

**AF2: Understand and retrieve relevant information from the text.**

**What did they eat?**

In a letter to the King and Queen, Columbus had very specific orders for the food of the expedition.

The standard food aboard a Spanish long-distance voyage was wine, olive oil, sea biscuits and salted meat. However, Columbus wanted better meals than these could be used to make. He requested from the Crown: good (not stale) sea biscuit, salted flour (for making bread aboard ship), wheat flour, wine, salt meat (usually salted beef), olive oil, vinegar, cheese, dried chickpeas, dried lentils, dried beans, salt fish (usually anchovies and sardines), fishing tackle, (bait for fishing while aboard), honey, rice, almonds and raisins.

Salt was used to help preserve the meat and fish so that it lasted longer on the journey. Remember that there were no fridges or freezers in those days.

The olive oil was used for cooking things like chickpeas, lentils, beans, and salted meat. The bread they cooked onboard was usually “baked” in the hot coals of the fire pit. One of the sailors cooked a meal in the fire pit, which was the one hot meal served every day at 11 am. The meal would be served in a large wooden trencher and the crew may have had small wooden bowls for their portion. The sailors would use the knives they carried for work (for cutting rope and sail cloth) to cut or pick-up large pieces of food. Otherwise they did not have any forks or spoons.

As far as drinks went, the sailors preferred to drink wine. Both the water and the wine were kept in barrels onboard but the water quickly went stagnant. This meant that you were more likely to be sick if you drank water than if you drank wine. So, by choice, the crews drank the wine first and then drank the water as a last resort. There was no coffee or tea to add to the water.

At the end of the day, the firebox was extinguished for the night, since fire on a ship is extremely dangerous.

1. For what was salt used on ship?
2. Why did the sailors prefer to drink wine than water?
3. What was cooked in olive oil?
4. What are anchovies?
5. With what would sailors eat their meals?
6. Why do you think that lentils, beans and chick-peas needed to be dried?
7. What happened at the end of each day?