

Teacher Information Card 2 (1 of 2)

Children's Diets

Children who worked in factories had very little time to eat.

'I have been in the mills at all hours and I have never in my life seen the machinery stopped at meal times in any of the mills...'

Evidence given to the Factory Inquiry Commission 1833

Food needed to be easy to prepare and nutritious. The types of food they ate included:

- Oatcakes
- Porridge solidified
- Bread and soups
- Mutton (cheaper meat from older sheep)
- Bacon
- Potatoes
- Gruel – a thin soup made from oats or potatoes mixed with milk and water, which was very cheap and filling
- Apples, pears and berries depending on the season
- Beer – even for children, because it was cleaner than water
- Tea (more expensive than beer, though)

Unpopular Foods

- Water – it was polluted
- Tropical fruits – they weren't available
- Milk and dairy products – expensive – but a shortage led to rickets

The factory worker's diet was high in carbohydrates which would give them the energy they would need for their long working hours.

Victorian Recipes for the Poor

Oatcakes were a popular food because they were cheap to make and slow at releasing energy so you didn't feel so hungry again quickly.

OATCAKES (makes 12)

Ingredients:

225 g fine oatmeal
 225 g wholewheat or plain flour
 1 tsp salt
 15 g fresh yeast
 1 ½ pints warm milk and water,
 mixed half and half
 1 tsp sugar

Method:

1. Add the salt to the flour and oatmeal.
2. Dissolve the yeast with a little warm milk and water mixture. Add the sugar. Allow the mixture to become frothy.
3. Mix the dry ingredients with the yeast and rest of warm liquid to make a batter.
4. Cover with a clean cloth and leave in warm place for 1 hour.
5. Bake on well-greased frying pan. Put enough batter into the pan to produce an oatcake about 20 cm in diameter. The surface will be covered in holes as it cooks.
6. Turn the oatcake after 2–3 minutes when the top side appears dry and the underside is golden brown, and cook for another 2–3 minutes.

Serve with jam (sweet) or cheese (savoury).

Teacher Information Card 2 (2 of 2)**POTATO GRUEL** (feeds 4)

Ingredients:

4 small potatoes
8 pints of water
2 tsp salt
4 tbsp flour

Method:

1. Cut the potatoes into large thumb-sized pieces.
2. Boil on medium heat for 10 minutes in 2 cups of water.
3. Add ½ teaspoon salt and a pinch of white pepper.
4. Turn heat down to low.
5. While stirring, add 2 tablespoons of flour, a little at a time.
6. Keep stirring gently until all the flour is dissolved and it makes a thick sauce.
7. By now the potatoes will just be starting to lose their square shape and start to look more rounded, but still firm in the middle. The dish will turn out to be half sauce and half potatoes.

OATMEAL GRUEL (feeds 4)

Ingredients:

12 dessert spoonfuls of oatmeal
4 pints of water
2 tsp salt

Method:

1. Mix the oatmeal with a little cold water to make a paste.
2. Put the rest of the water in a pan
3. Add the mixture and boil for 10 minutes.
4. Add the salt.

Resource:

Song about food: *Come An Hae A Bite Alang Wae Us*

<https://www.ulsterscotsagency.com/weans/library/music/UlsterScotsSongs.pdf>