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Reviewed Article:

Rubobostes' Feast

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In Romania, in recent years, numerous cultural events and projects have been developed to reconstruct some aspects of everyday life from the past, or to promote archaeological sites (Ardeleanu, 2012, pp.72-73). One of these sites is the *Porolissum Archaeological Reserve* (Sălaj County). It includes an important prehistoric centre (with discoveries from the Neolithic Age, Bronze Age, Hallstat, and Dacian LaTène Ages), as well as many Roman vestiges from the 2nd to the 3rd century AD (two Roman fortifications – *castrum*, the settlement – *vicus*, the necropolis and an amphitheatre, See Figure 1). The *Municipium* of Porolissum was the capital of the Roman province of *Dacia Porolissensis* and at the same time the most northern

defensive point of Roman Dacia (Gudea, 1989, p.98). In order to promote the ancient cultural heritage each year, the County Museum of History and Art from Zalău organises the *Porolissum Fest*, a cultural and scientific event taking place in a geographic space full of history.

> The cooking experience held at the Porolissum Fest helped us understand more about one constant aspect of daily life during all times: food. We need food to survive, but food is also linked to production and exchange, and to domestic and political economies.

Every year the organisers have proposed a different theme for the festival, in connection with the history of the Roman remains: the commemoration of some confrontations between the Dacians and the Romans, the visit of a certain emperor to Porolissum, Dacia's abandonment by the Romans, et cetera. For the first time, in 2017, along with numerous interactive workshops with the public, the organisers proposed that all participating associations provide cooking demonstrations, according to recipes and ingredients existing in the Roman period.

One of the nine groups participating at the cooking demonstrations was Omnis Barbaria Cultural Association (Romania). Five members of the association responsible for the cooking workshop, each with well-established tasks, were appointed: Marius Ardeleanu (responsible for verifying the historical accuracy of the artefacts used in ancient kitchens, and making the clay cooking pots), Vlad Săsaran (documentation on the ingredients of the Dacian period), Mureșan Andra (home recipe testing, and preparation of cooking ingredients), Sorana Ardeleanu (verification of historical sources and preparation of ingredients for cooking), and Cătălin Teletin (choice of a final recipe, home recipe testing, and making and keeping the fire for cooking at the festival).

All members of the association involved in the cooking experiment process have previous experience in historical reconstruction. They have taken part in numerous similar events, along with educational and cultural projects, as members or collaborators of some museums or re-enactment groups (Ardeleanu, 2015, pp.59-96; Ardeleanu, 2016, pp.653-672). They established four main stages for the cooking experiment:

1. finding a recipe and checking the existence of the ingredients in the Dacian ancient period (territory of today's Romania)
2. making replicas of the archaeological artefacts necessary for the Dacian kitchen
3. recipe testing
4. cooking experience at the *Porolissum Fest* event

In order to choose a recipe, a list of possible ingredients available in the Dacian period was made. 103 plants that existed on the territory of Romania in the ancient period and can be

purchased today have been selected. For an easier selection, they were divided into five categories: cereals (9), greens (25), vegetables (10), spices and aromatic herbs (36), and fruits (23). Some of these (24%) were also confirmed by numerous archaeological discoveries (Suciu, 2009, pp.118-124) or palynological analyses (Fărcaș et al., 2013, pp.92-104). The meat-based diet is also well documented by the discovery of many bones from domestic and wild animals in almost all Dacians settlements and fortifications (Haimovici, 1987, pp.144-153). With this list, some proposals were made to establish a recipe. At the same time, some recipes of some well-known authors from the ancient world were also consulted (Apicius, Columella, Archestratus, Galen, Cato, and, Athenaeus).

In choosing the recipe, it was first considered who the consumers of the feast would be. In this case, within the festival, the members of the association had to prepare food for the public and for the members of other groups. After a few suggestions and debates, the members of the group involved in the project decided to cook a recipe based on millet porridge with fried beef and pork sausage served with herb sauce. The porridge was one of the most widespread forms of food in antiquity. For example, Pliny reports that early Romans ate porridge instead of bread (Leigh, 2015, p.48). Various sauces of spices and herbs appear in the works from the ancient period (Cato, *On Agriculture*, 119; Oribasius, *Medical Compilations*, 4.1.40; Galen, *De alimentorum facultatibus*, 478; Apicius, *De re coquinaria* 4.5.3). Sausages were also one of the most widespread forms of meat conservation and consumption in antiquity (Toussaint-Samat, 2009, p.93). It is also mentioned in some of the works of the classical world (Aristophan, *Hippeis*, 150-167, 356, 1179, 1183; Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, 56.1-2; Martial, *Epigrams*, 13.35; Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 9.16.8; Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, 2.5.3, 4.61; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistola*, 8.133.41-45), they were not recognised as a status food, as they were often a way of using offal and other parts of animals, especially pigs. The sausages were sold piping hot in the street, as snack food or cold, served sliced (Alcock, 2011, pp.40-49).

Since the commander of the Dacian camp of the Omnis Barbaria Cultural Association is named *Rubobostes*, after the name of one of the Dacian kings (Nistorescu, 2010, pp.23-42), the menu was named *Rubobostes' Feast*. Once the recipe was established, it was possible to go to the second stage of the experiment: choosing and making the materials for the kitchen. Many of the required cooking items were in the inventory of the association (wooden tables, knives and dishes), but some of them had to be made: the iron grate and clay pots for cooking.

For sausage cooking, the members of the team decided to use iron *firedogs* (*Feuerböcke*), a type of cooking equipment well known in the LaTène world (Uenze, 1991, pp.173-175). These had widespread use, from the Etruscans to the Celts, Romans and then to the Illyrians (Drost, 1954, p.123). During the late La Tène period, the iron firedogs spread to the populations of the Carpathian Basin and north of the Alps (Jacobi, 1974, pp.110-111, fig. 27). From Pre-

Roman Dacia, only two iron firedogs are known, found at Ocnița (ancient *Buridava*). They support a grate consisting of seven rods and were made from a massive bar having a stylized head of a bullock at one end (Berciu, 1981, p.45, fig. 33-34, 9). They could hold either a clay pot for cooking, meat or sausage for roasting. The firedogs used for the cooking experiment were made of two iron rods, processed by hot tapping. The legs were made from a third rod of metal and attached to the body with iron rivets. One person built and polished the firedogs in seven hours (See Figure 2).

Three clay pots, replicas of cooking pots discovered in the Dacian fortification from Mala Kopanya (Zakarpatia, Ukraine), (Kotigoroško, 2014, fig. 75/9) were made at the same time. The working time for each vessel was six hours. After 10 days, when the pots were naturally dried (see Figure 3), they were fired together with other pots in an open fireplace for six hours after a preheating operation (See Figure 4). After burning, one of the three pots cracked and could not be used. The other two pots were in good condition and suitable for use (See Figure 5).

The third stage of the project consisted of home testing the recipe. In the first test a regular clay pot and a grate were used. Attention was focused more on the taste and not on the timing required for cooking. After making the first test (See Figure 6), we decided that some changes had to be made to the recipe: millet food should be served more liquid, much more sauce was needed for each portion, for herbs sauce it would be better to use seasonal ingredients and it would be preferable to use a mead vinegar instead of wine vinegar. At the taste level it was also noticed that the sauce complemented the millet porridge and sausages very well. A second test was made using one of the pots made for the experiment and the grate for the sausage. With the additions made, the recipe was much tastier. It was also noted that for cooking it takes 90 minutes to prepare the ingredients (for making sausages and the green herbs sauce) and another 90 minutes to boil the milk with millet in the handmade cooking pot. Having a little experience and confidence the members of the project decided that the clay pots, the firedogs with the grate and the recipe were ready to be tested during the festival.

The *Porolissum Fest* took place on the 2nd of July in the Roman Amphitheatre of the *Porolissum Archaeological Reserve*. After selecting the cooking area, preparing the camp and bringing all the necessary goods, including wood for fire cooking, the experience began. At this stage, two team members joined: Anton Mureșan and Adriana Berezovschi, both involved in preparing food for cooking. The organisers of the festival wanted to have a tasting for the public, so each association had to cook about 40 small portions. As a result, for cooking we used a larger clay pot (the same one used for the first home recipe test) and one of the two pots specially made for the event. One of the pots was held as a spare, in case one of the pots cracked or some other unexpected event arose during the cooking process. The clay pots were left for one hour with water in them before being used. In this way the clay swells and the chances that the pots will crack during the cooking process are much smaller. Then,

gradually, they were brought closer to the fire for a slow preheating process. After being well-heated, and having a sufficient amount of embers they were placed on the hearth and surrounded with embers (See Figure 7). The cooking time was 90 minutes. During this time, we had to add more milk to the pots several times.

At the same time, the sausages and the herbs sauce were prepared (See Figure 8). Pork and beef were minced in equal quantities. Then they were mixed with pork lard, basil, garlic, and salt. The resulting paste was introduced by hand into the salt-preserved pork guts. The entire operation lasted 45 minutes, carried out by two people. Roasting the sausages on the firedogs lasted for another 45 minutes, while cooking the millet porridge (See Figure 9). Another person prepared herb sauce. It consisted of carrot and parsley leaves finely chopped and mixed with mead vinegar, olive oil and a bit of salt. The final recipe of the Omnis Barbaria Cultural Association was (for 40 small portions):

Menu Name - The Rubobostes Feast

Content:
1. millet porridge boiled with milk in a clay pot;
2. Roasted beef and pork sausages;
3. green herbs sauce.

Ingredients:
1. Millet - 3 kg; salt - a spoon; milk - 5 l.
2. Minced beef - 2.5 kg; minced pork leg meat - 2.5 kg; pork fat - 0.5 kg; freshly minced basil - 5 table spoons; salt (unhydrated) - 150 g; garlic cloves – 35 pieces; pig guts - 10 meters;
3. Carrot leaves - 800 g; parsley leaves - 300 g; mead vinegar 150 ml; salt - a spoon; olive oil - 500 ml.

The cooking experience held at the *Porolissum Fest* helped us understand more about one constant aspect of daily life during all times: food (See Figure 10). We need food to survive, but food is also linked to production and exchange, and to domestic and political economies (Van der Veen, 2003, p.83). For members of the Omnis Barbaria Cultural Association, directly or indirectly involved in the project, the experience was important and unique. For the first time, experiments were made by making and using replicas of the iron firedogs found on the Romanian territory. Cooking clay pots were also made and used, replicas of those found in archaeological Dacian sites, made with materials and techniques existing in the ancient world. Also, only ingredients that were found in Dacia, 2,000 years ago, were used for cooking.

The Omnis Barbaria Cultural Association intends to continue cooking experiments based on ingredients and ancient resources in order to know some important stages related to the production, acquisition, processing, consumption and discarding of food in ancient times. The

research will be based on archaeo-botanical remains, findings from traditional archaeological excavations and contemporary historical sources. Material artefacts and historical documents will provide the background contexts which will allow for further interpretation of one of the most interesting and necessary activities in everyday life, cooking.

Keywords cookery
food

Country Romania

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FIG 1. THE PRAETORIA GATE OF THE ROMAN CASTRUM FROM POROLISSUM. PHOTO BY INFO TURISM MIRȘID

FIG 2. IRON FIRE DOGS MADE FOR THE COOKING EXPERIMENT. PHOTO BY MARIUS ARDELEANU

FIG 3. THE COOKING CLAY POTS BEFORE BURNING. PHOTO BY MARIUS ARDELEANU

FIG 4. PREHEATING OF THE POTS. PHOTO BY MARIUS ARDELEANU

FIG 5. THE COOKING CLAY POTS AFTER BURNING. PHOTO BY MARIUS ARDELEANU

FIG 6. THE FIRST HOME RECIPE TEST. PHOTO BY MARIUS ARDELEANU

FIG 7. THE COOKING POTS PLACED ON THE EMBERS. PHOTO BY BOGDAN DEAC

FIG 8. PREPARING FOOD FOR COOKING. PHOTO BY BOGDAN DEAC

FIG 9. IMAGE FROM THE COOKING PROCESS - DETAIL. PHOTO BY BOGDAN DEAC

FIG 10. IMAGE FROM THE COOKING PROCESS. PHOTO BY BOGDAN DEAC