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Three Thousand Dishes on a Georgian Table: The Data of Royal Eating in England, 1788-1813

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Abstract:

This data paper introduces and contextualises a new digital resource in food history that includes a digitisation and interpretation of two substantial kitchen ledgers from the palaces of King George III and his son (future) George IV of Britain, between 1788-1813. These bills of fare contain the daily food allocations of every table in the two palaces. They include more than 3,000 unique dish constructions and more than 40,000 served dishes. Each dish has been classified by a number of categories related to cooking, from details of key ingredients, to cooking method, resulting in over 1.3 million points of scholarly data about daily eating in Georgian Britain. Importantly the volumes digitised include two periods in which George III was suffering acutely from his mental health crises, raising important questions about dietetics in the period. The dataset is released openly with this article.

Keywords: food, dining, consumption, dietetics, elite dining, Britain, royalty, diet, digital humanities, digital history

Résumé

Cet article présente et contextualise une nouvelle ressource numérique dans l'histoire de l'alimentation qui comprend une numérisation et une interprétation de deux registres de cuisine importants des palais du roi George III et de son fils (futur) George IV de Grande-

[1] The authors would like to thank scholars and archivists who contributed advice or historical knowledge and helped interpret individual entries. They include but are not limited to Aaron Andrews, David Briscoe, Catherine Motuz, Gillian Williamson, Oliver Walton, Leticia Merla, Cornelius Schilt, Arthur Burns, Annie Gray, Bruce Ragsdale, William Tullett, Sarah Lloyd, Francis Boorman, Katrina Navickas, and Joe Cozens. Also thank you to the history students who agreed to contribute to the project their draft transcriptions of four pages each (crafted during their studies): Leah Kulkhanjian, Jessica Thomas, Jemma Mouratsing, Joel Sorby, Tayla Gilbert, Joshua Draper, Sheldon Pollard, Sharna Hylton, James Parrett. And for the financial support of the British Academy "Tackling the UK's International Challenges Programme 2019" (IC4/100235), the *Georgian Papers Fellowship* (Royal Collection Trust), and of the School of Cultural Studies and Humanities, Leeds Beckett University.

Bretagne, entre 1788 et 1813. Ces menus contiennent les allocations quotidiennes de nourriture de chaque table dans les deux palais. Ils comprennent plus de 3 000 constructions de plats uniques et plus de 40 000 plats servis. Chaque plat a été classé selon plusieurs catégories liées à la cuisine, entre autres les détails des ingrédients, les méthodes de cuisson, ce qui donne plus de 1,3 million de points de données scientifiques sur l'alimentation quotidienne en Grande-Bretagne géorgienne. Les volumes numérisés comprennent, notamment, deux périodes au cours desquelles George III souffrait gravement de ses crises de santé mentale, soulevant d'importantes questions sur la diététique de l'époque. L 'ensemble de données est publié ouvertement avec cet article.

Mots Clés Almentation, diners, dietetics, alimentation des élites, Grande Bretagne, royauté, histoire numérique

[Note to editors: This paper describes data (a digital resource) which will be made accessible open access online via Zenodo.org. The materials shared via Zenodo.org are a spreadsheet (.xlsx file) containing the historical transcriptions, and an appendix (.pdf) outlining the technical methods for data creation. If permission can be secured it will also include the digital images (.jpg) of the original manuscripts, or at least links and references to their catalogue entries in their respective archives.]

If you are what you eat, then King George III and his household were mostly beef, with significant pockets of pudding, some little bits of lark, a generous helping of crayfish, and a healthy portion of vegetables—to name but a few of three thousand known dishes served to the King's family during his sixty-year reign (1760-1820). With an equally diverse diet, the King's son—the Prince Regent (c. 1811-1820) who would become George IV (1820-1830)—was notoriously gluttonous and known for his more elaborate preparations at the dinner table. The Prince's fast urban London lifestyle may have been in contrast to the slower rhythms of his father's rural existence, but the pair shared a form of household accounting that has left historians with a rich daily record of the food placed on their dinner tables. These unique ledgers offer detailed insight into household provisioning at the top tables in Britain during an important period of transition from early modern to modern ways of eating.

Our dataset is comprised of two volumes of the ledgers that listed the meals served to George III at Kew Palace and his son, the Prince Regent, at Carlton House. Although this article primarily introduces our dataset and methodology, we also suggest some potential uses for the data by presenting preliminary findings on the royal household's daily life and considering our pedagogical practices. The ledgers make it clear that British cuisine was born of a mixture of local ingredients, French methods, and components from across the world. Changes to the British diet in the eighteenth century show the effect of international shipping and then empire, which

brought both new ingredients and new recipes to Britain.[2] Rachel Lauden identifies this as the period of the rise of 'modern Western' cuisines, while Sydney Mintz work reminds us of the violence that allowed the British to develop their taste for sugar.[3] The King and the Prince Regent enjoyed sweet foods at their table, while our dataset reveals that the father opted for simpler desserts by comparison to his son's elaborate constructions pioneered by the great French chefs of his day. Along with spices, other foreign ingredients also arrived: coffee, chocolate, and tea, transforming the drinking and socialising habits of the nation.[4] All of these flavours played a part in shaping the modern British diet, and all appeared on the tables of the Royal family. We argue that the royal table reflected wider shifts in empire-building, medico-scientific knowledge and practices, and food consumption and food preferences. The main purpose of this article, however, is to introduce our dataset and its research possibilities to other scholars.

Introducing the Ledgers

To analyse the diversity and hierarchies of eating in the royal households of Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the dataset described in this paper brings the food consumed in the palaces of George III and his son the Prince Regent to life and puts them into the contexts of cookery, culture, and identity. It does so by providing unique access to and context for two volumes from the royal kitchens in the form of scholarly datasets, outlining the thousands of dishes served to a host of parties at two royal residences:

- the 'Kew Ledger' (1788-1801), held at the National Archives, and detailing the food served daily at Kew, the occasional and convalescent home of King George III to the west of London, no longer standing.
- the 'Menu Book at Carlton House' (1812-13), part of the Royal Collection, and detailing similar types of information. Carlton House was one of the Prince Regent's properties, now destroyed, located on Pall Mall in London.[5]

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[2] Panikos PANAYI, *Spicing up Britain* (London, 2008); Emma KAY, *The Georgian Kitchen* (Stroud, 2014); Erika RAPPAPORT, *A Thirst for Empire* (Princeton, 2017); Troy BICKHAM, *Eating the Empire* (London, 2020)

[3] Rachel LAUDEN, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History,* (London, 2013), p. 207; Sidney MINTZ, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. (New York, 1985). See also Judith CARNEY, 'Reconsidering *Sweetness and Power* through a Gendered Lens.' *Food and Foodways*.' 16:2, 127-134; Vincent BROWN, 'Eating the Dead: Consumption and Regeneration in the History of Sugar', *Food and Foodways*. 16:2, 117-126.

[4] On spices see 'Orders to the Spicery', *The National Archives* (hereafter TNA) LS/13/129; Carole SHAMMAS, 'Food Expenditures and Economic Well-Being in Early Modern England,' *Journal of Economic History*, xliii (1983), 89-100 (pp. 99-100). There is a vast field of research on hot drinks, but see for example Phil WITHINGTON, 'Where was the Coffee in Early Modern England?' *Journal of Modern History* 92 (2020) 40-75; Jonathan MORRIS, *Coffee: A Global History*, (London, 2019); RAPPAPORT, *A Thirst for Empire…*; Emma ROBERTSON, *Chocolate, Women and Empire: A Social and Cultural History (Studies in Imperialism)*, (Manchester, 2010); Brian COWAN, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse,* (Yale, 2006).

[5] 'Kew Ledger' (1801), TNA LS/9/226; 'A History of Royal Food and Feasting' *Future Learn* (n.d.): https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/royal-food; 'Menu book for the Prince Regent and his Household, principally relating to Carlton House' (1812-13), *The Royal Collection Trust*, MRH/MRHF/MENUS/MAIN/MIXED/1.

The project selected one kitchen ledger from each palace to create an open scholarly dataset of royal culinary consumption. Both are large-format kitchen ledgers, amended daily by the respective Clerks of the Kitchen (William Gorton at Kew; Frederick Badua and Amand Wimtel at Carlton House) to record the dishes to be served to the many groups of guests, servants, and family members who stayed intermittently at these royal abodes. They are sometimes described as 'menus' but are better understood as 'bills of fare'—a listing of what was going to be served, not a list from which one could choose. Both books are free from evidence of food spills, so they were not likely present in the cooking areas of the kitchen, but probably stayed upstairs in the suite of offices on site. The ledgers are part of a wider series of 312 volumes held at the National Archives (TNA) dating from 1660-1830,[6] as well as two-dozen similar volumes held in the Royal Collection Trust for the period 1812-1837.[7] Similar ledgers appear in archives across the country and are both a record of consumption and of household management.[8]

The ledgers exist because Parliament required the royal household to account for its expenditure. At George's ascent to the throne in 1760, he agreed that he would give his income to Parliament in return for the substantial annual allowance of £800,000 (a purchasing power roughly equivalent to £80,000,000 today).[9] Indeed, in 1782 when parliament sought to rein in the royal household's spending, the kitchen was one of the first places scrutinised.[10] The task of keeping spending in check fell to the Board of Green Cloth, which oversaw the King's household management, including approving food use and ensuring the kitchen was held financially to account.[11] Just as the ledger at Kew enabled the Lord Steward to sign off each day on the proposed expenditure, a similar ledger in the Prince Regent's household allowed Parliament to audit the Prince's excessive spending.[12] Although the ledgers may seem to be merely a list of the food served, they played a crucial political role as part of the process of holding the royal family accountable to Parliament.[13] For our purposes, the ledgers also enable us to identify what was served, to consider the popular associations of food and the two Georges alongside the reality, and to assess the significance of royal food choices.

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[6] 'Lord Steward's Department: Kitchen Books' (1660-1830), TNA/LS/9.

[7] 'Georgian Menu Books' (1812-1837), *Royal Collection Trust*, MRH/MRHF/MENUS/MAIN/MIXED/1-24.

[8] For example, see the bills of fare of Franco/Swiss Sabine Winn and her husband Baronet Nostell from eighteenth century Wakefield (West Yorkshire Archives: SP/St/6/7) - with thanks to Ruby Rutter.

[9] This amount was roughly calculated using The National Archives Currency Converter: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/. This budget would have paid for 8,000,000 days' wages of a skilled tradesman in 1760.

[10] 'Chronological Survey 1660-1837: The Later Hanoverian Household, 1760-1837', in Office-Holders in Modern Britain: Volume 11 (Revised), Court Officers, 1660-1837, ed. R O BUCHOLZ (London, 2006), pp. cv-cxxxii. British History Online: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/office-holders/vol11/cv-cxxxii [accessed 15 March 2021].

[11] 'Establishment Book' (1761), *Royal Collection Trust,* EB/EB/39.

[12] Christopher HIBBERT, 'George IV (1762-1830)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004): https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10541.

[13] R O BUCHOLZ ed., 'Chronological Survey 1660-1837: The Later Hanoverian Household, 1760-1837', in *Office-Holders in Modern Britain: Volume 11 (Revised), Court Officers, 1660-1837*, (London, 2006), cv-cxxxii. British History Online: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/office-holders/vol11/cv-cxxxii [accessed 15 March 2021].

The documents provide detail of what was served and to whom at Kew and Carlton House. Across the period 1788-1801 the kitchen at Kew was active on 410 unique days, serving 22,655 dishes to more than fifty distinct groups of eaters, some regular such as the King, courtiers and servants, others occasional such as visiting foreign doctors and friends. Although the Kew kitchen remained closed on the remaining days, the ledger provides insight into household dining over a long period of time at the family's most private residence. By comparison, the volume at Carlton House provides a snapshot of a single year in the culinary life of the Prince Regent, and with the exception of a few days when the Prince was out, was active every day. In that year, the Prince's cooks served 17,703 dishes to more than forty distinct groups, with nearly half of all dishes destined for the Prince's own table. As a record of a single year of daily consumption, the Carlton House volume is particularly valuable for queries about seasonal cooking in a way that the Kew Ledger cannot be because of its status as an occasional royal home.

Methodology for Creating the Database

This project digitised and classified into an open scholarly dataset, the 40,358 dishes of food listed in these two volumes spanning the period of 1788 to 1813, representing 3,351 unique dish constructions and dozens of diners in each household. The dataset is both a full transcription and a structuring of the knowledge contained within the volumes. Our team has categorised and structured these dishes into 1.3-million points of historical culinary data which we describe and release openly with this paper. The resultant dataset provides new ways of investigating household structures, provisioning, and the place of Britain in an increasingly global culinary world.

Our project contributes to an ongoing movement to digitise and interpret the edible past, taking inspiration chiefly from the Early Modern Recipe Collective which has transcribed and made freely available English-language recipes from 1550-1800, and the New York Public Library 'What's on the Menu?' project that has (at the time of writing) transcribed 17,550 menus and 1.3 million dishes in their collection from restaurants operating in New York between 1850 and 2008.[14] Both projects share this initiative's aim of making available reliable data about food and consumption in the past. It also intersects with the important work of the *Trading Consequences* project, which built up a comprehensive picture of nineteenth century commodity pathways into and out of London as recorded across more than 200,000 documents.[15] Our work builds upon a tradition of digitising historical food and consumables that includes transcription, translating, and experimental archaeology,

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[14] Rebecca LAROCHE, Elaine LEONG, Jennifer MUNROE, Hillary NUNN, Margaret SIMON, Lisa SMITH, and Amy TIGNER, *The Early Modern Recipe Collective*, (2012-Present): https://emroc.hypotheses.org/; Rebecca FEDERMAN *et al*, "What's on the Menu?" *New York Public Library* (2011-Present): https://menus.nypl.org; Katherine RAWSON, 'Digesting Data for Critical Humanistic Inquiry' in *Laying the Foundation* John W. WHITE & Heather GILBERT (eds.) (Purdue, 2016), 59-72.

[15] Uta HINRICHS, Beatrice ALEX, Jim CLIFFORD, et al, 'Trading Consequences: A Case Study of Combining Text Mining and Visualization to Facilitate Document Exploration' *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 30, 1 (2015), i50-i75.

which remains popular on the web and which takes advantage of its flexible options for publication.[16]

In both cases the original manuscripts were photographed in high resolution. In the case of the Kew Ledger, this was commissioned by the authors and undertaken by the National Archives in-house team. The Carlton House ledger was photographed by the Royal Collection Trust as part of their *Georgian Papers Programme* and the images are available via their own website.[17] Full technical details of the photography are listed in the accompanying appendices stored with the dataset.[18]

The research team needed to make choices at every step of the dataset creation, starting with the process of transcription.[19] The volumes were then transcribed by the project team using a semi-diplomatic approach (i.e. editorial changes made to the page layout or text for clarity, such as expanding shortened words—wch to w*hi*ch). We converted the pages of the ledgers into a spreadsheet format of rows and columns of information, with each row representing a single dish served. This privileged consistent structuring of like-information over the visual layout of the original volume. As such, some information that appeared only once per page (the date, or the name of a table that was served many dishes) now appears once per row in the transcription spreadsheet. Transcriptions, especially tricky entries, were double-checked by other team members or in rare cases outsourced to colleagues on Twitter who provided advice, encouragement, and second opinions.

The second stage of the dataset production was to standardise spellings and to classify the dishes across a range of culinary categories, such as: type of dish and species of plant or animal served, the heating method or serving temperature, and details of any sauces or enhancements. The process of setting of categories is, again, subjective; we needed to decide what information to collect, as well as how to classify different types of activities or foods. The process also forced us at times to question our own assumptions about foodstuffs. For example, when is a wheatsheaf not a grain? When it is a bird, albeit one that we do not find on our modern tables. Classification, nonetheless, is a critical part of making our data more useful to researchers. The categories, however imperfect or modernised, enable researchers to discover similar dishes or to generate summary statistics along a number of categories related to food and cookery. The categories make it is possible to

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[16] Phil WITHINGTON, Dagmar FREIST, Leos MÜLLER, et al. 'Intoxicating Spaces' (n.d. 21st century): https://www.intoxicatingspaces.org; Lisa SMITH et al.,'The Recipes Project' (2012-Present): https://recipes.hypotheses.org/; Rebecca BEAUSAERT and Melissa MCAFEE, 'What Canada Ate' (2016-2021): https://whatcanadaate.lib.uoguelph.ca; Marissa NICOSIA, 'Cooking in the Archives' (2014-2021): https://rarecooking.com; Szilvia SZMUK-TANENBAUM *et al.*, 'Manuscript Cookbooks Survey' (2011-2022): https://www.manuscriptcookbookssurvey.org/.

[17] 'Georgian Papers Programme', *Royal Collection Trust* (2015-2021): https://georgianpapers.com/

[18] [Link to published dataset on Zenodo to be added. This includes associated technical documentation and appendices]

[19] On choices made by transcribers, see Jennifer MUNROE, Hillary NUNN, Margaret SIMON, Lisa SMITH, 'Reconstructing Recipes, Recovering Losses, Telling Stories', *Early Modern Studies Journal* 8 (2022): https://earlymodernstudiesjournal.org/review_articles/reconstructing-recipes-recovering-losses-telling-stories/. On the subjectivity of data creation, see Alexandra ORTOLJA-BAIRD and Julianne NYHAN, 'Encoding the haunting of an object catalogue: on the potential of digital technologies to perpetuate or subvert the silence and bias of the early-modern archive', *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 37, 3 (2022): https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqab065.

compare the species consumed by George III and IV respectively; to discern which sauces or foreign-inspired recipes appeared in each household; and to identify which categories of servants did or did not have access to stewed fare or desserts.

The classifications were recorded in new columns to preserve the original transcriptions. The process was conducted manually and double-checked by members of the team with food history expertise. A full description of each category is available in the published dataset as an appendix.[20] As the work involved interpretation and, in some cases, ambiguously described dishes, the classification involves a degree of subjectivity and the authors acknowledge that it certainly contains errors of human judgement. Examples of this include "Capons cislé a l'Italie", served to the Prince Regent in 1812, which we have assumed is a phonetic spelling of sizzled, and 'gerbe', the French term for a sheaf of wheat, which appears three times as an *entrements*, which we take to be a confection fashioned to look like a wheatsheaf. Most entries were more straightforward to interpret than those examples.

Our dataset can be used for data vizualisation, for example calendars of kitchen activity and seasonal food consumption. George and Charlotte spent relatively little time at Kew. Only 410 days between 1788 and 1801 were spent there—about ten percent of their time. This included two long bouts of mental illness, when George and his physicians spent several weeks at the property along with a select retinue of servants and family members who worked to restore the King to health. The remaining visits tended to be in the summers when the King would be attended by one of his sons for a few days of hunting, before moving on. Like much of George and Charlotte's life, these summer visits were fairly predictable—once every other week, on a Wednesday and Thursday, before heading back home. Some years, they scarcely came at all.

A visual representation of the seasonal and sporadic nature of their presence can be seen in Figures 1 and 2:

[20] [Link to published dataset on Zenodo to be added. This includes associated technical documentation and appendices]

Figure 1: Calendar view showing the number of days the Kew Palace kitchen was active on each day of the year, across the whole period 1788-1801, as in the Kew Ledger.

Figure 2: Calendar view showing active days in the Kew Palace kitchen when food was prepared or groceries were received, highlighting days the King was present (green) and absent (pink), as in the Kew Ledger.

Introducing the Georges and their Households

Given the length of George III's reign (1760-1820), changeable public reputation, and episodes of ill health, it is not surprising that he (and his family) attracted substantial attention from caricaturists. Looking at contemporary depictions of royal eating alongside the ledgers enables us to analyse the symbolic functions of food within George's rulership, from building a strong nation to demonstrating his fitness for kingship; the King's concept of sovereignty was closely connected to his moral code that focused on a modest, locally grown diet and his subjects' public interest in his kitchen expenditures. Food played a crucial role in that imagery, alternatively ridiculing his greed or frugality or underscoring his homely reputation as 'Farmer George'. When it came to food, the two Georges were imagined very differently, as James Gillray's satirical images hint (Figures 3 and 4). Where King George and his wife, Charlotte, are depicted as embodiments of temperance (dining on eggs and salad), the Prince Regent is shown to be a voluptuary taking delight in excess food and drink. The ledgers provide insight into the daily reality of the royal family, including the extent of the Prince Regent's gluttony and the King's and Queen's frugality.

Figures 3 and 4: James Gillray 'Temperance enjoying a Frugal Meal' and 'A Voluptuary under the horrors of Digestion' engravings (Hannah Humphrey, 1792).

To examine the food served to the household of George III, we used the Kew Palace volume (1788-1801). Kew was the family's retreat, where they visited when they wanted more privacy, such as a rest from London life during the summer or during George's periods of recuperation from his famous illness—the symptoms of which appeared shortly before the first entries in the ledger.[21] The King's political position, as man and monarch, was complicated in 1788 when the start of his mental illness

[21] Janice HADLOW, *The Strangest Family: The Private Lives of George III, Queen Charlotte and the Hanoverians* (London, 2014), 216-218.

caused the a Regency Crisis, which led Parliament to debate the king's fitness to rule. During his illness, he was more easily hidden from public view at the remote Kew Palace, although the press provided daily updates of his health.[22] The Kew Palace complex included multiple buildings within 300-acre grounds, including White House where the King took his meals (torn down in 1802-3), the Dutch House, Queen Charlotte's 'Cottage', and the separate kitchen (all still standing today).

Meals at Kew, like so much of royal life, took place in a liminal space that was simultaneously public and private. The King's dinners became particularly public during the periods of his illness when his meals were closely observed by physicians and courtiers.[23] The Kew Ledger provides information about the structure of the household and what sorts of meals each group or individual received. Decisions about who ate what reflected the King's moral authority and were underwritten by William Gorton, the Clerk of the Kitchen, on behalf of the nation. The personal preferences of the King and Queen are discernible, along with the preferences of some of the more powerful members of the household, such as the Princesses and the guests. The Ledger was organised by rank, title, and occupation, but given the importance of gender as an organising principle for both domestic and family life, the menus also contain implicit information about gendered bodies and dietetics, or contemporary knowledge about the connection between food and bodily health.

The Kew Ledger reveals that the King could be abstemiousness at times, which raises questions about what it meant for his rulership. Gillray correctly assumed that both eggs and vegetables were often eaten by the royal couple.[24] According to the Kew Ledger, eggs and spinach was their forty-sixth most commonly received dish, appearing twenty-eight times on the list; eggs with other types of leaves, such as sorrel or cress, featured in another eight dishes. A recipe for eggs with spinach in Elizabeth Moxton's frequently-printed book highlights the dish's simplicity; spinach was cooked with butter, then served with poached eggs on top.[25] Egg dishes in general appeared fairly frequently on their majesties' table (152 times), with four egg dishes appearing in their top 100 dishes (besides eggs with spinach, this included 'scholars eggs', boiled eggs, and buttered eggs). Eggs were frequently served to their pages, too, but less often to the equerries and the princesses. Eggs aside, the Kew Ledger reveals a royal table laden with food that would have been expensive, such as tiny birds (ortolan, lark) and vegetables out of season. Even the most luxurious of the King's meals was modest in comparison to the Prince Regent's table, however.

The Carlton House volume provides insight into the regular excesses of the life of their son George (the Prince Regent who would become George IV in 1820). The volume

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[22] Dana ROVANG, ''When Reason Reigns: Madness, Passion and sovereignty in late Eighteenth-century England', *History of Psychiatry* 17, 1 (2006): 23-44, at 24.

[23] Many books refer to George III's illness, but see for example Stanley AYLING, *George the Third* (New York, 1972)*;* Lewis NAMIER, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III,* (London, 1957); John BROOKE, *King George III: America's Last Monarch,* (New York, 1972); Janice HADLOW, *The Strangest Family*…352-416.

[24] For example, the equerry Robert Fulke Greville also referred to George III's modest meals (and sick dishes), including spinach and eggs. Annie GRAY, "Kew Palace: The Mind Behind the Myth, Research into George III's diet when 'mad' and other bits" (Unpublished report: February 2020), 7, 9.

[25] Elizabeth MOXON, *English Housewifery, Exemplified in above Four Hundred and Fifty Receipts* (Leeds, 1758), 140. Also mentioned as a typical example in GRAY, "Kew Palace…", 17.

selected for this project covers a 365-day period beginning in April 1812, just under a year after the start of the formal Regency Period. Due to his lifestyle, the Prince Regent was famously indebted, leading to a number of bailouts from Parliament and high tensions over his personal costs.[26] His love of entertaining and grandeur can be seen within the Carlton House volume, which includes a number of banquets. For example, on 5 February 1813, the Prince hosted a ball to mark his second year as Regent; he provided food for dozens of tables spread throughout the palace, with guests crammed into every room.[27] The surviving awe-inspiring dining room with its enormous chandelier at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton was not yet built, but is itself a testimony to George IV's love of food and dinner parties.[28]

Unlike his parents, George IV was popularly known as a heavy and ostentatious consumer at the table. The Prince Regent certainly had more lavish tastes than his parents, and his ledger included evidence of a well-stocked and very meaty side board at every meal, a much wider array of alcohol, as well as a penchant for creamy dishes and elaborate desserts to a degree not seen at Kew.[29] The Carlton House ledger thus acts as an opulent contrast of a man obsessed with grandeur to the more muted tones of a simpler royal life being lived at Kew. It also acts as a check in on how elite dining had evolved a full decade after the end of the Kew Ledger, with indications of greater emphasis on hierarchy, a new solidifying of national food identities, and an acceptance of French culture even while the troops on the battlefield took a different approach to Gallicism. Together, they show thousands of dishes fed in the nation's two most exclusive dining rooms and servants' quarters in the decades between the loss of America and the fall of Napoleon.

Seeing the Data within a Wider Context

Our dataset can enable researchers to dig deeply into our assumptions about food in the past, particularly the stereotypes about bland British diets. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a period of rapid imperial expansion, increasing commercialisation, travel and migration, a crucial part of the wider context for which types of food appeared (or did not appear) on the royal tables. The ledgers point to the diversity of the diet available to wealthy households (including the servants), the growing 'Frenchification' of food, and the role of ethnicity and migration in shaping British cuisine and taste. By examining the tables of George III in the 1790s and his adult son the Prince Regent in the 1810s, it becomes clear that they were microcosms of all of these cultural changes at once. Our dataset shows evidence of both traditional

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[26] Christopher HIBBERT, 'George IV (1762-1830)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004): https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10541.

[27] 'Menu book for the Prince Regent and his Household, principally relating to Carlton House' (1812-13), *The Royal Collection Trust*, MRH/MRHF/MENUS/MAIN/MIXED/1, pp 41.

[28] Jessica RUTHERFORD, 'The Royal Pavilion: George IV's residence at Brighton' *The Court Historian* 3, 1 (1998), 9-15.

[29] 'Menu book for the Prince Regent and his Household, principally relating to Carlton House' (1812-13), *The Royal Collection Trust*, MRH/MRHF/MENUS/MAIN/MIXED/1.

English (roast beef, apple tart) and new French cooking (soupe a la reine, gâteau mille feuille). The ledgers included flavours from around the world (coffee, cinnamon), and recipes from across Europe (mettwurst sausages, pasta). They were surprisingly diverse, with more than a hundred species of plants and animals finding their way into the kitchen and onto the plates of the royal family.

In the minds of many, of course, the British diet in the eighteenth century is little more than the caricature of John Bull eating slabs of roast meat.[30] Beef was a manifestation of British affluence and masculine independence—and had been for some time. Even as early as 1577, William Harrison commented that England's 'wealthy do feed upon the flesh of all kinds of cattle'. However, Harrison also noted that for those who could afford it, variation on the early modern plate was key, and that the elite English diner was also known to consume 'all sorts of fish taken upon our coasts and in our fresh rivers, and such diversity of wild and tame fowls as are either bred in our island or brought over unto us from other countries'.[31]

While the rich experimented widely with their fare, further down the social scale, food was fuel. In institutional settings such as workhouses it was carefully selected and portioned to keep inmates going, if not thriving, drawing on that which was local and abundant.[32] What one was served to eat was thus a key indicator of one's status in the social hierarchy, and as such food was embedded with many layers of meaning. Like the workhouses, the lower servants who prepared the food or waited on the needs of the royal family experienced a fuel-driven approach to food, portioned to keep them alive on a principally cloven-hoof diet of mutton, beef, and pork, served on a regular rotation that brought a monotony to eating that was in sharp contrast to the King and Prince Regent's own richly assorted tables, or those of their aristocratic guests.[33] That monotony was only broken by an occasional snuck leftover, or through more formal perquisites outlining who had a right to claim food not consumed by more elite diners.[34]

Roast beef was an important part of nearly every table (with a few exceptions, such as the Keeper of the Robes, and a few regular guests of the Prince Regent, who likely expressed a preference for other meats). The chief difference between higher status diners and lower servants was that the lower servants received a roast and only a roast nearly every day, while even middling servants often received a choice of two or more meats. The reliance on roast meat freed the kitchen staff to put their creative energy into more diverse dishes for those further up the hierarchy. The

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[30] Jennifer STEAD, *Georgian Cookery* (English Heritage, 1985); Ben ROGERS, *Beef and Liberty* (London, 2004).

[31] William HARRISON, *Description of Elizabethan England* (Book II, Ch. 6, 1577) Paul HALSALL (ed.) (Fordham, 1998): https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1577harrison-england.asp.

[32] Peter HIGGINBOTHAM, *The Workhouse Cookbook* (History Press, 2008).

[33] 'Kew Ledger' (1801), TNA LS/9/226; https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/royal-food/0/steps/17089; 'Menu book for the Prince Regent and his Household, principally relating to Carlton House' (1812-13), *The Royal Collection Trust*, MRH/MRHF/MENUS/MAIN/MIXED/1.

[34] Charlotte PAPENDIEK, *Mrs Papendiek's Journals*, Vernon Delves BROUGHTON (ed.) vol. I (London, 1887), 269.

weighted pulleys in front of the kitchen fires made roast beef even more efficient from a labour perspective.

The diverse diet of the wealthy carried on into the eighteenth century, but roast beef was by then more widely available across the social spectrum, and the contents of the plate was also increasingly influenced from abroad. A movement of culinary refinement in early modern France quickly spread to England through published cookbooks in the seventeenth century.[35] The influence was long-lasting. By the late eighteenth century, we see both in the households of George III and IV, the importance of the French language within the culinary lexicon, as well as the style of service—meals served *à la française* (several dishes served at once, with diners helping themselves), a mode of service codified in France in the seventeenth century and applied daily for the King of England's meals.[36] French influences on the kitchen were numerous, even at this time of great colonial expansion for the British, leading Amy Trubek to ask why, at the height of their own Empire, the British 'would permit a form of French culinary imperialism?'[37]

Yet digging into the use of French in our transcribed ledgers, we find that when the English ate dishes with French names this did not always mean they were eating foreign foods. French kitchen staff sometimes wrote *beouf* instead of beef, but this did not always imply a French recipe. For example, when their Majesties get 'Collops de Boeuf au Concombre' for dinner in 1790, this is a classically British preparation, which has been noted in French by the clerk for reasons of his own, but which do not seem to relate to the nature of the food being served.[38] In a similar vein, a search of the dataset reveals that ragouts and fricassees were served regularly in both households. Ragouts of various meats and vegetables are served on 90 occasions in our dataset, while fricassees, most often of chicken or pullet, came up 209 times. But the since these terms had been in circulation in the English language since 1652 (ragouts) and 1568 (fricassee), we might think of these dishes as 'naturalised English', to borrow Dorothy Hartley's phrase coined in reference to the way that the English enjoy 'foreign dishes' and Continental cooks'.[39]

Migration from across Europe, too, left its mark on the British palate, sometimes subtly transforming flavours and dishes as immigrants brought recipes and dining rituals to Britain, or in some cases had practised them privately for centuries before their influence began to creep outwards into the streets.[40] In London in particular, some of these immigrants began opening eating houses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that

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[35] Stephen MENNELL, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present,* (2nd ed. Chicago, 1996), pp. 83-7; Susan PINKARD, *A Revolution in Taste* (Cambridge, 2009).

[36] Jean-Louis FLANDRIN, *Arranging the Meal: A History of Table Service in France*, Julie E. Johnson trans. (London, 2007); Susan PINKARD, *A Revolution in Taste…* Also MENNELL, *All Manners of Food…*, p. 85; Amy B. TRUBEK, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession,* (Philadelphia, 2000), p. 7

[37] TRUBEK, *Haute Cuisine…,* pp. 42-3.

[38] 'Kew Ledger' (1801), TNA LS/9/226.

[39] Dorothy HARTLEY, *Food in England: The Complete Guide to the Food that Makes us who we are,* (London, 2021 [first ed. 1954]), p. 1.

[40] Carole SHAMMAS, 'The Eighteenth-Century English Diet and Economic Change', *Explorations in Economic History* 21, no. 3 (1 July 1984): 254–69; Panikos PANAYI, 'The Anglicisation of Eastern European Jewish Food in Britain' *Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora* 30, 2-3 (2012).

focused on regional fare. These included at least one Indian eatery, a number of Italian merchants selling foreign-sourced foodstuffs, as well as everything from German sausage shops targeted at Continental shoppers, to potato houses for the growing Irish community looking for a cheap hot meal in St Giles-in-the-Fields.[41] These changes were apparent in the royal household too, where parmesan and vermicelli were among may important ingredients to appear regularly on grocery lists.[42]

Digging into Daily Life

The ledgers provide insight into what role food played in day-to-day life. In this section, we focus on dining at Kew—while thinking about it in comparison to Carlton House—to demonstrate some of the ways one can use the dataset. Kew was a curious place, in that the royal family spent relatively little time at the palace between 1788 and 1813, while treating it as a place to escape the rigours of court life. The ledger shows that food served at Kew was influenced by French cookery and imperial trade, of course, but read alongside other sources (such as diaries), we can also examine the rhythms of daily life. The ledger itself can be used in several ways, such as charting the dates of residence that allow a glimpse into the royal year and an overview of (largely) summer foods available at Kew. It is even possible to identify what food was being served to the household of King George during the first instance of his famous illness in 1788-89.

The White House, which was located in what is now Kew Gardens just a few metres away from the surviving 'Kew Palace', was not the King and Queen's principal residence. Rather their main home was about fifteen miles to the west in 'The Queen's Lodge' at Windsor Castle. Kew was a helpful stopover on the way to London and the 'Queen's House'—now Buckingham Palace—was a further seven miles to the east. Queen's House has its own kitchen ledger, which shows a much less formal food service regimen, as well as a number of guests such as chaplains, maids of honour, and yeoman guards who never appear at Kew.[43]

Life in the royal household has been well documented by contemporaries. Queen Charlotte's diaries emphasise the repetitiveness of the royal day. Like many of her contemporaries, Charlotte's diary acted as an aide memoire for herself and her family.[44] They provide details about when she rose in the morning, the time she spent reading, the

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[41] *The Epicure's Almanack 1815,* Janet ING FREEMAN (ed) (London, 2013); Adam CRYMBLE, Lisa SMITH, Rachel RICH, 'Cabbages and Kings' *History Extra* (20/03/2020): https://www.historyextra.com/period/georgian/george-iii-food-german-cabbage-tastes-how-influence-british-cuisine/.

[42] 'Kew Ledger' (1801), TNA LS/9/226.

[43] TNA/LS/9/210.

[44] On early modern women's diaries see for example Helen WILCOX et al eds. *Her Own Life Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, (London, 1989); Kevin SHARPE and Steven N. ZWICKER, *Writing Lives: Biography and Textuality, Identity and Representation in Early Modern England*, (Oxford, 2008); Adam SMYTH, *Autobiography in Early Modern England,* (Cambridge, 2010).

moment the musicians started playing, and who she played cards with before heading to bed. Mealtimes were regular, as one would expect, and created punctuation marks in the day. Unlike Charlotte's letters, which reveal feelings, her diaries are an impersonal account of daily events.[45]

A number of her servants likewise left traces of their life in the Royal Household, including keeper of the robes Fanny Burney, the King's aide de camp General de Budé, and the children's governess, Charlotte Finch, all of whom have their food listed within the volumes.[46] Royal commentators, particularly caricaturists, regularly poked fun at the King and Queen's supposed habits, including imaginings of their domestic life.[47] The King, during the course of his duties, was also a prolific letter writer. His letters include some to his family, outlining in particular his strained relationship with his son, the future George IV.[48] As the nation's most watched family, we know so much about their lives and their routines. With these datasets, we now also know about the food in their bellies.

Part of the routine of royal life can be seen in the style of table service used in the palaces. Both the King and Queen and the Prince Regent were served *à la française*. This style of service was the norm at elite dinner tables across Europe well into the nineteenth century.[49] Grimod de la Reynière defined this way of serving dinner in his 1805 *Almanach des gourmands:*

> An important dinner normally comprises four courses. The first consists of soups, hors d'ouvres, relevés, and entrées; the second, of roasts and salads; the third of cold pasties and various entremets; and lastly, the fourth, of desserts including fresh and stewed fruit, cookies, macaroons, cheeses, all sorts of sweetmeats, and petits fours typically presented as part of a meal, as well as preserves and ices.[50]

Within that framework was tremendous variation. The chef's duty was to decide which dishes went into each place on the table each day. At Kew, and indeed at Carlton House, we find an adaptation of the classic model defined by Grimod de la Reynière. Kew only ever had two course and an entremets, while Carlton House also had a lavish sideboard of hot and cold meats. The King was sometimes served additional dishes that did not fit the

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[45] 'Diaries of Queen Charlotte', 1789-1794, *The Royal Collection,* GEO/ADD/43; by contrast, see the greater warmth in her letters: 'Letters and correspondence of Queen Charlotte,' 1761-1818, *The Royal Collection,* GEO/MAIN/36345-36438, 36439-36536, 36540-36820.

[46] Frances BURNEY, *The Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, 3 volumes (1778-1840); 'De Budé Papers' 1748-1819, *The Royal Collection,* GEO/ADD/15/0457-0861; 'Papers relating to Lady Charlotte Finch', 1762-1818, *The Royal Collection,* GEO/ADD/15/432-456, 8152-8193.

[47] Kenneth BAKER, *George III: A Life in Caricature* (London, 2007).

[48] Bonamy DOBRÉE, ed. *The Letters of King George III* (London, 1935)

[49] Jean-Louis FLANDRIN, *Arranging the Meal…,* pp. 3-5; Maryann TEBBEN, *Savoir-Faire: A History of Food in France,* (London, 2020), pp. 89-91.

[50] Alexandre-Balthazar-Laurent GRIMOD DE LA REYNIÈRE, *Almanach des gourmands,* 3rd year (1805), p. 18, cited in Jean-Louis FLANDRIN, *Arranging the Meal…,* p. 3.

pattern of *à la française* dining, which may have been his request, or his doctors' recommendations. Different groups—the Princesses in particular—seem to have been served food unique to them, suggesting that requests may have been possible or that age-appropriate cooking was applied, especially for the princesses who were still in childhood. Indeed, Janice Hadlow suggests that Charlotte held daily consultations with a 'medical man' to decide on the children's meals.[51] Servants' meals typically followed a predictable weekly rotation, meaning no regular decisions had to be made about what they would be eating.

It is unclear who made final decisions about what was to be cooked, whether requests were taken, or from whom. Nevertheless, the structure of the source materials does give some hints into workplace practices in the kitchen. Within the volumes, each two-page spread was split into four columns by its creator; in most cases, a two-page spread represented a single day. Each day included a list of each party to be fed, along with the food allocated to them on that day. Their Majesties were always listed first when they were in residence at Kew, thereafter followed (in general order of rank) various sets of servants and guests, with a declining diversity of dishes as one progressed down the social hierarchy. A similar hierarchical approach was used in the Carlton House volume.

A typical entry from 6 July 1791 shows the Princess's Servants meal:[52]

Princess's Servants
12 ¼ Mutton roasted
Pudding
Supper
2 Ducks roasted
Pease

[51] Janice HADLOW, *The Strangest Family…* p. 305.
[52] Kew Ledger' (1801), TNA LS/9/226, p. 133.

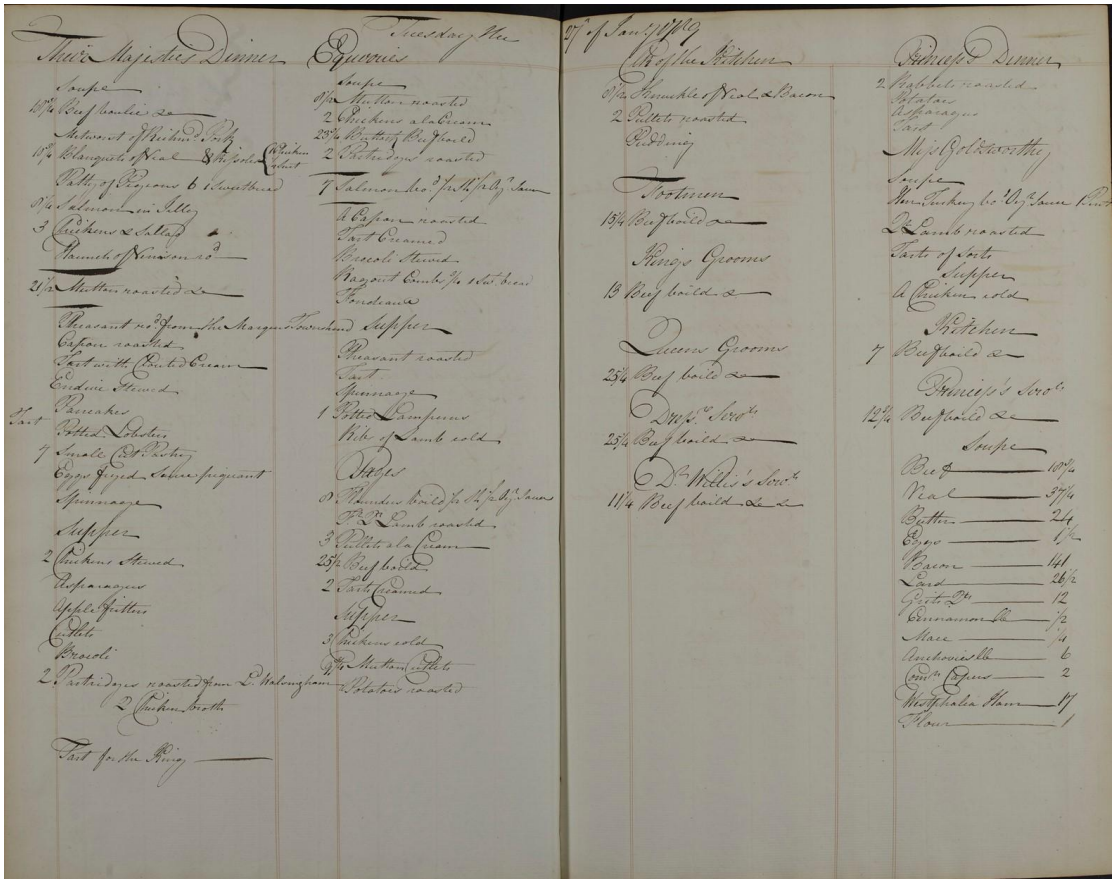

Figure 5: The page for 27 January 1789 in the Kew Ledger. Typical of what one might expect to see, and including 14 unique tables of diners (with the King appearing twice).

The Kew Ledger also records a number of grocery (dry goods) and oylery/oilery (generally items shipped in oil) deliveries. These are interspersed with the bills of fare. An example of an Oylery delivery from 28 July 1790:[53]

Hams lbs 52 ½
Anchovies 3
French Olives 1
Taragon Vinegar 1
Salt Pecks 4

The Carlton House volume was not used in the same way to record deliveries. A number of 'mensil' books in both TNA and the Royal Collection provide additional detail about goods coming into the household at regular intervals, making it possible to recreate the

[53] Kew Ledger' (1801), TNA LS/9/226, p. 123.

contents of the royal pantry on any given day with remarkable granularity.[54] Similarly, supplier contracts outline who was responsible for provisioning the household of certain goods, including a great many female suppliers (in 1789 Elizabeth Marshfield for fish, Ann Winkles for jellies, and Elizabeth Wilton for oysters, to name a few). The prices and contracts were agreed on an annual basis each January, and approved by the Board of Green Cloth.[55] Details of staffing and wages as well as rules of work are also available through household establishment books.[56]

Another area where our data can prove useful is as detailed evidence of the relationship between diet and health. The Kew Ledger is particularly valuable for its coverage of the two key periods of mental illness suffered by George III in 1788-1789 and 1801. This has not been our project's focus, but it is an example that points to the relevance of our data for studying health in the royal household. A number of recent projects have highlighted the intersections of food history, royal experience, and mental health, for example. This particularly includes the meal served to George III on 6 February 1789, which has appeared in popular history publications focusing on the King's battles with his mental illness.[57] That day was significant because it was the first time that George III was allowed to eat with a fork, having been deprived of it by his doctors some weeks earlier for safety reasons. The Kew Ledger was left open to that meal during an exhibition at Kew Palace in 2012 to celebrate the re-opening of the royal kitchens after a two-century rest behind a locked door. But the King was not the only diner in the household whose physical needs were considered; the ledger hints at the health of the whole household, from foods that were particularly beneficial for sturdy servants (roast meats) to the types of foods needed by growing children (such as chicken and vegetables).

As the Kew ledger reveals, the concept of eating the right foods for good health retained cultural and medical force, even at the most elite tables at the turn of the nineteenth century. Given that George's well-known mental health issues were poorly understood by doctors of the day (and indeed by modern physicians who attempt problematic retrospective diagnoses on the case), the volume is an important source for understanding whether or not the illness of George III, or the general health of the royal household, was reflected in the daily choices of food served.[58] Dietetics (or, eating certain foods to promote health and to cure illness) is an important area of ongoing study. Erwin H.

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[54] 'Mensils', TNA/LS/9; 'Georgian Mensils' (1812-1865), *Royal Collection Trust,* MRH/MRHF/GOODS.

[55] 'Contracts' (1796), TNA/LS/13/26.

[56] 'Establishment Book' (1779), *Royal Collection Trust*, EB/EB/7/32.

[57] Lauren COLLINS, 'The King's Meal' *The New Yorker* (13 November 2011): https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/11/21/the-kings-meal; Historic Royal Palaces, 'Georgian Cook Along: Soupe Barley' *YouTube* (May 2012): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuitmOQHMfg.

[58] On George's health, see for example: 'George III medical papers', 1788-1820, *The Royal Collection,* MED/16/17; Ida MACALPINE and Richard HUNTER, *George III and the Mad-Business* (London, 1969); Timothy PETERS, 'King George III, bipolar disorder, porphyria and lessons for historians', *Clinical Medicine* 11 (2011), 261-264.

Ackernecht claims that humoral dietetics had faded by the eighteenth century.[59] Yet David Gentilcore has shown that the concept of dietetics was flexible enough to survive into the nineteenth century, largely because it easily incorporated global foodstuffs within its framework.[60] The ledger's evidence fits with recent scholarship on eighteenth-century French and Swiss medical consultation letters, for example, which emphasised that patients and physicians drew heavily on the concept of eating or avoiding certain foods when ill. Physicians typically prescribed regimens to their patients, outlining foods to eat or avoid, medicines to be taken, and exercises to be done.[61] E.C. Spary has shown, moreover, the profound ways in which ideas about healthy eating intersected with Enlightenment ideas to create a kind of 'scientific cookery', a concept that may very well have appealed to George III who was well-known for his scientific interests (and had the most modern, scientifically-designed kitchen installed in Kew).[62]

In Britain, the importance of food for health, too, remained important in the eighteenth century. Early eighteenth-century physician George Cheyne, for example, popularised a reformed (vegetarian) idea of healthy eating in England, linking illnesses to blockages from bad digestion and luxurious food that caused poor health. Cheyne's diet, which remained popular until the nineteenth century, emphasised the healthfulness of plain eating, especially foods such as milk and eggs—long staples of sick dish cookery.[63] In the late eighteenth century, the work of William Buchan further promoted Enlightenment ideals of a well-balanced body, stressing the necessity of a good diet for good health. His work was aimed at the middling sorts, reflecting an ongoing effort to regularise health and bodily control.[64] As Spary has argued, a frugal, well-maintained diet was associated with good morals, good health, and good governance. A man's ability to manage his bodily oeconomy through regimen was seen as a critical indicator of his capacity for managing the political oeconomy, too.[65] This parallel of body and political body had potential resonance for an ill king.

Because of its connection to his mental illnesses, the Kew ledger is an important insight into sick dish cookery in the eighteenth century. Nourishing foods for invalids (or sick dish cookery) regularly appeared in prescriptive literature of the time, making it possible

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[59] Erwin H. ACKERNECHT, *Therapeutics: From the Primitives to the Twentieth Century, with an Appendix History of Dietetics* (London, 1973), p. 179. For more recent discussions of dietetics, see Kenneth B. ALBALA, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2002); David GENTILCORE, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe: Diet, Medicine and Society, 1450-1800* (London, 2016).

[60] David GENTILCORE, *Food and Health*…

[61] For example, Michael STOLBERG, *Experiencing Illness and the Sick Body in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Leonhard Unglaub and Logan Kennedy (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 42-4; Robert WESTON, *Medical Consulting by Letter in France, 1665-1789* (Farnham, 2013), p. 179.

[62] E.C. SPARY, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670-1760* (Chicago, 2012), p. 247.

[63] David GENTILCORE, *Food and Health…*, pp. 38-42.

[64] David GENTILCORE, *Food and Health…*, p. 44; Charles E. ROSENBERG, 'Medical Text and Social Context: Explaining William Buchan's "Domestic Medicine"', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 57, 1 (1983): 22-42, pp. 31-3, 39.

[65] E.C. SPARY, *Eating the Enlightenment…*, pp. 259-61, 277, 289.

to identify which foods in the menus may have been intended for health. Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*, for example, listed the foods to eat or avoid for each illness. Popular recipe books, like Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery* (reprinted thirty-seven times between 1747 and 1796), typically had sections on 'Directions for the Sick' that included recipes for foods commonly served to invalids.[66] Glasse provided no theoretical explanations, as that was the purview of the physician, only 'a few Directions for the *Cook* or *Nurse*' on nourishing foods: broths, boiled and minced meats, egg and milk-based foods, special milks and other drinks, and jellies. A popular book on dietetics by Thomas Moffett, *Health's Improvement*, which was first published a half-century posthumously in 1655 and again in 1746, explains some of the rationale behind the food choices.[67] For example, partridge was fit for weak stomachs and was best in winter. It was particularly recommended to invalids as a result. Lamb was considered appropriate for any constitution. Baby animals in general, like pullets and capons, were considered temperate and suitable for all.[68]

We see this knowledge about the connections between food and health finding its way into the royal kitchen at the time. In 1812, George's physicians even linked a bout of midnight sickness to his having eaten 'a good deal of Marmalade' that day.[69] On 14 December 1788, partridges, veal, crab, pullet patties, and jelly were possible options for George III. Jelly was considered nourishing and easily digestible. Veal, according to Moffett, was but jelly hardened and it was of course, a baby animal. By 12 February 1789, the King's health was on the mend, which was reflected by the wider range of 'sick dish' options to tempt him: veal, mutton, pheasants, patty of sweetbreads and chicken, chicken loaves (both minced meats), jelly, pullet, and chicken broth.[70] When George was ill, the kitchen went to great lengths to provide him and the family with the full ceremony of *à la française* dishes. Whether it was believed the food might cure him, or merely that it might keep spirits high in a house that was struggling with a sometimes-violent king, we do not know for sure.

Annie Gray suggests that a mix of preference and sick dish cookery were important for feeding the king. She notes that when he was at his worst, 'invalid foods' like calves' foot jelly or mutton broth were served. But he also had preferred (plain) foods, which could be used to tempt his appetite, such as barley soup and metwurst sausages.[71] Terence Scully has identified a number of popular mediaeval sick dishes, which we can still see in much later invalid cookery, and which we now find in the royal bills of fare. Easily digestible and tempting, and warm, moist foods were generally used, such as chicken, white fish

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[66] Hannah GLASSE, *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, (1st ed. London: 1747), pp. 118-121.
[67] Victor HOULISTON, 'Moffet [Moufet, Muffet], Thomas [T. M.] (1553-1604)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18877.
[68] Thomas MOFFETT, *Health's Improvement: or, Rules comprizing and discovering the nature, method, and manner of preparing all sorts of food used in this nation* (London, 1746), pp. 137, 143, 177.
[69] GPP/GEO/MED/16/4/95 (20 July 1812). With thanks to Arthur Burns.
[70] 'Kew Ledger' (1801), TNA LS/9/226, pp. 12 & 72.
[71] Annie GRAY, 'Kew Palace…, February 2020, p. 8

(like perch or crayfish), eggs, grains, nuts, green vegetables, fruit, and sugar. Such foods were also readily available, in contrast to something like peacock, which rarely appeared.[72] George III's table was replete with easily digestible foods, from the eggs and spinach that he and Charlotte enjoyed, to the wide range of chicken and fruit-based dishes that regularly appeared on the menus.

The dataset allows us to look at provisioning of a large household over a sustained period of many months (1788-1789) as well as the sporadic need to supply the household over several years. Read alongside mensil books and contracts, the ledgers make it possible to identify who was supplying what to the household (and when), uncovering the local network of suppliers. The ledgers also reveal the seasonal patterns of the family's comings and goings to Kew over time (and what foods might appear), as well as the rhythms of daily life in a household at a moment of an illness crisis—and the need for food that provided healthy sustenance to all. This flexibility of research potential makes these two volumes an important set of sources for a wide range of historians studying the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Pedagogical Discussion

We hope that the resource will prove particularly valuable to researchers, educators and students. To support effective teaching, we offer the following observations based on our own pedagogical work with the materials at undergraduate level in the United Kingdom. The dataset is particularly useful for digging into themes such as social class and food, food preparation, Britishness, empire, and households.

The 3,000+ foods served at Kew and Carlton House can facilitate learning about the great variety of food eaten by those who could afford it. For example, the ledgers can highlight that food was served differently to people of different social classes, and that the elite ate a much more varied diet—especially when it came to fruit and vegetables—than some might imagine. The ledgers are organised so that students can identify the many kinds of meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables included in the diet, as well as the different modes of cooking (see column 'Heat Method'). The history of food is often written based on what we can glean from cookbooks, which offer clues but often cannot reliably be connected to what people ate regularly. By coupling evidence from the ledgers with cookbooks, students might compare the foods served to the King or Prince Regent with published recipes. Similarly, sources that discuss eating—diaries, correspondence, fictional accounts—can be read alongside the royal meals. Students will be able to consider what dishes were served, at what time of day, and in which season, whether they focus on the

[72] Terence SCULLY, 'The Sickdish in Early French Recipe Collections', pp. 132-140 in Sheila CAMPBELL, Bert HALL and David KLAUSNER eds, *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture* (New York, 1992), pp. 134-5.

royal households, consider fictional or idealised accounts of eating, or food eaten in different types of households.

One of our own teaching interests has been the question of what it meant to be British in the eighteenth century. Many people are familiar with James Gillray's cartoons in which King George and Queen Charlotte were lampooned for their eating habits (Figure 3). Gillray's cartoons emphasise the importance of diet as a marker of national identity, in a way that we recognise when we reflect on the close association of roast beef with Britishness. The Kew and Carlton House ledgers contain evidence of the importance of roast beef and locally grown and raised foods for feeding British bodies; they also showcase the myriad ways in which Britain's growing power, both in Europe and throughout its growing Empire, was allowing for an increasingly varied diet. The volumes show both French and German influences, but also other European elements such as Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese, and flavours from further away, including India, Asia, and the Americas. Students will be able to consider the old adage that 'you are what you eat', and consider what British people were, based on their varied diet, and their appetite for foreign-influenced dishes.

Based on our own teaching of the dataset at undergraduate level, we noted that many students struggled in certain areas. Recent scholarship on teaching early modern recipes and transcription to students points to some of these areas: anxiety over getting things 'right', difficulty in understanding vocabulary for processes, tools and food (between changed word usages and phonetic spelling), or differences in historical uses of space and seasonality.[73] Standardised dish names and food types in the dataset may protect against some of these issues; although a student might not know what a ruff is, for example, the dataset will indicate that it is a type of bird at least, while the dates will indicate the time of year when something was eaten. A particular issue that emerged in our teaching is that the average level of French knowledge amongst British undergraduate students is often too low to fully understand the French-inflected vocabulary of the kitchen. This is further complicated by phonetic spelling, which requires an extra layer of translation: how might a French word have been heard and then written by a late eighteenth-century English person? Some students may also eat from a narrow dietary range, or may have grown up in a household that ate very different types of foods, so help with vocabulary will likely be needed even for 'British' foods or ways of cooking. One solution to quickly resolve the problem of unfamiliar words might be a glossary, possibly one that students produce together.

The structure and function of the early modern household is brought to life by the ledgers, and this dataset offers a unique way for teachers and students to explore the inner

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[73] Jennifer MUNROE, Hillary NUNN, Margaret SIMON, Lisa SMITH, 'Reconstructing Recipes, Recovering Losses, Telling Stories', *Early Modern Studies Journal* 8 (2022): https://earlymodernstudiesjournal.org/review_articles/reconstructing-recipes-recovering-losses-telling-stories/; Margaret SIMON, 'The Experience of Scholarly Labor: Reading Affect in Transcription', *Early Modern Studies Journal* 7 (2021): https://earlymodernstudiesjournal.org/review_articles/the-experience-of-scholarly-labor-recording-affect-in-transcription/ .

workings of these households and families. Inspired by a mini-transcribathon to look at the royal food ledgers in 2019, for example, several students in Lisa Smith's 'Early Modern Households' Module at the University of Essex undertook a group project that drew on the ledgers. The students considered topics such as: individuals within the royal household, food as medicine, 'British' food, and food traditions.[74] The students concluded that the menus were a good starting point for insight into daily life and the wider culture.[75]

By considering the number of dishes produced each day, alongside the range of preparation methods being practised in the Kew and Carlton House kitchens, it becomes possible to start to think about how time was spent within the home both by servants preparing food and members of the royal family eating it. Social historians have noted the change of mealtimes in the nineteenth century when dinner moved to the end of the day, while students interested in the ledgers will observe that the principal meal of the day took place in the middle of the day, with 'Supper' being a smaller meal served in the evening (See column 'Meal').

The 'Party' column shows how the food served was apportioned to different groups of people within the home. Parties included their majesties, guests, and a range of servants as befitted such a large household. Further, the princesses, some of whom were still children at the period covered by the Kew Ledger, ate separately from their parents, and had a governess with her own dining table. The different meals served to these various parties allow for analysis of diets according to age, social position, and gender, for anyone interested in reflecting on how ideas about nutrition and appetite were determined according to a hierarchical vision of society at large, and of the household as a microcosm of that social order. The dataset can be combined with further student research across the *Georgian Papers Programme* digital archive offered by the Royal Archives, which extensively complements our own data with qualitative and quantitative sources across a range of themes related to the Royals and their households.[76]

Our dataset is a helpful catalyst for encouraging critical thought in a classroom. It poses many questions and offers hints at how those questions may be answered with the data it contains, which makes it an excellent training ground for students to develop critical research methodology skills around generating evidence in support of a conclusion.

Conclusion

[74] The blogposts for their project, 'All Things Georgian', can be found at the student blog: Lisa SMITH, ed. *The Digital Recipe Book Project*, (2019): https://drbp.hypotheses.org/category/kings-dinners-project.
[75] Will PARKER, 'All Good Things Must Come to an End – Concluding Blog Post', *The Digital Recipe Book Project*, 5 May 2019, https://drbp.hypotheses.org/1027.
[76] 'Georgian Papers Programme', *Royal Collection Trust* (2015-2021) https://georgianpapers.com/

These two manuscripts in their revised form, offer insights into the labour of a pair of royal kitchens at a key moment in British dining. As datasets made open to all, they offer new potential to challenge assumptions about British consumption, British and European culture, and even how a single family evolves across generations. As a piece of interpretive scholarship, this dataset makes three key contributions to our knowledge.

Firstly, to digital food studies and public-facing digital humanities more broadly, this work builds upon an exciting tradition in scholarly digitisation of culinary source materials and their public presentation. The specific volumes build upon earlier public programming work at Kew Palace during their kitchen re-opening of 2012, which used the Kew Ledger to tell a story about the King's mental health and of cooking at Kew.[77] More broadly the contribution is most notably within the vein of those projects seeking to tell a story at scale, such as the Early Modern Recipes Online Collective and NYPL's 'What's on the Menu?' projects.[78] It does so by presenting two substantive manuscripts in depth, moving beyond the NYPL approach of digitising many menus from many restaurants, towards one that provides a view into the day-in-day-out rhythms of a single family over an extended period. In doing so it provides both a set of data wedged temporally between the early modern European project and the modern American one, and offers new views that privilege the everyday over the special night out.

Secondly, to medical history, the records herein are a vital insight into the connection between eighteenth century mental and physical health practises, and the nation's most important patient. The Kew Ledger in particular showcases on the ground attempts to heal the King in his weeks of greatest vulnerability, by addressing the needs of his belly. This dataset, which also provides evidence of the King's eating during periods of health, therefore makes a substantial contribution to the historiography of sick dish cookery and dietetics, and crucially shifts E.C. Spary's work on Enlightened eating in France into the daily rhythms of an entire British household.

Finally, to food history and dining, these kitchen ledgers show that the dinner table was a microcosm of change, pulled upon by forces ranging from migration and trade, to individual tastes, to conversations about health, to the changing of the seasons. These factors all tie back into the existing historiography across a range of areas relevant to food history, but do so now with new evidence that both supports those earlier claims, and highlights the degree to which any one of them is only ever part of the picture. The wealth of detail contained in the ledgers challenges the assumption that it was the French who had the greatest influence of the British palate in this epoch, opening up new ways of thinking about how European and global ingredients, flavours, and cooking methods came together in a period where British identity was being defined at the dinner table. In the era when historians have characterised British cuisine as John Bull and roast beef versus French chefs fleeing the revolution, our data offers new opportunities to

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[77] Lauren COLLINS, 'The King's Meal'…

[78] Rebecca LAROCHE, Elaine LEONG, Jennifer MUNROE, et al*, The Early Modern Recipe Collective*, …; Rebecca FEDERMAN *et al*, "What's on the Menu?" …

understand the complex range of factors underpinning decisions about who should eat what according to age, gender, and social status. By looking at eating in the round and considering intersectional forces influencing it, the British diet can come into sharper focus than traditional histories have allowed.