, meat had to be sold within two days; if not, it was to be sent to the almshouse of the Holy Spirit.

In towns, low quality food that was unsuitable for sale was not simply discarded. Food like this was still fit for the poor (Jürjo 2019, 100). In medieval times, when famines were frequent, wasting food was uncommon; everything was used in one way or another. This principle of frugality is also demonstrated by various directives regulating the production and sale of foods that prescribe what should be done with goods deemed unfit. Such meat, fish, bread, and beer had to be sent to almshouses. Additionally, it seems that non-Germans were allowed to sell products of a lower quality. For instance, in 1394, Tallinn's butchers were forbidden from selling measled pork to Germans only (LUB 4: 1365). Written sources indicate that meat was not excluded from the diet of the lower classes, but the quality of it may have been very different from what was consumed by the elite. Studying bone matter can give us little information on the quality of the meat a person consumed, while animal bones found among food waste offer us some insight (Lõugas & Maldre 2022; Haak et al. 2022).

There was no alternative to animal products in medieval times, and therefore everything was used, people were careful not to waste or discard anything. The lesser body parts of animals were also used as food – the head and the extremities as well as the blood, internal organs, etc. However, eating offal was not a sign of poverty. For long-term preservation and/or trade, meat was mostly salted, smoked, and dried. Using vinegar to preserve meat was less widespread. Common people mostly ate processed meat, as fresh meat made its way to their table only every now and then (Põltsam-Jürjo 2013: 52–53). Thus, salted meat was considered more quotidian than fresh meat and a food for simpler folk. The elite mainly consumed fresh meat and generally, eating fresh food was a mark of status in medieval times (Woolgar 2007, 169).

The characteristics of the meat consumed as food depended on the physical condition of the animal. In medieval Livonia, domestic animals were local in origin; there is no information that would suggest that livestock was brought in for animal breeding. The way animals were kept also affected the quality of the meat. In medieval times, domestic animals were outside for longer; these free-range beasts had to withstand the elements, which made them smaller in size, and tougher (Maldre 2003). Beef, goats, and sheep were not raised solely for meat and this influenced their slaughtering age, which in turn affected the quality of the meat. Only pigs were considered to be purely meat-animals, but they were to be slaughtered only when the optimal weight of the animal had been achieved. The importance of the pig as a source of meat and pork products in commerce is illustrated by information in medieval written sources on the butchering and dividing of the meat carcass of the pig – there is no such information on other animals (Põltsam-Jürjo 2017, 13). Ham was a big piece of pork from a back leg cut that was salted and smoked. Each pig, therefore, provided two hams. Pork ham was an important trade item, but people also prepared it at home for domestic consumption. Each animal offered two flitches (*side speckes*), and for long-term preservation, these were also salted and smoked. This fatty side of pork was the most popular ration; for example, in

1451, there were 100 flitches in the part of Lihula Castle belonging to the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order (LUB 11: 160). Written sources also mention pork back (*swins ruggen*), which was obtained as a single piece from each animal. Pig's trotters, head, and offal – everything was to be eaten.

In medieval times, people tried to improve the quality of meat in several ways. Fattened and/or neutered animals and birds provided fattier, juicier, and more flavorful meat. Written sources mention fattened oxen, pigs, piglets, sheep, cocks, and geese. There are reports that barley was used to fatten up animals, and the beasts were on this special diet for a while before they were slaughtered (Põltsam-Jürjo 2017, 12; Põltsam-Jürjo 2022b, 152). Neutering animals also affected the quality of the meat. Written sources mention on numerous occasions that castrated cock, i.e., capon, castrated ram, i.e., wether, castrated boar, i.e., hog, and castrated bull, i.e., ox, were consumed as food. Tender meat came from young animals, such as piglets, lambs, calves, and chicks. The above-described ways to influence and improve the flavor and other qualities of meat were known and practiced all over medieval Livonia, both in towns and in the countryside.

Conclusions

In medieval times, people's eating habits and food consumption were subjected to external control and regulation. Both religious and secular authorities oversaw this, while doctors and scholars also had a say. The food traditions that people followed in their daily lives and on special occasions can also be interpreted as a type of regulation mechanism. Constraints imposed through fasting or luxury regulations mostly limited the amount of food consumed, setting moderation as the standard. Rules of fasting adopted in medieval times affected the food culture of the Estonian peasantry for centuries, and local, pre-Christian customs fit into this framework as well – e.g., the case of equating Thursdays with the Christian Sunday in the choice of food. Medieval regulations targeted meat consumption more than other foods. Meat was desirable and prestigious, eating a lot and a great variety of it was a sign of social distinction. Ironically, the glorification of meat affected the eating habits of the elite negatively, making their diets more unbalanced, and unhealthy. The taboos and norms that shaped meat consumption also affected the consumption of other foods, such as fish and vegetables.

Several norms and regulations influenced the preparation and trade of meat and other food products in medieval Livonia. The food production of towns and food trade required certain uniform standards. In the preparation and production of food, Livonian towns mostly followed German examples and this was especially evident for bread. The same applied to some meat products. Still, unlike bread, there are no written rules in the statutes of guilds on the preparation of meat products, such as pork ham, smoked sausage, etc. There were, on the other hand, strict quality requirements for fresh meat that was sold at markets. While there were rules and restrictions concerning meat eating and meat in general, some areas were less regulated or entirely unregulated.

There is no doubt that the many norms and regulations – from fasting to the quality requirements for marketable meat – very much influenced the way an individual ate. In some ways, the restrictions might even have helped diversify people's diets, if, for example, they attempted to find substitutes for foods that were forbidden. Ultimately though, in medieval times, but also later, food shortages and famines caused by volatile weather overrode and were stronger than any rule or regulation.

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Toit ja normid 13.–16. sajandi Eestis. Liha ja lihatooted

Inna Põltsam-Jürjo

RESÜMEE

Võrreldes arheoloogilise leiuainesega pakuvad kirjalikud allikad keskaja toidukultuuri käsitluseks teistsuguseid võimalusi nii teemapüstituste kui ka meetodite seisukohalt. Üks tahk, mida just kirjalikud allikad valgustavad, on toidukultuuri, üldse laiemalt argikultuuri normatiivne külg, kõik, mis puudutab ajastuomast suhtumist, tabusid, eelarvamusi, reegleid ja standardeid. Keskaja Eestis, *resp*. Liivimaal tähendas see eelkõige kristliku kiriku seatud norme, samuti linnade kujundatud toidutööstuse ja -kaubanduse standardeid. Suur mõju oli võimusuhetel ja seisusühiskonna mentaliteedil. Käesolevas kirjatöös on tähelepanu peamiselt liha ja lihatoite puudutavatel

sotsiaalsetel ja kultuurilistel normidel. Liha tõuseb muudest toiduainetest esile, sest ühest küljest on sel olnud ajaloos sügav ja mitmepalgeline kultuuriline tähendus, teisalt on just lihaga olnud seotud palju tabusid ja eelarvamusi.

Keskajal oli inimese toitumine allutatud mitmekülgsele kontrollile. Viimast teostasid nii kirik kui ka ilmalik võim, oma sõna ütlesid sekka õpetlased ja arstid. Ka väljakujunenud, kindlate traditsioonide järgimist argi- ja pidupäeva toiduvalikus võib käsitada kui omalaadset kontrollimehhanismi. Väljastpoolt lähtunud võõrsund, mida rakendati näiteks paastukeeldude või luksusmääruste abil, oli suunatud peamiselt söögiisu piiramisele, seades oluliseks normiks mõõdukuse. Keskajal omaks võetud paastukeelud jäid eesti talurahva toidukultuuri mõjutama sajanditeks ning sellesse raami sobitusid ka kohalikud eelkristlikud tavad, näiteks neljapäeva võrdsustamine kristliku pühapäevaga toiduvalikus. Teistest toitudest enam puudutas keskajal kontroll lihasöömist. Liha oli ihaldatud ja prestiižne toit, mille rikkalikus koguses ja suures valikus söömine toimis sotsiaalse tunnusmärgina. Ülistav suhtumine lihasse mõjutas eliidi menüüd paradoksaalsel moel ühekülgsuse ning tegelikult ka ebatervislikkuse suunas. Liha söömist kujundanud tabud ja normid avaldasid mõju teiste toitude, näiteks kala ja köögivilja tarbimisele.

Keskaja Liivimaal mõjutasid mitmesugused normid ja ettekirjutused liha- ja muude toidutoodete valmistamist ja nendega kauplemist. Toidutööndus linnades ning toidukaubandus nõudis teatud ühtseid standardeid. Linna käsitöönduses, sh toidutoodete valmistamisel, kehtisid Liivimaal valdavalt saksa eeskujud, mis eriti selgelt puudutasid leiba. Sama kehtis ka osade lihatoodete puhul. Siiski pole erinevalt leivast tsunftide põhikirjadesse kirja pandud norme lihatoodete, näiteks seasingi, suitsuvorsti vms valmistamise kohta. Küll aga kehtisid ranged kvaliteedinõuded toorele lihale, millega turul kaubeldi. Kuigi liha kui toiduainega, samuti lihasöömisega oli seotud palju ettekirjutusi ja tabusid, leidus ka vähem korraldatud või kindlalt reglementeerimata alasid.

Mitmesugustel normidel – alates paastumisest, lõpetades kvaliteedinõuetega müügil olevale lihale – oli vaieldamatu mõju üksikisiku toidusedelile. Mingil määral võis see isegi kaasa aidata toiduvaliku mitmekesistamisele, näiteks kui keelatud toitudele püüti leida asendajaid. Ometi oli keskajal ja tegelikult hiljemgi kõikidest kehtestatud normidest ja ettekirjutustest alati üle ja tugevam ilmastiku kapriisidest tingitud toidupuudus või lausa näljahäda.