

# Cutlery and crockery



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## Wooden spoon

**Wooden spoon** — hand carved wooden spoons were in common use in medieval times.



### How do we know about wooden spoons?

Illustrations and descriptions in medieval manuscripts, and finds made during archaeological digs.

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## Wooden trencher

**Wooden trencher** — an early type of plate. The word trencher comes from the medieval French word *tranchier*, which meant “to cut”.

A trencher was originally a piece of stale bread, cut into a square shape by a carver, upon which the food could be placed before being eaten. At the end of the meal, the trencher could be eaten with sauce, but was more frequently given as alms to the poor. Later the trencher evolved into a small plate of metal (for the rich) or wood (for everybody else).



### How do we know about wooden trenchers?

Illustrations and descriptions in medieval manuscripts, and finds made during archaeological digs.

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## Wooden mazer

**Wooden mazer (shallow drinking bowl)** — everybody would have had their own mazer in the C13th, C14th and C15th. Mazers or drinking bowls were introduced by the Normans, and there are many illustrations in medieval manuscripts of them being used by people at all levels of society. Ash was the commonest wood used, even though it was not the easiest wood to turn.

Some mazers were very elaborate with beautifully decorated metal rims.

People in north west France still use drinking bowls today, mainly for their breakfast coffee or hot milk or chocolate, but modern French drinking bowls are usually made of china.



### How do we know about wooden mazers?

Illustrations and descriptions in medieval manuscripts, and finds made during archaeological digs.

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## Horn bowl, cup and spoon

**Horn bowl, cup & spoon** — horn was a commonly used material in medieval times. Animal horn is partly gelatine, and becomes very malleable once it has been softened in boiling water. It can then be flattened, separated into sheets, and can then be shaped, trimmed and polished. It was the medieval equivalent of plastic, and was commonly used to make bowls, cups and spoons.



### How do we know about horn bowls, cups and spoons?

Illustrations and descriptions in medieval manuscripts, and finds made during archaeological digs.



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## Bone spoon

**Bone spoon** — bone was used for many purposes in medieval times, as it was very easily available, and a sturdy but easy to work material which could be carved for decorative items. This particular design has a very pointed end, which may have served the function of a 'pricker' — to prick food and hold it still (like a fork) whilst it was cut with a knife.



### How do we know about bone spoons?

Illustrations and descriptions in medieval manuscripts, and finds made during archaeological digs.

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## Pewter chalice spoon

**Pewter chalice spoon** — this type of spoon was used to either fish unwanted bits out of communion wine, or to feed the bread to those participating in the communion ceremony.



### How do we know about pewter chalice spoons?

Illustrations and descriptions in medieval manuscripts, and finds made during archaeological digs.

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## Knife in leather sheath

**Knife in leather sheath** — almost everybody in medieval times carried a knife — men, women, and children. A knife was a normal part of what you carried with you, and was used for all sorts of things, e.g whittling sticks, cutting rope, cutting meat. It was expected when you went to a meal that you brought your own knife. The host wouldn't be expected to provide knives to everyone to use.



### How do we know about eating knives?

Illustrations and descriptions in medieval manuscripts, and finds made during archaeological digs.



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## Sharpening kit

**Sharpening kit** — this kit comprises a wooden 'strickle' — a grooved board onto which you place sand or grit for coarse sharpening; a water/honing stone that will give a razor edge; and a strop to make it even sharper, all in a leather roll. Most medieval people would have sharpened their own knives and daggers using equipment like this. People would have regularly used the honing stone and strop to keep their knives sharp.

When sharpening a knife, if the blade is really blunt, you would begin with the strickle. You would kneel on the leather strap, or trap it between your body and a table, to hold the strickle down. Put some sand or grit into the grooves of the strickle. Put the knife blade into a groove, press down firmly and move the knife back and forth until you have a reasonably sharp edge. To sharpen further, use the honing stone. The stone needs to be wet, and the angle of the blade needs to be kept at a constant angle to the stone, at around 20–25 degrees, and pulling/sliding the knife away from the blade edge. Once the blade is sharp, it would have been sharpened or polished further by sliding the sharp edge over the leather strop in the opposite direction to the sharp edge using the leather strop. 10 passes would probably be enough.

### How do we know about sharpening kits?

Illustrations and descriptions in medieval manuscripts, and finds made during archaeological digs.

