

Ninth International Symposium of Bellecroix

Cooking at the Castle

Architectures, Functions and Uses of Castle Kitchens

October 20th-22nd 2023 - Château de Bellecroix (Chagny – Saône-et-Loire, France)

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In the West, cooking is a fundamental element of daily life in any residential area. It is here that food for consumption is prepared at least twice a day. Castles do not escape this need and their kitchens are characterized by special arrangements, sometimes with a number of spaces devoted to storing and preparing dishes. This place where food is prepared, refined by the addition of sauces and sometimes decorated, is staffed by numerous people, from the head cook to the scullery boy, including subordinate jobs such as the staff assigned to the cleaning of dishes. Castle cooking is therefore a space of convergence, of men and of products, and can be also a room for conviviality.

But cooking is also an art: preparing a meal must be done in accordance with the codes of a society or at least of a social group. Thus, it reflects, sometimes in a spectacular way, its adherence to a culture: it reveals its place in a global social hierarchy. Cooking is therefore a complex mixture of perennials and imitations, traditions and innovations. Cooking in the castle is not only a necessity to feed the residents: it is also a way of differentiation, by which the aristocrat distinguishes himself from the rest of the population.

From the central hearth in the great hall, topped by a "louvre" where the smoke escapes, inherited from ancient uses, to the central hearth kitchen typical of princely or abbatial palaces of the fifteenth century, various organizations of the culinary space have been uncovered for decades. But they have been the subject of few syntheses for the medieval period. Peter Brears' book *Cooking and Dining in Medieval England* (Trowbridge, 2008), offers in this sense a stunning synthesis for England, which might be extended to other countries, as well as updated with the results of survey and excavations.

The ninth Bellecroix colloquium will therefore be an opportunity to improve the knowledge of this particular area of the castle, through case studies as well as through synthesis approaches if available (architectural, topographical, chronological or statutory). The subjects of the lectures are meant to stay behind the door of the hall: what is happening inside the hall (protocol, service, placement, etc.) is not in the scope of the colloquium. Some guidelines for reflection could be as follows :

1. location of the kitchens in the castral space; typology of kitchens (possibly in relation to the status of the patron);
2. links between kitchen space, table service, ceremony;
3. evolution of the architectural programs governing the organization of the kitchen and subordinate spaces during the Middle Ages;
4. differentiation between kitchens for crowds from private kitchens for the lord;
5. similarities and differences between abbatial, seigneurial and princes' kitchens;
6. safety and sanitary issues (fire, poison, food corruption).

This list is not restrictive. As the symposium is open to anyone, other topics will certainly appear, depending on the proposed articles.

The symposium will be held at the château of Bellecroix, which is a former Hospitaller commandery seated in Burgundy (France), in the small city of Chagny close to Beaune. It is accessible by a direct train from Paris or from Lyon.

Languages spoken: French, English. No online translation.

The organization of the conference will pay for the accommodation costs (hotel nights, meals). Travel costs are reimbursed exclusively from a city located in France; international travel must be borne by the participants or their home organizations.

Proposals are to be submitted by the 31st of December 2022, with a short summary of 500 to 1000 words maximum to h-Mouillebouche@wanadoo.fr.