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## "BREAD FOR SLAVES - 2" - AN ANCIENT SHOPPING LIST FROM POMPEII

Two posts on twitter, [here](#) from @ahencyclopedia, and [here](#), from the excellent Dr Sophie Hay, tell us of a list of provisions, bought or sold, over a number of days. It lists three types of bread - "bread", "coarse bread", and "bread for a slave" (panem puero).

The text was scratched on a wall in Pompeii at a caupona, (plan and photos [here](#)). There is a photograph of it online which I give below. The item is entered in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* as CIL IV 5380. The list makes interesting reading.



CIL IV 5380, list of foodstuffs from Pompeii

The transcription:

		Idubus pane(m) II
VIII Idus casium I	Servato	pane(m) cibar(em) II
pane(m) VIII	montana  (denarius) I	oleum V
oleum III	oleum  (denarius) I VIII	halica(m) III
vinum III	pane(m) IV casium IV	domato[ri] pisciculum II
VII Idus		
pane(m) VIII	porrum I pro patella I	
oleum V	Sittuae VIII inltynium I	
cepas V		
pultarium I	III Idus pane(m) II	
pane(m) puero II	pane(m) puero II	
vinum II		
VI Idus pane(m) VIII		
	pri(die) Idus puero pane(m) II	
	pane(m) cibar(em) II	
puero pane(m) IV	porrum I	
halica III		
V Idus		
vinum domatori  (denarius)		
pane(m) VIII vinum II casium II		
IV Idus		
Hxeres  (denarius) pane(m) II		
femininum VIII		
tridicum  (denarius) I		
bubella(m) I palmas I		
thus I casium II		
botellum I		
casium molle(m) IV		
oleum VII		

And a translation:

## H15 CIL IV 5380

		On the <i>Ides</i>
7 days before the <i>Ides</i> , cheese 1	For Servatus	plain bread 2
bread 8	[unknown item]	oil 5
oil 3	oil 1 <i>denarius</i> , 8	porridge 3
wine 3	bread 4, cheese 4	whitebait 2
6 days before the <i>Ides</i>		
bread 8	leek 1, for a small plate 1	
olive 5	[two unknown items]	
onion 5		
cooking pot 1	2 days before the <i>Ides</i> , bread 2	
bread for slaves 2	bread for slaves 2	
wine 2		
5 days before the <i>Ides</i> , bread 8	1 day before the <i>Ides</i> , bread for slaves 2	
	plain bread 2	
bread for slaves 4	leek 1	
porridge 3		
4 days before the <i>Ides</i> , wine {unknown type} 1 <i>denarius</i>		
bread 8, wine 2, cheese 2		
3 days before the <i>Ides</i>		
{unintelligible}		
bread 2		
female? 8		
wheat 1 <i>denarius</i>		
beef? 1, dates 1		
incense 1, cheese 2		
small sausage 1		
soft cheese 4		
oil 7		

Translation, from Alison E. Cooley, M.G.L. Cooley, "Pompeii: A Sourcebook", chapter 8, "Commercial Life", p.163. Extract [here](#). Reprinted in their "Pompeii and Herculaneum" (2014) as H25, p.239. Online [here](#).

Note that the typo: it is not "bread for slaves" but "bread for a slave". It looks very much as if someone is getting their daily groceries here!

The numbers are presumably in asses, although one case it is 1 *denarius* (=16 asses) and 8 asses for olives.<sup>[1]</sup> The symbol for "denarius" appears against some items.

For those interested, there is a new reading of the text proposed in [this item](#), Caruso, Paola & Solin, Heikki, "Memorandum sumptuarium pompeianum : per una nuova lettura del graffito CIL IV 5380", in: *Vesuviana : an international journal of archaeological and historical studies on Pompeii and Herculaneum*, 8, 2016, pp.105-127. It's in Italian, but not for ordinary mortals to read, as the publishers demand \$40 for the privilege. I thought that

I should signal its existence, not least because the text of inscriptions is often less certain than it may appear when neatly printed in our journals and collected editions.

Juvenal ([Satire 5](#)) refers to the dinner guests given inferior bread to that placed before their host:

All your great houses are full of saucy slaves. See with what a grumble another of them has handed you a bit of hard bread that you can scarce break in two, or lumps of dough that have turned mouldy—stuff that will exercise your grinders and into which no tooth can gain admittance.

For Virro himself a delicate loaf is reserved, white as snow, and kneaded of the finest flour. Be sure to keep your hands off it: take no liberties with the bread-basket!

If you are presumptuous enough to take a piece, there will be someone to bid you put it down: “What, Sir Impudence? Will you please fill yourself from your proper tray, and learn the colour of your own bread?”

“What?” you ask, “was it for this that I would so often leave my wife’s side on a spring morning and hurry up the chilly Esquiline when the spring skies were rattling down the pitiless hail, and the rain was pouring in streams off my cloak? “

These, of course, were free men, the clients of a patron. Slave bread must have been even worse.

It’s an interesting light on ancient society.

1. <sup>[1]</sup>Melissa Bailey, “Roman Money and Numerical Practice”, *Revue belge de Philologie et d’Histoire*, 91, 2013, pp. 153-186. Online [here](#).↩
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