

Food in the Bible

OLD TESTAMENT

Torah & Historical Books

Every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food (Gen 1:29-30)
Fruits of the Trees in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2-3)
In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread (Gen 3:19)
Storing up food on the Ark before the Flood (Gen 6:21)
Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything (Gen 9:3)
The Bread and Wine of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18)
Abraham and Sarah provide a meal for Three Guests (Gen 18:1-15)
Esau selling his birthright to Jacob for a pot of porridge (Gen 25:27-34)
Joseph storing up and providing food for Egypt and other nations in famine (Gen 41)
The Passover Lamb (Ex 12:3-13, 21-28)
Manna & Quail (Ex 16:1-36; Num 11:1-9, 20; Dt 8:3, 16; Josh 5:12; Ps 78:23-25; Wis 16:20)
The Mystical Covenantal Meal (Ex 24:9-11)
Bread of the Presence (Ex 25:23-30; Lev 24:5-9; 1 Sam 21:1-6; Mk 2:25-28; Mt 12:3-5; Lk 6:3-4; Heb 9:2)
Communion Sacrifices / Peace Offerings (Lev 3:1-9; 7:11-18; 19:5-8)
Do not fully harvest; leave some for the poor and sojourner (Lev 19:9-10)
Clean and Unclean Animals (Lev 11)
Man does not live on bread alone (Dt 8:3)
Food in the Promised Land: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives & honey (Dt 8:8)
Land flowing with milk and honey (Ex 3:8, 17, 13:15, 33:3; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27, 14:8, 16:13-14; Dt 6:3, etc.)
Gideon's meal for the angel burned up (Jdg 6:19-24)
David's hospitality to an abandoned Egyptian soldier (1 Sam 30:11-12)
Food hospitably provided for David and his men (2 Sam 17:27-29)
Provisions for Solomon and his court (1 Kgs 4:22-23)

Prophets

The Diet of Elijah: bread and meat every morning, brought by ravens (1 Kgs 17:4-6)
Elijah multiplies meal and oil for the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8-16)
Elisha purifies water and pottage, and multiplies barley bread and oil (2 Kgs 2:19-22; 4:1-7, 38-44)
Woe to those who feast but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph (Amos 6:4-7)
When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain . . . that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and sell the refuse of the wheat? (Amos 8:4-6)
Coming famine of the word of the Lord (Amos 8:11)
The lion shall eat straw like the ox (Is 11:7)
Future feast of choice wines on the Lord's holy mountain (Is 25:6-9)
All who thirst, come to the waters (Is 55:1-2)
Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart (Jer 15:16)
Ezekiel Bread: wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet & spelt (Ezk 4:9)
Judah & Israel had pride, surfeit food, and prosperous ease, but did not aide the poor and needy (Ezk 16:49)
Daniel and his companions eating only vegetables (Dan 1:8-16)
In that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine (Joel 3:18)

Wisdom Books

God's ways are sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb (Ps 19:10, 119:103; Sir 24:19)
Taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps 34:8)
Feast of Wisdom (Pr 9:1-6)
Eat your bread in happiness (Eccl 9:7)
The LORD satisfies the thirsty soul, and filled the hungry with what is good (Ps 107:9)

NEW TESTAMENT

Gospels

Food and Meals in the Gospel of Luke (practically in every chapter): 1:15, 53; 2:4, 16, 37, 41; 3:9, 11, 17; 4:2, 3, 4, 25; 5:29, 30, 33f, 37-39; 6:1f, 21, 25, 38, 43f; 7:33-34, 36f; 8:3, 5, 32, 55; 9:3, 10f; 10:7-8, 34-35, 38-42; 11:3, 5, 11-12, 27, 37f, 42; 12:1, 13f, 19, 22, 23, 24, 29, 36, 42, 45; 13:6f, 20, 26, 29; 14:1, 7f, 12f, 15f, 29; 15:2, 11f; 16:6-7, 19f; 17:7f, 27; 18:9f; 19:19; 20:46; 21:11, 34; 22:7f, 14f, 30, 31; 23:29, 36; 24:1, 13f, 41)

Some Highlights:

- Mary: The Lord has filled the hungry with good things (1:53)
- Jesus eats with sinners (5:30)
- Meal with Simon the Pharisee and the repentant Woman (7:36-50)
- Good Samaritan (10:34-35)
- Mary & Martha (10:38-42)
- Take the lowest place / invite the poor (14:7f, 12f)
- Prodigal Son (15:11f)
- The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19f)
- Celebratory feast at the house of Zacchaeus (19:1f)
- Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:13f)

The diet of John the Baptist: locusts & honey; no wine or strong drink (Mk 1:6; Mt 3:4; Lk 1:15)

Wedding Feast of Cana (Jn 2:1-11)

My food is to do the will of Him who sent me (Jn 4:34)

Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish (Jn 6:1-14; Mk 6:32-44, 8:1-10; Mt 14:13-21, 15:32-39; Lk 9:11-17)

Bread of Life Discourse (Jn 6:25-71)

Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life (Jn 6:27)

Give us this day our daily bread (Mt 6:11)

When you fast, do not look dismal (Mt 6:16-18)

Do not worry about what you are to eat or drink? Is not life more than food? (Mt 6:25)

Feast with Matthew and Tax Collectors (Mk 2:13-17; Mt 9:9-13; Lk 5:27-32)

When the Bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast (Mt 9:15)

Plucking grain on the Sabbath (Mt 12:1-8)

Food Imagery in the Parables (Mt 13)

What comes out of a man's mouth defiles a man (Mk 7:1-23)

The cursed and barren fig tree (Mk 11:12-14; Mt 21:18-22; Lk 16:3-9)

Parable of the Marriage Feast (Mt 22:1-14; Lk 14:16-24)

I was hungry and you gave me food (Mt 25:35, 37, 42)

The Last Supper (during Passover) and the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:23-26; Mk 14:12-25; Mt 26:17-29; Lk 22:7-38)

Meals with the Risen Christ (Lk 24:28-43; Jn 21:9-14)

Acts / St. Paul / Catholic Epistles / Revelation

Eating Meat of Unclean Animals (Acts 10)

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit; so glorify God in your body (1 Cor 6:19-20)

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31)

Eating Meat Offered to Idols (Rom 14; 1 Cor 8; 10:14-33; see also Ex 34:15)

Divisions, gluttony, and drunkenness in the meal before the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-22)

Their god is their belly (Phil 3:9)

The kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17)

He who does not work should not eat (2 Th 3:10)

If a brother sister is poorly clad and in lack of daily food, show your faith through works (James 2:14-17)

Fruit of the Tree of Life (Rev 2:7, 22:2, 14, 19)

Hidden Manna (Rev 2:17)

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: whoever opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him (Rev 3:20)

The Bittersweet Scroll (Rev 10:8-11; Ezk 2:8-3:3)

Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:9)

Emergent Scriptural Themes

Relationship with God

- The LORD provides food for human beings through His creation.
- We should be grateful to God for the gift of food. Food points us to Him.
- The LORD Himself provides for the hungry.
- The original sin is depicted as an act of eating fruit in disobedience to God.
- Human beings are tempted to make food and its pleasure into an idol, but “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”
- Gluttony is the sin of disordered eating, of putting pleasure ahead of health and the wellbeing of others, especially the poor. Those with wealth are especially tempted to gluttony.
- Drunkenness is the sin of alcohol abuse.
- Both gluttony and drunkenness make one self-centered and a slave to pleasure. They almost always involve neglect of relationships and negative social ramifications also. Both also lead to other sins.
- Fasting is a commendable discipline by which we temporarily give up the pleasures of food and drink for the sake of higher goods, especially relationship with God and solidarity with the poor. Fasting helps us reorder things aright, when done with a pure intention.
- Famine and drought are sometimes the result of sin.
- We are called to glorify God in our bodies, and in particular through what we eat and drink. We have a moral responsibility of being good stewards of our bodies.
- God’s word and wisdom is sweet, nourishing, and satisfying to the soul.
- Jesus enters people’s lives through sharing meals. He also proves His Resurrection through food.
- Jesus feeds us with Himself in the Eucharist.
- Heaven is depicted as a great eternal banquet.
- We were originally meant to eat from the “tree of life”—a symbol of immortality with God—whose fruit is made accessible to the faithful in Heaven, through the Cross of Christ.

Types of Food

- The original diet of humans of humans was strictly plant-based. And, in the future kingdom, even carnivores will eat only plants.
- Plant-based foods are especially associated with health.
- After the flood, certain animals were allowed to be eaten.
- In the Acts of the Apostles, all food restrictions are lifted, for the sake of evangelizing the Gentiles.

Social Aspects

- Meals are a place where we are called to welcome one another in hospitality, and humility, and where we are called to express charity, generosity, gratitude, joy, and peace.
- We have an obligation to work for our food, when able.
- Society and believers (in a special way) have an obligation to provide for those in need.

Faith & Food Connections

Justice – giving to others what is their due

- Toward God: Honoring God through praise, thanksgiving, and good Stewardship
- Toward Ourselves: Health
- Toward Other Human Beings: Social Dimensions
 - People We Know (Family, Friends, Neighbors, Co-Workers)
 - The Poor
 - Food Laborers (Wages & Working Conditions)
 - Health Care System
 - Future Generations
 - The Preborn & Children (Pro-Life Connections)
 - The Elderly
- Toward Animals
- Toward the Environment

Temperance – pleasure ordered to the good

- The role and purpose of pleasure
- Attached vs. detached from the good (selfishness and addiction)
- Excess & defect (according to a thing's nature, design, and purpose)
- Discipline & Fasting
 - Happiness over immediate gratification
 - Deeper goods over more shallow ones
 - Long-term over short-term satisfaction
- Are health and pleasure at odds? Will eating healthier make me unhappy / miserable?

Spirituality—a way of life guided by the Spirit that glorifies God and serves others in holiness and virtue

- Relationship with God: gratitude, prayer, glory, stewardship, not idolizing food
- Charity & Virtue (especially justice, temperance, fortitude)
 - Eating Mercifully: compassion toward other humans, animals, and creation
 - Eating Ethically: acting in principle — choosing conscience over convenience
- Fellowship (*Communio*): a Spirituality of Community
 - Associated Virtues: hospitality, charity, generosity, humility, gratitude, peace, joy
- Spirituality of the Every Day (opportunity to do the ordinary with extraordinary love)
- Sacrament: The Eucharist (harmony between spiritual and physical food)
- Evangelization: the witness of virtue / opportunity to inspire and draw others to Christ