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Fava Beans: Europe

Fabas indultet famus – hunger sweetens the beans



The fava or broad bean is the biggest and brashiest of beans. Because it has no tendrils to grip onto other plants, it's a loner, supporting itself with a stout and hearty stem. Uniquely, its seed scar (hilum) or belly button is on the top narrow end rather than the side. It's also stubborn. When eaten fresh, the big fuzzy pods and tough seed coats of fava beans make it one of the most labor-intensive beans to process and it is perhaps no wonder that it was often fed to horses. When dried it can be one of the most recalcitrant of beans to cook. But favas are also eminently adaptable and one of the few that will tolerate a frost, so they can be grown in northern Europe. This adaptability to a wide range of climates allowed favas to proliferate not only in the arid Middle East and Africa but practically anywhere as either a winter or spring crop. Surprisingly, China grows most of the fava beans on earth, but in most places cultivation is scaling back in favor of soy, corn and other grain crops.

Although the plant was included among the early Fertile Crescent domesticates, the origin of *Vicia faba* is unknown and its wild ancestor is probably extinct. Its closest wild relatives *Vicia narbonensis* and *Vicia galilea* have a different number of chromosomes and cannot be crossed with fava beans which

suggests that neither of these is an ancestor. Like corn, the fava has been so thoroughly altered in domestication that the seed has no means of dispersing itself and depends on humans for propagation. That is, without cultivation the fava bean would cease to exist.

The oldest archaeological remains of favas were found in a site near Nazareth dated between 6500 and 6000 BCE, which contains a cache of some 2,600 well-preserved beans, evidence that they were being gathered and stored, but these are probably wild. Oddly, the archaeological record is otherwise silent and the next findings date from several thousand years later. Exactly when and where favas were domesticated remains a complete mystery, and they quite suddenly appear in Bronze Age sites in the third millennium BCE in places as far flung as Spain and Portugal, northern Italy and Switzerland, Greece and the Middle East. It has been suggested that favas may have been independently domesticated in Spain and around Israel, but most likely they spread from the Fertile Crescent in every direction, becoming the premier bean of the ancient world. When the word bean is used in European texts prior to 1492, it is almost always the fava.

Opinion is divided about the status of fava beans in ancient Egypt. Classical authors, most notably Herodotus, claimed that the Egyptians would not grow beans, nor could even look upon them. But this probably refers only to priests, who were said to avoid beans either because they were used in sacrifices (Rameses III offered 11,998 jars of shelled beans to the Nile God), or because this was seen as a means of conscious self-denial for priests. Pliny claimed that priests abstained from beans because they dull the senses and cause sleeplessness. There is no doubt though that ordinary people ate fava beans, and they are even found in some tombs, said to be as old as the 12th dynasty.

The fava bean remained a staple in Egypt through successive ruling dynasties, Persian, Greek, Roman and Muslim. The medieval *Kitab wasf al-At'ima al-Mur'ada* (Book of the Description of Familiar Food), compiled in Cairo in 1373, has many interesting recipes, some of which are specifically intended for the sick, monks or for Christians during Lent. That is, they contain no

meat. The maghmuma, for example, is a pot layered with onions, carrots, favas, eggplants all sprinkled with coriander and caraway and soaked with vinegar and murri (a kind of salty fermented barley-based sauce). This is then boiled, flavored with olive oil and sesame oil and eaten with flat bread. There are also simpler recipes, such as Tharida, beans with crumbled bread, spices, lemon, walnuts and yoghurt.

Egypt has remained steadfastly addicted to the fava bean and it is said that they still supply the principal source of protein for the poor. Ful medames is also considered the national dish of Egypt and it is claimed that it is recorded in ancient hieroglyphs. The word 'ful' apparently derives directly from the ancient language, and medames means 'buried' in Coptic, probably referring to the original method of cooking, slowly over hot embers under ground. Coptic is the language spoken by early Christians in Egypt and the only surviving link to the ancient language. Ful medames is eaten for breakfast with flat bread; it is essentially just slowly cooked fava beans with garlic, olive oil, lemon and cumin and sometimes parsley. The beans can be whole or mashed or served with chopped hard-boiled eggs. Eating this dish is not only very traditional, stretching back literally thousands of years, but it also seems to be a conscious act of nationalism. Ful medames is an expression of identity for modern Egyptians who choose to resist the onslaught of contemporary breakfast foods; it is a way to remember who they are.

A dish cooked like this, slowly in a pit, is also mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud. It is usually called hamin or, by modern-day Ashkenazi Jews, cholent. It is specifically designed to be food for the Sabbath. Since no work is to be done on the day of rest, nor fires lit, something had to be devised that could cook slowly for hours before sunset on Friday. The next day the pot could be opened and a meal served without labor. Today cholent is made with New World phaseolus beans, meat and barley, and must certainly vie for one of the most filling and satisfying of dishes ever created. Heinrich Heine, the nineteenth-century German poet, called it divine: "This Cholent is the very Food of heaven, which on Sinai, God Himself instructed Moses In the secret of preparing."

The original would of course have been made with favas and was probably something closer to *ful medames*. The dish traveled everywhere the Jews did, to Iraq in the east, northern Africa and westward to Spain where it was called *adafina* and made with chickpeas. This Hebrew word means “to press to the wall,” apparently referring to how the oven is sealed with wet clay to keep in the heat. We will return to this topic in the context of medieval Spain and how cooking chickpeas was a sure way to identify secret Jewish observance, but for the moment, the Talmud or *mishna* mentions *hamin* a few times particularly in the context of what kinds of fuel are allowed. For some reason, perhaps the obvious, dung and peat are not allowed. But wool and feathers are, though it is hard to imagine that these smelled any better smoldering. Inclusion of eggs is also something discussed in the Talmud; whole eggs in the shell would be thrown in and left to cook for hours until brown and indescribably fragrant. There is still a dish among Sephardic Jews called *huevos haminados*, which involves cooking the eggs alone for hours, sometimes with onion skins, until brown and smoky.

Returning to ancient times, we should not forget the central importance of beans to the Israelites. When David is in the wilderness during the rebellion of his brother Absalom, the foods brought to him were wheat and barley, meal and parched grain, beans and lentils, honey and curds, sheep and fat cattle (II Samuel 17: 28). These were precisely the staples of Fertile Crescent agriculture.

These were also by this time the staples in ancient Greece. Homer is usually more forthcoming about roasted oxen and food appropriate for warrior heroes, but he does let a bean slip in, naturally in describing warfare: “On a threshing floor one sees how dark-skinned beans or chickpeas leap from a broad shovel under a sharp wind at the toss of the winnower: just so from shining Meneláos’ cuirass now the bitter arrow bounced up and away.” Homer would certainly not have used this simile unless every reader, or listener, understood precisely the process of winnowing beans.

Perhaps more ink has been spilled over the question of the Pythagorean ban on beans than any other ancient food question. This is partly because no

writings by Pythagoras survive, his famous theorem notwithstanding, and it was left to followers and detractors to figure out his motives. The interest in his diet also stems from his alleged vegetarianism, in fact the word *Pythagorean* meant vegetarian; the latter term was not coined until the nineteenth century. The typical explanation for his avoiding meat, recounted by Diogenes of Laertius, Porphyry, Iamblicus (authors writing about 800 years after Pythagoras) and also Plutarch, was the idea of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, an idea he picked up either in his sojourn in Egypt, Persia or even, some claim, in India – the other ancient culture espousing reincarnation. Pythagoras and Buddha were near contemporaries. So the logic goes – if one can be reincarnated as a cow, for example, you might just be eating Aunt Tillie when you chomp down on that steak. One account even has Pythagoras recognize an old friend reincarnated as a puppy.

Pythagoras, who hailed from the Greek island of Samos, was born about 570 BCE, and dissatisfied with the tyrannical rule of Polycrates he left on his travels through the ancient world, eventually settling to found a kind of counter-culture commune in Croton, part of Magna Graeca, modern southern Italy. Reputedly about 300 men flocked to his side. There they practiced their mysteries, speculated on the universal truth of numbers (hence the connection to geometry), strummed their guitars (the octave divisions of a string reflect the cosmic music of the spheres) and ate vegetables, honey, bread and, if Porphyry is to be believed, fish (once in a blue moon). This vegetarianism stemmed not so much from concern for animal welfare, but from the rejection of violence in general, especially of the sort officially sanctioned by the Greek state – public animal sacrifices (more or less state-sponsored barbecues) and of course warfare. The comparison to twentieth-century hippie communes is not too far-fetched.

But whence the cryptic injunction to abstain from beans? Normally, as in India, beans are a mainstay of the vegetarian diet. Among the Pythagoreans the ban was so strict that even crossing through a bean field in flower was forbidden, and in one account this is how Pythagoras met his death when pursued

by enemies – he refused to escape through a bean field and was captured. In Iamblicus' version it is his followers who are chased to the edge of the field and slain, down to the last, a pregnant woman, Timycha, who bites off her tongue and spits it out rather than reveal the secret of the prohibition. The simplest, and perhaps most plausible explanation is that beans are part of the whole cycle of reincarnation and they house human souls. To eat a bean is thus a form of murder. This was Varro's explanation. An Orphic fragment puts it like this: eating beans and gnawing on the heads of one's parents are one and the same.

Other explanations range from the equally sublime to the ridiculous. One often reads that Pythagoras really meant that his followers should stay away from politics, since beans were used to cast votes. A white bean meant yea, a black bean, nay. Thus he wasn't really saying anything about eating beans. Actually the comment, so some modern scholars claim, was a little more directly a rejection of democracy. Since the Pythagoreans favored oligarchy – the rule of the few and "best" put in office by appointment – they were rejecting the system of democratic elections.

A more down to earth, if simple, solution is that Pythagoras was concerned with pure mystical thought and as everyone knows grumbings of the belly and flatulence are incompatible with philosophizing. Among Aristotle's list of reasons, from a now lost tract, is "because they are injurious" perhaps meaning damaging to health and clear rational thoughts. In ancient medical theory a sound mind could only exist in a healthy body, free of physical perturbations like gas. Others contend that this was an injunction against gluttony and gourmandizing, beans being so delicious that they tempted the followers to over-indulge. We will not take issue with this supposition, but then Pythagoras might just as well have banned any number of other delicious foods.

Equally plausible is the notion that beans somehow resemble the female sexual apparatus, when viewed from the side, with just a little imagination. When roasted (a common way of preparing favas to this day in Greece) they not only become crunchy, but also split open and the similarity to vaginal lips becomes a little less ridiculous. Thus they were seen as a symbol of creation,

perhaps again a bearer of souls, a portal for life. There are references to a magical trick performed by Pythagoras, as told by Porphyry, that he planted some beans in a pot and after ninety days they looked like a vagina. In another version they turn into a human head – presumably a soul caught in transit and only partially reincarnated.

Aristotle also picks up this thread when he explains that beans are like testicles, but adds that they are like the gates of Hades in being the only plant that has no joints. That is, bean stems are hollow and have no nodes and thus serve as a kind of elevator shaft from the underworld, the means of exchange for souls. Actually they are specifically compared to a "ladder" and this makes sense if one has ever seen fava bean pods protruding horizontally from the plant; they do resemble a ladder. This would explain the reluctance to run through a bean field and trample the stems, as well as the ban on picking the pods or rungs of the ladder. In short order Aristotle also claimed that the beans were avoided because they are like the form of the universe – perhaps again a veiled reference to their regenerative power. Even odder is the idea that a nibbled bean left in the sun will smell like semen or the blood of a murdered person – which must smell different from ordinary blood. In any case, all these notions point to the idea that beans are some transitional form of human in the great transmigration of souls.

There is a certain logic to all these assertions. The very word for bean in Greek is *kyamos*, which may be related to the verb *kyein* meaning to swell out. That would make sense if referring to flatulence, but the bean pod itself also swells out much like a pregnant woman's belly. The Germanic word *Bohne* (related to our bean) may derive from *bhouna* – "that which swells out." The word fava too may descend from *bhabha* – again meaning swelling rotundity. It seems as if in most Indo-European languages the bean is connected with the idea of pregnancy and regeneration. The bean was thus a potent symbol of fertility and there was even worship of a bean god in Attica called Cyamites, who had some connection to the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries. His shrine was found on the road from Athens to Eleusis.

If the bean was a living symbol of regenerative power, it would also explain why ancient authors claim that they serve as an aphrodisiac, and it would also explain why priests would abstain from beans, not wanting to be distracted by sexual potency. Strangely, this too is connected to flatulence. *Pneuma*, meaning air, breath or soul, or in Latin *anima* (as in animal, animate), was the basic principle of life and it is generated in the stomach in the form of gas just as it is transferred in the act of reproduction. This also explains the bizarre association among authors like Pliny of flatulence with the libido. In other words, eating beans not only makes you fart, it helps you conceive. The bean actually contains the regenerative force. So depending on your lifestyle, you might want to absorb the power of the souls in transit, or like the Pythagoreans, avoid them so as to live a non-violent life.

There is yet another, quite recent explanation provided by modern science and anthropology. There is an inherited deficiency among some people of Mediterranean origin called favism. These people are lacking the enzyme glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) in their red blood cells. Eating a fresh raw fava bean causes sudden destruction of red blood cells or acute hemolytic anemia, and so can breathing in the pollen – which again explains not running through a bean field. In either case it can cause weakness, fatigue, jaundice and can even be fatal. The disease is extremely rare, and mostly affects young boys, but nonetheless is not unheard of in southern Italy, precisely where Pythagoras set up his commune. Unfortunately there are sparse contemporary descriptions of this disease among ancient physicians. The disorder is also so rare that it seems highly unlikely that an odd case, even if Pythagoras had witnessed it himself, could have led to this overarching prohibition. By this logic Pythagoras would have made a list of many potentially poisonous foods, and clearly that's not what the ban on meat attempts to accomplish.

The Pythagorean concept of beans as the means of transit for souls may have yet another simple explanation. Ancient commentators do not mention this, but something very strange and wonderful takes place in the nodules that form on legume roots. When infected by rhizobium bacteria (*rhizo* means root,

bio, life), little anaerobic chambers are formed on the roots. Here the bacteria thrive in a symbiotic relationship with the plant. The plant gets ammonium nitrate from the bacteria, which it alone can wrest from the atmosphere, and a protein created by both scavenges oxygen from the node so that the bacteria can survive. This protein is called leghemoglobin and functions much the same way hemoglobin does in our blood, binding oxygen with iron for our bodies to use in cellular respiration. Moreover, when cut, the nodes are red, exactly like blood. Observation of this might very easily have led Pythagoras to conclude that the same life force was at work in beans and humans, and he would be quite right. In another sense, the nitrogen which supports life is reincarnated, if we consider the soul something chemical rather than mystical and immaterial. That is, the nitrogen does get recycled from the bacteria and the bean to the creature that eats them to the person that eats the animal, and so on and so forth. Though why Pythagoras would have wanted to break this chain of causation remains a mystery, but it does indeed resemble Buddhist ideas, where some claimed Pythagoras got them.

We will probably never know exactly why Pythagoras banned beans, but the prohibition is found elsewhere in the ancient world and the idea that beans contain souls seems the most plausible explanation. This is not to discount, however, the overwhelming social prejudice against fava beans in the ancient world. As a food of the poor, all cosmic considerations aside, to eat fava beans was to become like the poor. Anyone who could afford to do otherwise ate meat. Athenaeus cites a dialogue by one Alexis in which a woman complains about her poverty and her three children. "Sounds of wailing untuneful we utter when we have nothing, and our complexions grow pale with lack of food." Dinner, when they can get it, consists of a bean, a lupine, greens, a turnip, pulse, vetch and handful of other oddments including cicada.

Other Greeks also spurned beans, which were sometimes eaten as an after-dinner snack. Arcestratus, the gourmet from Gela in Greek Sicily writing about 330 BCE, whose works survive in fragments in Athenaeus, offers vivid suggestions about various topics such as where to find the best fish and various

bread, for which he recommended sources across the Mediterranean. Normally he prefers food simply seasoned and fresh, but in one fragment discussing these after-dinner desserts he approves of boiled sow's womb in cumin, sharp vinegar and silphium sauce, and roasted birds. But "All those other tragemata are a sign of wretched poverty, boiled chickpeas, broad beans, apples and dried figs." These lowly foods are comparable to living beneath the earth and the bottomless pit of Tartarus.

Among the Romans, beans were also considered lowly fare, though this was not always a negative association. Columella, the agricultural expert, mentions that artisans eat beans. Pliny and Horace claimed that peasant farmers live on beans and Martial mentioned that builders eat them. In his epigram V, 78 in which he invites a friend to a meager repast, he admits that he can't afford fine luxuries or gyrating flute girls, but he can offer leeks, some boiled eggs, cabbage and pale favas with pink lardo (a kind of cured pork fat). Thus even in this self-deprecating poem, the food that most clearly expresses his noble poverty is beans, not just favas, but hot chickpeas and tepid lupins – "it's a paltry meal, who can deny?" One can live nobly on such wretched foods, and better than with luxuries when you have to suck up to some wealthy patron.

In very much the same vein Juvenal's Satire XI contrasts the wildly extravagant and expensive feasts common in Imperial Rome with a simple homegrown repast. He exclaims "You will find out today, my good friend Persicus, whether I live up, in my life, to all my beautiful maxims; Whether I recommend beans, but live on *paté de foie gras*, Whether I mean *petit fours* when I send my boy out for polenta." The meal he proposes is simple but good honest food: tender young kid, mountain asparagus, fresh eggs and local fruits. Again, beans are associated with rustic simplicity, but here seen as authentic food that tastes good to unjaded palates. Rich men, he thought, have no real pleasure in dining when all they eat is pheasants and flamingoes flavored with a perverse array of seasonings. In days gone by Romans were satisfied with hearty simple foods like beans.

Thus rather than completely negative associations with poverty, beans were seen as a traditional and simple food. Fava beans also played a part in

Roman religious festivals. The bean harvest in central Italy was normally at the end of May so June 1 was celebrated as *Calendae Fabariae* and the new beans were used in sacred rites. Bean meal or *lomentum* was also baked into cakes and used as an offering. There was also a ritual of bean tossing to placate wandering spirits called the Feast of the Lemures or Lemuria in mid May. In it the father of the household goes out barefoot at midnight and tosses beans over his shoulder saying nine times "shades of my ancestors, depart" while banging on pots. The beans and the souls they contain are meant to substitute for the family members whom the ghosts might snatch, or the ghosts consume the spirits contained in the beans and are sated. Remarkably this festival was later converted to All Saint's Day in the seventh century, originally May 13 and only later moved to coincide with the Celtic holiday, which we celebrate as Halloween (All Hallows Evening), a pale shadow of its original role as an exorcism of angry ghosts.

Fava beans also lent their name to one of the most respected patrician clans of ancient Rome, the Fabius family. When you hear the modern name Fabio, as in the male supermodel on the cover of romance novels, consider that his name means bean. The Fabii served as consuls, and were war heroes – Fabius Maximus fighting against Hannibal. But why would an ancient noble family take the name of the lowly bean? They were certainly not friends of the common rabble. The association seems to be more with the ancient staple crops and Roman piety. Romans liked to think of themselves as tough farmers, despite their wealth and power. In other words, this name was a kind of marketing ploy, such as might be used by the descendent of a founding father, to recall the original roots of Roman society. There was also a pea family and a chickpea family whose most famous member was the lawyer and statesman Cicero.

That wealthy Romans ate fava beans is also strongly suggested by the few recipes that have survived in the manuscript attributed to Apicius. Although the preparations are hardly simple, they show that even in the most extravagant of cookbooks, beans had their place. What is strange is that two pea/bean recipes are named for Vitellius, who was notorious as one of the greatest gluttons of the

ancient world, right up there with Heliogabalus and of course Apicius himself. Vitellius was known to snatch offerings off the altar during services. It may be that the compiler of the cookbook merely attached names of famous gourmands to the recipes. In any case this gives some idea of how beans were eaten by the rich, a strange twist on mushy peas or bean dip.

Peas or Fava Beans Vitellius

Cook peas and mash. Crush pepper, lovage, ginger and over the condiments hard boiled egg yolks, three ounces of honey, garum, wine and vinegar. All this put into a pot and with the crushed condiments, add in oil and boil. Season the peas and mash so they are smooth, add honey and serve.

There is also a version that uses unmashed beans or peas, leeks, coriander, herbs and spices. Although the main ingredient is fairly simple, the treatment and in particular the contrast of flavors, the interplay of spice and sweetness, herbs, fish sauce and sour vinegar makes this a good example of elite taste in ancient Rome.

The Roman association of beans with rustic simplicity and piety disappeared with the fall of their empire. In general, agriculture and the neat, controlled rows of grain, vineyards and olive groves – the Mediterranean diet – gave way to a wilder means of subsistence. The Germanic tribes, Visigoths and Ostrogoths, Vandals who came armed with spray-paint cans, and eventually the Franks, neglected the rigorously ordered latifundia, or huge slave-operated estates, and drew more heavily from the forests and from cattle. They let pigs run wild in the woods, and ate meat and dairy products from their herds and above all hunted game and wildfowl. This is an oversimplified picture of the dietary changes, but it is true that cultivated land shrank in the early Middle Ages, just as the population had. The great Roman trade networks also collapsed, forcing the population to consume locally grown produce. It is for this reason that Charlemagne in his famous *Capitulaires* had to order farmers throughout his empire to plant various crops (including chickpeas and beans) so that his armies could have food ready and waiting when they passed through.

During these years the meaning of beans in Europe also changed, primarily under the influence of Christianity. Although in the early years there was no consistent rule about when people should fast, by the time of the Council of Nicea in 325, a period of forty days or *Quadragesima*, preceding Easter, was set aside for prayer and self-denial. The Anglo-Saxon word for this period, *Lent*, merely means springtime. Although there were various interpretations of what exactly constituted a fast, it came to mean complete abstinence from all meat and related products such as eggs and dairy. Fridays were also designated fast days, and hence the persistence of the custom of eating fish on Fridays among Catholics. Fish, in particular stockfish – a virtually indestructible form of dried cod – along with pickled herring became the quintessential food for Lent, especially for those far from the coast. Wealthy Christians could afford more expensive fresh fish, extravagant species such as sturgeon and salmon, and even sea-mammals like whale and dolphin, and, after papal approval, other forms of sea-creature such as puffin, beaver's tail and barnacle geese, which were said to be hatched from actual barnacles. All these foods made Lent less than a hardship for the less-than-devout and affluent medieval diner and individuals, and even whole towns could purchase dispensations from these rules.

For the impoverished, Lent was a more difficult time. The fall harvest's bounty had been consumed through the winter, and spring's crops were barely pushing through the soil. Then suddenly any remaining meat in the household, usually preserved in the form of hams and sausages, had to be consumed, in a festival which came to be called carnival. The word seems to have some connection to *carne* or meat. It was a holiday in which the world was turned upside down, villagers got to mock their superiors while masked, mock weddings and trials were held and everyone for this one Tuesday – Fat Tuesday or Mardi Gras – ran amuck. This mayhem was tolerated only because the regular order of society was restored and indeed strengthened for the rest of the year, carnival serving as a kind of safety valve.

Immediately after the feast, the austere period of Lent began. What was left to eat, especially for the poor peasant and townsmen? There was stockfish if you

could afford it, but more than any other food there were beans – cheap, filling and nutritious. Through the Middle Ages and into the early modern era, the most persistent association with beans was not only Lenten austerity, but poverty. One need only recall the story of Jack and the Bean Stalk. The destitute family, once surviving, is under duress forced to sell the family cow. Simple-minded Jack trades it for “magic” beans, which everyone knew was a really bad deal. The cow would have provided milk as long as it was fed, the beans only one measly meal – unless they were planted. But they turn out to really be magical after all: the prodigious bean stalk soars into the clouds and Jack climbs up to find the giant, riches, a goose that lays golden eggs, a singing harp and so forth. The end of the story is a peasant’s dream come true: the family becomes wealthy, small triumphs over big, poor over rich. One can easily imagine why this story would have appealed to your average peasant. Such things never happened in real life. But the story also has a hidden moral that has been lost over time and with the watering down of the fable into a children’s story. Beans, although seemingly of little worth, are indeed magical. They contain the regenerative force of life, and can maintain human life, but only if they are carefully saved and planted. You may not get a bean stalk like Jack’s, but with hard work beans can save the poor.

The association of beans with poverty might be considered negative, but not if your whole aim in life was consciously dedicated to personal poverty, as it was among ascetics. Among the early monastic groups meat was regarded as an unnecessary luxury, a food that would distract the devout from their contemplation because it heats the body, creating an excess or plethora of blood and flesh, and the remaining nutrients are converted to sperm, which activates the libido, something to be avoided at all cost among the celibate. St. Benedict of Nursia in his Rule, the founding document of Western monasticism, details a kind of measured moderation, which nonetheless specifies that except for the very weak, no one should be given meat at any time. Among later groups, the Carthusians in particular were strict vegetarians. Beans necessarily became a staple in such diets. That is not to say that all monks actually practiced austerity, in fact quite the opposite, and it appears that since many of them were drawn

from the aristocratic class, they grew rich with pious benefactions, owned extensive land and ate extremely well, which is precisely why new monastic orders were continually founded, reemphasizing their poverty. St. Francis of Assisi is perhaps the best example of someone in conscious imitation of Jesus, who gave up all his personal possessions, traveled around begging, and lived without any worry about tomorrow. It is even said that for this reason, taking the biblical text literally, his followers would not soak their beans the night before as was customary, but only on the day they were to be consumed. Nor would they accept more alms than could support them for a day.

Fava beans, despite the association with poverty, became one of the mainstays of the medieval diet along with various other legumes such as vetches, peas and what was called phaseolus, which at the time referred obviously not to the New World species but to something in the Vicia family, probably black-eyed peas from Africa. There are some very simple reasons why this was the case. After about the year 1000 the European population began to grow dramatically. In 300 years it nearly doubled from 38 to 74 million. This caused the expansion of agriculture, moving onto less fertile lands, up hillsides and even reclaiming land from swamps and from the sea as in the Netherlands. The impetus was quite simply warmer weather. We are understandably concerned about global warming today, but severe fluctuations in climate have occurred throughout the history of our planet – though now admittedly we are causing it. In the Middle Ages warmer weather meant greater productivity of the soil and a longer growing season. Apparently, wine grapes were grown by Cistercian monks in northern England, as they are, frighteningly, again today. The surplus in food meant greater security and less frequent famine despite regular crop failures. A more consistent diet also meant greater human fertility, or to put it another way, as a general rule more food always equals more people. Compounded with agricultural innovations such as the mold-board plough which could cut through heavy soils, the horse collar which allowed horses to be harnessed to ploughs without strangling them, as well as iron horseshoes, Europe witnessed a kind of agricultural revolution.

The development of crop rotation systems is also central to this story. Normally soil is depleted of nutrients if the same crop, say wheat, is grown year after year. In order to restore fertility the soil must be allowed to rest or go fallow for a season. In any given year, perhaps a third of the arable land would be left out of cultivation. Step in the legume. Rather than left fallow, legumes could be grown, whose roots host the aforementioned rhizobia which draw nitrogen from the atmosphere and “fix” it in the soil. The soil thus becomes ready for another crop immediately thereafter. The legumes, normally something like alfalfa, could be fed to cattle, which in turn provide manure which further enriches the soil; or beans can be grown and fed directly to humans. Apparently the ancient Romans understood this system, but it was only with the recovery of classical agronomic texts that the system was explained to medieval Europeans in books like Pier de’ Crescenzi’s book on agriculture. Renowned author Umberto Eco goes so far as to speculate that it was beans that “saved civilization.” “When in the 10th century, the cultivation of beans began to spread, it had a profound effect on Europe. Working people were able to eat more protein; as a result, they became more robust, lived longer, created more children and repopulated a continent.” That is, the greatness of medieval civilization, magnificent gothic churches, universities, thriving commerce and industry all depended on the lowly bean.

This may be stretching it a little, but agricultural historians do agree that there was a shift from land-intensive agriculture of grains combined with cattle rearing, to more labor-intensive farming, specifically of legumes. This makes perfect sense if the growing population puts a pressure on land and there is a greater demand for food. Although grains were still the staple and were grown on large estates, and hence show up more regularly in account books, legumes would have been found in small gardens for private use, feeding the poor who could no longer afford meat. Meat was reserved for those enjoying the fruits of medieval civilization.

Not surprisingly, included in this efflorescence of culture and the arts were cookbooks, intended of course mostly for wealthier households since they incorporate spices and other expensive ingredients. One may infer from the

relative paucity of bean recipes that they were not considered among the more elegant dishes that might be served. The oldest surviving medieval cookbook, the *Libellus de arte coquinaria* of the thirteenth century, contains no recipes featuring beans, but then neither does it include any vegetable dishes, not because these were never eaten, but because they were normally prepared simply and required no recipe. The only reference to beans here is in a recipe for chicken with bacon which in one version instructs that the bacon be diced the size of fava beans. Clearly, cooks were familiar with them, but it seems unlikely that elegant diners would have been impressed with a fava bean recipe. The *Viandier* attributed to Taillevent, the nickname of Guillaume Tirel, chef to King Charles V of France, is comparably silent, though it does mention a series of “*menuz potaiges*” or little pottages – not meaning small in size but in estimation. These include soups of beet greens, cabbage, turnips, leeks, all familiar to poor households, as well as “*feves frasees*” or favas mashed, sieved or whole in the shell. No recipe for these is offered because “women are experts with these and anyone knows how to do them.” That is, these are common lowly foods such as would be prepared by women in modest households, while for aristocratic kitchens run by men, these are beneath their dignity.

We do have a record of the kinds of foods that would be served in ordinary households though, principally the *Ménagier de Paris*, which is an advice book written by an elderly professional for his 15-year-old bride. It seems that this man wanted to make sure that after his death his young widow would be competent enough to cook and run a house so she could attract a suitable man to remarry. Here are fava recipes of precisely the kind Taillevent denigrated. The author is instructing his wife with the absolute basics. For example, he says that old favas must be soaked the night before, then the water thrown away. The favas are cooked in fresh water and then pureed. All this is to remove the strong flavor. To this is added either broth of meat and bacon or during Lent plain water and oil or onion broth. He also includes the *feves frasees* made of whole favas for Easter, the same mentioned by Taillevent. These are cooked in the pod, scraped out with a spoon and then recooked until they split and then served in

meat or fish broth, fried onions and garnished with fresh bean leaves wilted in hot water. There are also directions for dealing with fresh beans, all quite simple and homely. Here is some evidence of beans being eaten in urban households.

Another fascinating record of some of the class and ethnic associations of food is found in the fifteenth-century *Registrum de coquina* of Jean of Bockenheim. For each recipe, the author, a German cleric in Rome, lists to whom the recipe should be served. We find recipes for nobles and peasants, Germans and Englishmen, priests and whores. His recipe for fava bean soup is worth quoting in full:

Thus make minestra of favas. Take and clean these well in warm water and let them soak for a night. Then boil in fresh water and chop them well and add white wine, and add above them onions with olive oil or butter, with a little saffron. And it will be good for Lollards and pilgrims.

Here the association is not specifically with poverty, though pilgrims en route to a holy site could be poor, but rather with religious austerity and for some odd reason with heresy. The Lollards were followers of John Wyclif, a medieval precursor to Martin Luther who advocated a vernacular liturgy and Bible and doctrines that would later be espoused by Protestants, such as the emphasis on faith rather than works. They were vigorously persecuted in the early fifteenth century, though not necessarily poor. Some of their leaders were nobles. Why Bockenheim thinks fava bean soup would be good for religious fanatics may have something to do with religious purity – eating simple common foods for cleansing of the soul through suffering. This is one of the simplest and cheapest of recipes; the others like it, turnips for example, are offered to rustics.

The English cookbooks of this era also contain bean recipes. Some are similar to the purees mentioned above, but they are also souped-up, so to speak, with expensive ingredients, more fitting for noble households. For example, the *Curie on Inglysch* (Cooking in English) has a pottage of “wite benes” seethed in water, pounded finely in a mortar, boiled with almond milk, wine and honey, and then garnished with raisins soaked in wine. The lowly bean is thus ennobled

with expensive imported ingredients. Even more interesting is this recipe from the *Forme of Cury* for fried beans, here left in its original language. The symbol þ is a thorn standing for *th*. To seethe means to boil and the powder douce is a spice and sugar mixture.

Benes yfryed. Take benes and seep hem almost til þey bersten. Take and wryng out þe water clene. Do þereto oynouns ysode and ymynced, and garlic þerwith; frye hem in oile oper in grece, & do þereto powdour douce, & serue it forth.

The Catalan *Libre de Sent Sovi* of the early fourteenth century includes a similar recipe: tender favas with almond milk. The beans are cooked first in water and then steeped in almond milk, a favorite ingredient in medieval cookery, especially for Lent. It was made by grinding and soaking almonds and then straining off the thick milky liquid. To this is added parsley, alfãbegua (basil), moradux (marjoram) and other good spices, ginger and verjuice, the juice squeezed from green unripe grapes.

Roughly contemporaneous is the Latin *Tractatus de modo preparandi et condiendi omnia cibaria* (Tract on the way to prepare and cook every food), probably written in France. In the introduction to ingredients the author states that the book will include food for nobles and the wealthy, such as partridge and pheasant, chicken capon and so forth, but also “whatever is truly fitting for robust men who live by laboring, such as beef and mutton, salted pork, deer, peas, fava beans, and bread made of barley mixed with wheat.” The logic is that lighter and whiter foods are more appropriate for those with delicate digestive systems and only robust workers have enough digestive heat to break down tough or crass foods like mutton or beans. This idea is standard in the medical literature. But it is also a scarcely veiled class-based prejudice. The cheaper forms of protein are for the lower classes, and delicate and expensive fowl only for the rich.

Nonetheless true to his word, there are fava bean recipes, both for fresh and green beans, cooked with almond milk, pepper, ginger, saffron, cumin and cinnamon as well as for “hard and old” beans. These get a quick boil, a soaking

over night, and are cooked in fresh water until they split. Then they are pounded and seasoned either with butter, meat broth or bacon. There is also a recipe for skinned favas, dried without the seed coat. These too are cooked and pounded into a smooth paste and flavored with fried onions, finely chopped bacon or saffron. We should perhaps take the author on his word, that these are typical dishes of the working classes.

Also of the fourteenth century is the *Liber de coquina*, most likely of Italian origin since the author specifies all the countries where his recipes come from, except Italy. Here there are seven distinct fava recipes plus others for chickpeas, lentils and “fasseolis.” Most interesting are fava flowers, simmered with fresh pork, and thickened with beaten eggs and spices into which the pounded meat is then returned. Or they can be cooked with bread and almond milk, presumably a version for Lent, during which one might easily find beans in flower. The other fava recipes are similar to those mentioned above, though there is one option that includes fatty fish served with a dried bean pottage.

As might be expected, southern European cookbooks offer more recipes for favas and with a greater variety of preparations. Here the social stigma against beans may not have been as strong as in the north, but there may also be socio-economic reasons for the proliferation of bean recipes. Strangely the willingness to eat beans may have had something to do with the plague. In 1348 the bubonic plague hit Europe with a terrible ferocity. The bacillus *Yersinia pestis* arrived in the bodies of fleas from the steppes of Central Asia. There it survived by being transferred from fleas to rats. Apparently the infected flea chokes up and goes on a kind of feeding frenzy and is willing to bite anyone, including humans. The humans in question were Mongols who had recently conquered Baghdad, which in turn was also connected to Europe via revitalized trade routes for spices and other luxuries. It's a stiff price to pay for spices, but the rats followed the caravan routes, and the fleas and the bacteria hitched a ride all the way to Europe. Once infected with the bubonic form (there were probably also worse pneumonic and septicemic versions), grotesque black swellings appear in the

armpits and groin with a red “ring around the rosy” — the so-called boo-boos. The victim usually died within a few days. Estimates for the death toll state that about one-third of the entire population of Europe perished. That's around 35 million people.

Obviously at first this wrought havoc on the European economy, totally dislocating business and agriculture. But perversely enough, if you were lucky enough to survive, it usually meant that you inherited your relatives' wealth, and in general there were more opportunities to thrive. With a greater demand for labor, wages rose, the price of land plummeted and life for the average peasant vastly improved. Landlords were desperate to keep their tenants so they often offered excellent bargains — low fixed rents. What has this to do with beans? With this added wealth, a greater proportion of the average household income could be spent on meat. Food historians often call the latter fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the golden age of meat. The diets of the rich and poor became less differentiated. The average person might even be able to afford some pepper and other spices. No longer relying heavily on beans as a source of protein — as the rule goes, once you can afford not to eat beans, you don't — they are less associated with poverty. There is no longer the powerful stigma against bean eating because fewer people are forced to do so to survive. Therefore, there is less danger of being considered a peasant by eating beans. That is, one can do so for the sake of pleasure without risk of social degradation. One might also add that this fear of debasement could never have been so strong among the very wealthy; there was no possible way one could be confused with a peasant. But among the middling sorts this danger was very real, until of course the peasants were eating meat regularly.

This is mere conjecture, but this period witnesses a real plethora of bean recipes, mostly quite inventive. The fifteenth-century Venetian anonymous cookbook known, appropriately, as *Anonimo Veneziano*, not only includes beans but also distinguishes between favas and faxolli (again probably black-eyed peas). A Fresh Fava Tart of King Manfred is particularly interesting.

Take the favas and clean, then cook in good milk, then drain. Take cooked pork belly and pound it with a knife, and then put the favas and the meat together. Take sweet and strong spices and saffron and place in a basin and add in good fresh cheese and make the dough. Then make the tart and add in this mixture into the crust and put in the middle and above slices of sweet rich cheese.

Another novel recipe from this period is found in the Anonimo Toscano cookbook which instructs to take dried fava beans boiled quickly and then drained, then boiled again in fresh water, being careful not to let them burn. This appears to be the quick method without overnight soaking. These are made into a thick soup with oil and fried onions, or with pepper, saffron, honey and sugar. Furthermore, "With these favas you can serve tench or other fish. And know that with the aforementioned, you can make mortadella." The author is suggesting a kind of bean- and fish-based sausage, probably as a meat substitute for Lent. This is one of the most fascinating culinary inventions of this era.

As with this anonymous author, Rupert of Nola, writing in Catalan for the Aragonese court ruling in Naples, also has a dish entitled Royal Fava Beans. They are essentially boiled in almond milk or goat's milk and flavored with sugar, cinnamon and rosewater – a typical flavor combination. The recipe is really a vehicle for explaining how to get the acrid flavor out of a pot that has accidentally burned – something that must have occurred often enough in busy kitchens for Rupert to give precise instructions. Anyway, all these are ample evidence that noble and wealthy households were interested in bean recipes in the fifteenth century. Rather than being served simply, they posed a challenge to the cook who sought to discover new and exciting ways to serve them.

There is no other way to explain the remarkable and labor-intensive recipe offered by Martino of Como in the mid-fifteenth century for Stuffed Fava Beans. The dried beans are soaked and then the skin on each is carefully removed without breaking. Then almonds are crushed with rosewater and sugar and the marzipan-like mixture is stuffed back into the skins and heated gently. These mock-beans are then served in meat broth with chopped parsley and fried

onions. One can easily imagine Martino's patron being offered what seems to be a fairly common dish only to be surprised and delighted by the trick. Although not really a bean dish, it gives a good impression of the kinds of marvels enjoyed in late medieval Italy. There are actual bean recipes here as well. One mixes the crushed beans with onions, sage and finely chopped figs or apples. This mixture can also be fried in oil into a kind of frittata or bean cake, covered with fine spices.

What is perhaps strangest about these recipes is that they first appeared in print around 1470, translated into Latin in *De honesta voluptate* by Bartolomeo Sacchi, known as Platina. Strange because Platina borrowed these recipes from Martino, whom he claims as a friend, and yet juxtaposes them with his own odd mixture of classical references and medical advice. So just a few pages before these recipes we are told that, "The power of favas is cold. When fresh they tend to moistness and so harm the stomach; dried are even worse. In whatever manner eaten, they cause bad insomnia. It is believed that sprinkled with aromatics they harm less." This was not schizophrenia on the part of Platina, but reflects the contrary advice that would have been given to any diner when faced with a plate of beans. Yes, they are a lowly food, but prepared in elegant ways they can be quite interesting, says the gourmand. The physician on the other hand warns about the dangers of flatulence, disturbed digestion and bad dreams. Like today, people were assailed with a barrage of conflicting ideas about food, and beans in particular are prone to mixed messages, partly because of their social connotations but also because of the medical tradition which denounced beans.

This tradition goes all the way back to the ancient Greek and Arab medical authorities. A few key passages in Galen were picked up and amplified by later authors. First, gladiators eat fava beans, but it makes them flabby with spongy flesh rather than solid. Beans cause flatulence, even if cooked for a long time – and that this flatulence occurs in the whole body, particularly when one isn't accustomed to eating beans or if they're badly cooked. This idea is not quite as silly as it sounds, considering that the ancients believed that any default in

concoction in the stomach (the first stage of digestion) was later passed on through the liver into the bloodstream and then incorporated into the flesh, and even brain, hence the bad dreams. This is also why it makes the flesh spongy and soft, we literally inflate a little. Bean soup causes gas, but whole cooked beans are even worse. Roasting mitigates this, but then they become indigestible. All Galen can counsel is that hot foods and those that tend to thin, meaning those that speed digestion by cutting through the crass substance of the bean, serve as correctives. This would in part explain the combination with onions and spices.

These ideas persisted through the centuries, obviously supported by people's own experience of eating beans. Benedict of Nursia, a physician contemporary with Platina, for example, contends that fava beans are cold and dry. This means that they increase the cold and dry humors in the body, namely melancholy. Because they are difficult to digest they also generate vapors – just as happens in a pot of boiling beans, because digestion in the stomach is a kind of cooking. These vapors rise up to the head and thicken the spirits. The spirits are the super-refined form of nutrition which in a sense nourishes our brains. With proper digestion these spirits are light and vigorous and so too are our thoughts. But when clouded by gross, thick and unrefined gases from the stomach, our ideas become muddled, we become depressed and, especially after an evening meal, our sleep is disturbed. John White also notes “It's said, that if a Woman with Child eats Quinces and Coriander seed much it makes the child ingenious; & on the contrary, if on the contrary, if they eat much Onions, or Beans, or such vaporous Food, they will be Lunatic, or Foolish.” Again, it is the idea that gases disturb thoughts, even in the womb. Prosper Calanius, citing Byzantine author Michael Psellus, claims that even staying too long in a bean field sends pestilent fumes into the head, which renders our thoughts slow and weak. Eating fava beans was not merely a matter of slight discomfort and possible embarrassment, but a complete disruption of the whole physiological mechanism. Again, hot herbs and aromatics offer some correction, but beans are inherently dangerous and best left to common folk with stronger stomachs and those less concerned with clear and rational thought.

As we pass into the early modern era these ideas remained firmly in place and are just as starkly juxtaposed against gastronomic concerns. As before, the wealthy could afford to eat expensive fish during Lent and beans perhaps as a novelty, but down the social scale people were forced to eat beans and thus the social stigma remained firmly in place. It was perhaps even strengthened anew once the population began to rise again, when inflation hit hard in the sixteenth century, and once again the disparity of wealth made social distinctions greater. Fewer people could afford meat regularly and beans became ever more firmly associated with poverty. This meant that the middling ranks of society were once again faced with possible debasement for eating beans. Bean recipes still appeared in elite cookbooks, but increasingly they focused on fresh fava beans and “green beans” eaten pod and all, brought in from the New World. Because these were necessarily seasonal and supplied by market gardeners, they stood apart from ordinary peasant fare. The negative social and medical connotations against beans thereafter focused more heavily on dried beans, which only the poorest were forced to consume.

For example, Girolamo Cardano, the sixteenth-century physician and mathematician, writes about the same fried bean cake mentioned in Martino a century earlier. He explains how during Lent it is diligently cooked and mashed, seasoned with oil, pepper and onions or leeks and then is eaten by plebeians. Though he admits it tastes good, it is nonetheless too dangerous for studious people to eat, and especially harmful for boys. What had earlier been merely a patent medical warning now became a specifically class-based ban. In a similar vein Baldassare Pisanelli claims favas “generate much wind, and make the senses stupid, and cause dreams full of travails and perturbation ... they are good in cold weather, for rustic folks.” The author of a little treatise on salad, Costanzo Felici, although he likes favas, still reveals the prejudice of many people: “... finally it is a food very common for men and gives a great deal of nourishment, and even if it is vulgarly said you give favas to gross men [i.e. bulky], nonetheless they give pleasure to many.” This was the best defense he could muster.

Similar opinions can be found throughout Europe. Ludovicus Nonnius, a Spaniard writing in what is today Belgium, recounts the various dangers of fava beans, and that those boiled whole in the pod are “often served up among rustics and plebes.” In England Tobias Venner contends that utterly ripe beans (i.e. dried) are worst of all and should be considered “meat only for ploughmen.” By meat he merely means food, but for ploughmen they did serve as meat in our modern sense of the term.

One of the strangest opinions about favas is that they are an aphrodisiac. Thomas Moffett writing in late sixteenth-century England says that fava beans are a very hurtful meat unless eaten young at the beginning or middle of a meal with butter, pepper and salt. But they are best avoided because they “too much encrease the seed to lusty wantons.” So much for celibate monks eating them, though this may be the reason that St. Jerome forbade beans for nuns – because “they tickle the genitals.” The logic of such statements partly stems from agreement among ancient authorities that beans are highly nutritious. This was probably based on empirical observation of people actually living off them, without of course any knowledge of proteins. According to theory any food which is nutritious, after having replaced the blood, flesh and spirits, is then converted into sperm, both the male and female variety. As merely an excess of nutritional matter, if not stored in fat, it is converted to sperm, which then signals the urge to procreate. There may also have been a vague intuition that the physical consistency of cooked beans, although usually chickpeas in the ancient authorities, is similar to and thus easily converted into sperm. Yet more surprising, beans inflate not just the stomach but the whole body. This creates a kind of artificial aid to sex, an early modern Viagra, if you will.

In a discussion of truffles and oysters as aphrodisiacs, Laurent Joubert also considers how vulgar people think that gassy foods aid sex, which would then mean peas and legumes would do the trick. In fact, he claims, neither do. The gross vapors might “render people salacious” but hardly fecund, which is the real purpose of foods that “render men more gallant in the venereal act.” Though the association with sex may just be a springtime thing – there is a saying in French

“*Quand les feves sont en fleur, les fous sont en vigueur*” meaning that people go a little silly and twitterpated.

Despite these medical warnings and sexual associations, fava beans might still have been served in noble households. As Melchior Sebizius writes in the seventeenth century “the use of legumes is greatest, but not only among the lower sort of men; truly they frequent even magnates’ meals, especially in times of fasting, usually prepared as porridge.” The cookbooks of the early modern period scarcely bear out this impression though. Normally the recipes either use fresh favas or they are cooked in ways elaborate enough to disguise their humble origins.

In the 1540s Christoforo di Messisbugo includes not a single recipe for fava beans, and only one recipe for tiny fasoletti, eaten fresh and lightly fried. The English *Proper Newe Booke of Cokerye* of about the same time includes a tart of pounded beans, made with eggs and curds, but these are disguised. The contemporaneous *Livre fort excellent* offers something a bit more homely, and one is tempted to think this reflects a broader readership, other than the wealthy. It reads:

Boil favas in water and when they are well cooked take onions very small fried in salt, butter or oil and let them cool a little, and when they are cooled place these things in a pot and let them boil again on the fire in the sauce, stirring often. A little saffron. One serves them with herrings, salted porpoise and other sauce.

The optional inclusions are difficult to interpret; the herrings are probably for modest households and the salted porpoise was most likely much more expensive. In either case, the interest in bean dishes seems to wane in the sixteenth century.

It is surprising that the largest and most comprehensive cookbook of the sixteenth century makes only passing reference to fava beans. Bartolomeo Scappi’s huge *Opera* with thousands of recipes mentions them in two places as an alternative to peas or chickpeas when cooked in a tart. There is also one

brief recipe (II.252) that says to cook dried favas or chickling vetch (a bean even lower than favas) by soaking in lye, washing in several changes of water, after which they are cooked in oil, water and salt and garnished with fried onions, herbs and saffron. Interestingly, there are several recipes that call for fagioli, which by this point may be New World species, and others that include various legumes. But fava beans, unlike any other food in this book, are merely an afterthought. Either the papal court, for which Scappi cooked, was uninterested in favas, or there was indeed a stigma against consuming them. Putting them in the same recipe with vetches is a good indication of this.

On the other hand, Scappi may just be indicating that any legume dish will work with peas, which are preferred, or something else similar, and thus there is no reason to specify favas. To give an idea of where favas might appear, here is a generic legume tart. There are different versions with fresh and dried legumes, this is the latter. Provatura is merely fresh cheese, something like farmer cheese. Mostaccioli are perfumed biscuits. The combination of sweet and savory flavors with spices is very typical of this century.

To Make a Tart of Peas, Fagioli or Other Dried Legumes

The peas being cooked in a good meat broth, pound them in a mortar and pass through a sieve, and for every pound of the paste add six ounces of grated Parmigiano cheese and six ounces of fresh ricotta, or fresh provatura pounded in a mortar, and six ounces of goat's milk, or cow's or not having milk, take cold rich broth, and a pound of sugar, six beaten egg yolks, or three with the whites, half an ounce of cinnamon, an ounce of powdered Neapolitan mostaccioli, half an ounce of pepper, three ounces of fresh butter. Place this composition in a tart with pastry dough beneath, and let it cook in the oven and serve hot with sugar and cinnamon on top. In this way you can make fagioli, having first been parboiled and then cooked again in meat broth. Split chickpeas can be boiled just in good broth, as can red chickpeas and lentils. Split favas when they are well cooked, you can mix with little onions beaten and fried added to the above mixture, adding fewer eggs than is in the other.

There can be little doubt that the relative paucity of bean recipes in early modern cookbooks reveals a reluctance to eat them on the part not only of the wealthy, but also of the ever-expanding audience for these printed books, the growing middle class. There can be no doubt, however, that fava beans were grown. The agricultural manuals of the period all discuss them, specifically as human food. For example, Gervase Markham in his *A Way to Get Wealth* explains not only when and how to plant them, but also how they should be dried. When one is compelled to harvest early, beans must be kiln-dried, after which they will remain sound for "the space of many years, without turning or rolling; nor need you to respect how thick the heap lie, since beans after they are once dried in the Kilne, or in the Sun, never after will thaw, give again, or relent, but remain in their first soundness." Those you intend to feed to servants can just be kept in barrels, up to twenty years, he claims, and he has even heard of beans lasting 120 years this way. His comments about servants are revealing, but so too is the idea that this is the one food that can withstand time and ostensibly feed people in time of want.

Common experience with beans is also revealed in the *Maison Rustique* by Charles Etienne and Jean Liebault, translated into English as *The Country Farm*. The authors specify that beans should be soaked overnight in nitre dissolved in water – much the same effect as baking powder used by some today – or they recommend boiling with mustard seed. Also observant, they note that "beans will keep long if you water them with sea water, notwithstanding that they will not boile any thing at all in salt or sea water." That is, they never soften if you salt the boiling water. Comments such as these suggest that people were still growing and cooking beans despite the fact that they were neglected in elite cookbooks.

There is other indirect evidence that points to the negative association of beans with the poor, namely art. The most startling and sudden appearance of poor people and lowly subjects in paintings in the sixteenth and through the seventeenth century is difficult to explain. It seems unlikely that people were empathizing with their plight. Nor are such subjects to be seen through

the modern lens, as charming rustic folk living out their humble daily lives. When Pieter Breughel was painting his chunky rustics dancing and swilling wine, this was meant as a social satire. The patrons of these works were most likely middle- or upper-class buyers who held these paintings up as examples of how not to behave. The same can be said of literary depictions of the sweaty masses, including the Grobianus books and Rabelais, in whose *Gargantua and Pantagruel* giants greedily chomp their way through unimaginable heaps of lowly peasant fare: sausages, tripe and, yes, beans. The same spirit pervades Dutch art of the seventeenth century as well, although the peasants are now a little more clearly the laughing stock.

Although not specifically about beans, there is a subset of genre paintings entitled *The Bean King*. These depict the Feast of the Epiphany when a bean would be baked into a cake and whoever found it would be made king for the day. This actually took place and survives, for some reason, in Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans, which would not be complete without a king cake. There are a series of works with this title from the mid-seventeenth century by Jacob Jordaens. (These can be found easily online in a moment with a simple search.) In them, carousing drunks in a world-turned-upside-down scenario toast the Bean King. In all versions the elderly king is clearly past his limit and is being egged on to drink more. The crowd crammed in the canvas are not lowly peasants though, the surroundings are opulent and the clothes resplendent if untidy. So perhaps this is a kind of heavy-handed warning not to go over board, as the one vomiting man down left has done as well as other hideously sloshed figures.

The most interesting work in the Bean King genre, sometimes also called *Twelfth Night* or the *Lord of Misrule*, is by Gabriel Metsu. It does depict a more modest household, simply furnished and with homely clothes. It is also the most subtle and perceptive. Apart from the possible religious symbolism and the patently comic elements like the baby in the toilet or the grimacing figure cooking over the fire, there is a fascinating family dynamic at play. The king must be the elderly grandfather, carefully trying to down the last of his drink. The

children look on in amazement, as does a fool pointing derisively and looking directly at the spectator to make sure we notice. There is also someone we might construe to be his wife, who looks on lovingly and is ready with the pitcher for a refill, ready to humor his binge. The dominant figure, and one whom we might consider his grown daughter, whose children litter the room, offers the most engaging look of tired amazement, disgust, apathy and renouncement. One can almost hear her say "Dad, I can't believe you're still at it!" This is far more incisive as a social satire, very clearly pointing out to the viewer exactly how not to behave. Again, the painting is not about beans per se, although their presence here in a peasant household makes more sense than in the Jordaens versions, where the message is clearly just mayhem. In Metsu, tellingly, there is a lone slab of prime rib, this being perhaps the rare occasion when this family did not actually have to eat beans but got to celebrate them in cake.

In another genre entirely, and somewhat older than these, is a painting by Annibale Carracci painted in Rome in the late sixteenth century, entitled *The Bean Eater*. Perhaps never before was an ordinary peasant depicted with the intention of showing real life. There is no moral message or satire, merely a man caught in the act of shoveling a bowl of beans down his hungry throat. He almost seems a little contemptuous for being interrupted, as he glares directly at the spectator or perhaps the artist as he bursts onto the scene with his sketchbook. Carracci's motives can only be guessed at, but it may be a real desire to capture ordinary life, and what better way to express the experience of peasants than to show one eating beans? Incidentally, it is hard to identify the species. They could be stewed fava beans, or maybe black-eyed peas, though by this time they could be *Phaseolus* from the New World.

The most persuasive evidence that beans had truly become exclusively the "poor man's meat" after the sixteenth century comes directly from cookbooks. Domingo Hernández de Maceras, cook for a college refectory in Salamanca, makes absolutely no mention of favas, only chickpeas and lentils in his *Libro del arte de Cozina* of 1607. In Francisco Martínez Montañón's *Arte de cocina* of 1611 there are a few recipes. The author was chef to King Philip III of Spain, so it is

a good indication of what nobles would or would not eat. One soup of favas for Lent is made from tender young beans and lettuce, water, spices, cilantro and a bit of vinegar and raw eggs broken into the pot. You can add fennel as well, though some señores don't like it. A similar version for meat days includes fried salt pork and can be served under a plate of meat. Importantly, these are fresh young green favas; nowhere are dried beans mentioned.

In the same century, the English Robert May in his *The Accomplisht Cook* mentions beans nowhere, except for a bean bread, which, as it turns out, contains no beans whatsoever. His contemporary William Rabisha in the *The Whole Body of Cookery Dissected* does not seem to even mention the word bean once anywhere. The same is true of the Dutch *De Verstandige Kock* (The Sensible Cook) whose translator points out quite rightly that the book was intended for affluent households and thus dried beans and peas, eaten by the poor, are nowhere mentioned.

With the advent of classical French haute cuisine following the publication of La Varenne's *Cuisinier François* in the middle of the seventeenth century, dried fava beans are completely banished from elite cookery. Green peas are still to be found and even enjoy a vogue at the court of Louis XIV. There is French saying, "*s'il me donne des pois, je lui donnerais des fèves*" meaning you do something to me, I'll give you back the same or "tit for tat," but given the falling estimation of beans, it seems to imply you get back worse. Green beans also make a dramatic appearance, but the ancient staple fava is left for the poor and horses.

L'Art de bien traiter by L.S.R. describes many recipes for peas, but for favas there is but one. These are very young, just when they begin to form, and are served with their skins intact, seasoned just like peas with chopped marrow, savory and bouillon. Only when a little older is the skin removed and they are cooked longer. Mature dried beans are not mentioned at all. In *Le cuisinier* of Pierre de Lune there are actually four fava recipes, again all for fresh young beans, blanched and peeled. The first is served with crème, egg yolk and nutmeg. The second *au lard* can be served with mutton broth. Favas in the Italian fashion are fried and served with fried parsley and the last, a *faufracho à l'espagnole*, is as follows:

When tender favas have been peeled, pound them in a mortar, season with salt, pepper, three raw eggs, and cook them in a tart pan with melted lard, like a tart without a crust, and serve it whole or cut up.

The absence of fava beans in eighteenth-century cooking is even more startling, perhaps because these books consciously target bourgeois households and country farms. Again, it may be that among these middling ranks of society the stigma against fava beans would have been the strongest. A fairly prosperous family would have no reason to eat beans, unless they are fresh and tender. It is also at this point that New World species began to definitively displace fava beans, a part of the story that will be picked up later. For the moment, it will suffice to show that through the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century, fava beans and usually dried beans of any sort have no place even in the most comprehensive of cookbooks.

In eighteenth-century England, Mary Kettilby's *A Collection of Above Three Hundred Receipts*, which went through many editions after 1714, makes some very revealing comments in the preface about the status of beans. Her point is basically that most cookbooks give "strangely odd and fantastical" rules that spoil many a good dinner. It is not only the great chefs who contrive "relishes a thousand time more Distasteful to the Palate" but also "a Poor Woman must be laugh'd at, for only Sugaring a Mess of Beans." The association with poverty is clear enough, and not surprisingly, there is not a single mention of beans elsewhere in the book.

In Mrs. Fisher's *The Prudent Housewife* of 1750 one would naturally expect something thrifty such as beans. An illustrated table setting does indeed show a plate of Beans and Bacon along with other elegant dishes such as stewed carp, chine of veal and fricassee. But there is no recipe, perhaps because she assumed any housewife would know how to cook it. On the other hand, judging from her menus, beans appear only once in August. Susannah Carter's *The Frugal Colonial Housewife*, which was reprinted in Boston on the eve of the Revolution, never mentions dried beans. Only fresh broad beans are boiled and it is "best not to shell them till just before they are ready to go into the pot." Mrs. Raffald,

much of which was taken from Fisher, does include a recipe. To make Windsor Beans, "Boil them in a good quantity of salt and water, boil and chop some parsley, put in good melted butter; serve them up with bacon in the middle, if you choose it." Apart from not being much of a recipe, these must be fresh beans or the salt would probably prevent them from ever cooking properly. Charlotte Mason's *The Lady's Assistant*, by any account a thorough cookbook, lists beans in the menus, but nowhere mentions dried beans. Judging from the corpus of eighteenth-century English cookbooks, it seems as if dried fava beans were not eaten, except by the poor.

An illustration of this is found in *Shrove Tuesday: a satiric rhapsody* by Anthony Pasquin published in London in 1791. In it a bunch of pedantic scholars are wrangling about the botanical classification of beans. An F.R.S. is a brother of the Royal Society, the leading scientific institution of the day.

*When Joe Soho was in the massy chair,
All-gorgeous carv'd, and rais'd above his peers,
He ask'd a question, made his brethren stare,
Pulling his side curls down to hide – his ears!
"As we've complete arrang'd both grubs and greens,
Pray in what genus do ye class your beans?"
"How class our beans! Cried Fungus, let me see,
"How class our beans! Roar'd Horace, (vis à vis)
"How class our beans!" went individual round,
And all seem'd lost in reveries profound!
Silence assum'd the absolute command,
Each head lean'd pond'rous on its kindred hand;
No band of nincumpoops were e'er so pos'd,
And some o'er-wrung by study, dreamt and doz'd;
Chagrind, discomfited, perplex'd and pang'd
Each sober judgment by its fancy nag'd:
Some look'd toward the ceiling some-the floor,
The wisest doubted, and the wicked swore!
D.D.'s, Lords, M.D.'s seem'd in deep distress,
And ignorance hoodwink'd every F.R.S.*

*'Till and old woman (who at their desire
Was wont to empt the pot and stir the fire)
Ended the matter, as Bystanders ought,
And sav'd their brains from being pierc'd by thought,
"Your Honor sure (quo' she) can't be mistaken,
"I always class my beans with bacon!"*

The satire only really makes sense when you consider that the learned know nothing about beans; it's only the old woman servant who understands what to do with them.

Why beans disappear from genteel tables appears to be partly due to growing affluence among average cookbook readers and a desire to showcase meat at the center of every meal. But it may also have something to do with yet another Agricultural Revolution which made fava beans one of the premier fodder crops for horses; in fact the term horse bean – although a slightly different variety – becomes the more common usage, while Windsor beans, eaten fresh, remain as human food. That is, why would anyone serve a bean so universally recognized as fodder, unless under duress?

In a nutshell, this revolution, which spanned a few centuries only culminating in the eighteenth century, transformed agriculture from a local subsistence activity to a more market-oriented business. Growing population was once again central to this process, particularly in the Netherlands where land was scarce and urban populations were densely packed. With good prices and growing demand for food, especially in cities, there was an incentive for landowners to convert peasant holdings into capital-intensive enterprises. Why allow backward peasants to farm the land in traditional ways when you could directly exploit the land yourself, perhaps kick the tenants out, a process called enclosure, and then apply new methods of irrigation, fertilizers and improved breeds? Land could be amassed into larger parcels and the former tenants even employed as a rural labor force, and paid wages. Crop rotation systems thereafter became more complex, the most celebrated being that of Charles "Turnips" Townsend who introduced this vegetable in a four-field system as a winter fodder crop

along with clover so that cattle could be kept year round rather than slaughtered in the fall. More cattle of course meant more fertilizer. New machines were also introduced such as Jethro Tull's seed drill, the Rotherham plough and new threshing machines. With the push to increase productivity both of cattle and crops, a major effort was made to find a fodder which could both fatten cattle quickly and serve to replenish the soil.

Although this simple picture of a sudden "revolution" has been qualified and called into question in recent decades, there is no doubt that business-oriented farmers were increasingly interested in legumes, including fava beans. This is not the place to debate the extent and significance of overall productivity, and for this story the central fodder crop involved, clover, is irrelevant because it cannot be used as human food. But use of fava beans as fodder appears to have had a direct impact on their slow disappearance from English and northern European cuisines.

This interest in growing beans is evidenced in a wide diversity of agricultural texts in eighteenth-century England. For example Joseph Randall's *The Farmer's New Guide for Raising Excellent Crops of Peas, Beans, Turnips or Rape* was published in 1764 with the intent of introducing these crops to entrepreneurial farmers. Thomas Hale's *A Compleat Body of Husbandry* makes a distinction between horse beans, which are sowed in fields, and so-called great garden beans, which are cultivated more intensely in gardens around London for human consumption. He believes that the larger fields could also be cultivated with the same industry, manure and care, but evidently they were not – most beans were merely grown for fodder and planted by broadcasting haphazardly. An anonymous book *An Enumeration of the Principal Vegetables* of 1796 was designed to introduce new crops to substitute for wheat in times of scarcity. The author is unequivocal: "The green, unripe seeds of this well-known vegetable, are a favorite summer-food in this and other countries. But the meal obtained from the ripe and dried seeds is seldom made use of." He cites some experiments of the Board of Agriculture to add bean meal to extend bread, but these do not appear to have had any effect. Such beans are, after all, for horses. Antoine

Parmentier, though admittedly trying to promote potatoes, says of legumes such as peas, favas and haricots when worked into bread, "this compact aliment, disagreeable and viscous, often costs more than the best wheat bread."

Likewise in France, dried fava beans carried a social stigma. In the *Dictionnaire oeconomique*, Noel Chomel under the entry for poverty offers a fava bean recipe in which eight pints are dried in an oven and then milled for quick and easy use in soups. This cuts down the cooking time and fuel use. He comments that the same can be done with rice, "but this is not a food for the poor. It's too delicate and expensive." In a remarkable encyclopedic *Dictionnaire des plantes alimentaires* of 1803, Pierre-Joseph Buc'hoz describes how fresh young favas are eaten with aromatics. But older dried beans are only eaten "in some provinces and at sea"; "The people love best fèves de marais when they are biggest ... they're cooked first in a bit of water, then browned lightly in butter, with salt and pepper and a pinch of savory, to lift up the flavor, because these are a bit bland." By distancing his own taste from common practice, he ultimately denigrates the bean, further commenting that during the revolution people used favas to make bread, but it was far too tough and astringent. These, at least, he does not completely disregard as he does vetches, which are only for the most robust of stomachs and peasants.

Not all writers in France expressed their disdain for beans though, and there might even be a lesson learned by growing them. There is a remarkable episode in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, a revolutionary educational tract, which features growing beans. Rousseau was in large part rejecting the effete and superficial culture of eighteenth-century France, which is why he proposes how to raise young Emile in a natural way, without being confined or ordered about. The young boy is let loose to run in the fields and discover nature and real human nature on his own rather than try to learn it from books. The particular lesson he hopes to impart to Emile in this episode is about the origin of property. Living in the country, he will know about labor in the fields, but Rousseau thinks doing it himself with his own hands will really help him understand, something most spoiled children it seems could not grasp.

Rousseau has his young student plant beans. He helps him with the harder work, but the beans themselves are put in the earth by Emile. After the earth is plowed, "He takes possession of it by planting a bean in it. And surely this possession is more sacred and more respectable than that taken of South America when Núñez Balboa in the name of the King of Spain planted his standard on the shore of the South Sea." Every day they water and tend the beans and Rousseau reminds him that "there is in this earth something of himself that he can claim against anyone whomsoever..." Then one day the beans are gone (according to Rousseau's plan) and they discover that the gardener has torn them out. He then learns that there had been melon seeds planted there before by the gardener, now ruined. In the end they come to an arrangement whereby Emile will be lent a little plot as long as he shares his produce with the gardener. The lesson is not only that labor makes something yours but that property is the right of the first occupant and that to live with others we must respect their rights, entering into a social contract of sorts. Conflict has been avoided and both walk away happy. The entire mode of living in a free society has been taught to Emile, no, rather experienced firsthand, through the act of growing beans.

Interestingly, and in direct contrast to the north, fava beans do remain steadfast in southern European cookbooks and culinary practices. They were still being extensively grown there as human food and of course the diet in general was more vegetable-based than in the more affluent north. But it also reflects the very different economy of the south. Here there was no comparable agricultural revolution. The majority of people subsisted on the same basic foods they had for centuries and with the exception of the very wealthy, most people still did survive on grains, legumes and minimal amounts of meat. Rather than large capital-intensive farms, there were still small peasant holdings, and the mezzadria or share-cropping system in Italy. The absence of a significantly large middle class hoping to distance themselves from the diet of their ancestors, mainly by eating more meat, seems to explain in part why favas are still featured prominently in culinary texts. Climate alone cannot account

for this, because, as we have seen, they were grown in the north, just not for human consumption.

Two examples here should suffice: Juan de Altamiras' *Nuevo Arte de Cocina* consciously attempts to address the culinary interests of both rich and poor alike. Not surprisingly, there are several recipes for dried beans, which scarcely differ from those of several hundred years before. For example, his *Potage de Judias Secas* is seasoned with fried onions and garlic, pepper, saffron, mint, grated bread and a bit of cheese, and it would be good with a little rice as well, he adds. Apart from the fact that these might have been made with New World beans, the recipe is extremely conservative. Altamiras' readers did not have such a clear social stigma against beans because everyone was still eating them. It may also explain the survival, as opposed to revival, of traditional dishes like the fabada asturiana, similar to the above recipe though now considerably richer with chorizo and morcilla (blood sausages) and various other more expensive ingredients.

In Italy fava beans also remained a staple ingredient. Vincenzo Corrado's *Del cibo pittagorico* (Pythagorean Life – meaning vegetarian), rather ironically, offers a remarkable range of recipes. Though he does mention that in the Salento the *minuto popolo* – or little people – make great use of favas; there is no stigma at all towards them. There are twelve recipes, including soups, fried favas, with cream, and in a "sauce of the rich," which directs to "fry the favas in oil, garlic, thyme, tarragon, salt and pepper and moisten with fish broth, and when they're cooked, serve with this rich sauce moistened with the same broth and lemon juice." The interest in maintaining Lenten fasts partially explains dishes such as these, but there is really no social stigma against eating them, precisely because there is not a large class of people forced to eat them, from which another (middling) class hopes to maintain a distinction. Corrado also offers bean fritters, in a frittata, and this recipe for fave alla bianca involves slowly cooking the beans, seasoning with salt oil and parsley, celery and bay leaf, and then mashing them into a fine cream and serving them on fried toast points. This dish can easily be found today in many Italian restaurants, what was originally called pan unto, or today fettunta or bruschetta.

Nineteenth-century sources are also revealing, especially since they directly address concerns of the poorer classes. In England in the early part of the century, the high prices of grain before the legislation of the Anti-Corn Law League led several cookbook authors to comment on the poor state of the common diet. Bell Plumptre's *Domestic Management* of 1810 is very interesting in this regard. Apart from mentioning that people should live according to their means and not try to imitate others, she complains that the "prevailing error in the diet of this country is the too great use of animal food" and attributes many diseases to it. Furthermore the artificial scarcity of corn (meaning grain) undermines "the health of society at large, and dwindle(s) it down to a race of invalid dwarfs." The English also ruin their vegetables by overcooking. "The English use vegetables with a cold distrust, as if they were natural enemies." And "From being little used at our tables, vegetables have been little noticed in our cookery books." Not surprisingly, it is here that many vegetable dishes appear, including the beans and bacon, which presumably had been eaten all along by lower classes. These are her directions:

When you dress beans and bacon, boil them separate, for the bacon will spoil the color of the beans. Always throw some salt in the water, and some parsley nicely picked. When the beans are enough, which you will know by their being tender, throw them in a cullender to drain. Take up the bacon, and skin it, throw some raspings of bread over the top; and if you have an iron, make it red hot, and hold it over to brown the top of the bacon; if you have not one, set it before the fire to brown. Lay the beans in a dish. And the bacon in the middle on the top, and send them to the table, with parsley and butter in a bason.

The same attitude is struck later in the century by Charles Elmé Francatelli, renowned as a chef to the royal court, but he was also concerned enough to compose *A Plain Cookery Book for the Working Classes*. It presents simple straightforward instructions to help a poor family make ends meet. Although there is a brief recipe for broad beans, he specifically promotes white haricot beans, that is, the American variety, over favas, claiming that "In France haricot beans form

a principal part in the staple articles of food for the working classes, and indeed for the entire population; it is much to be desired that some effectual means should be had recourse to for the purpose of introducing and encouraging the use of this most excellent vegetable among the people as a general article of their daily food, more especially in the winter season." They might even reduce dependence on the potato crop, which had just failed. At present he thinks they are only an expensive luxury, but could be imported in greater number and would "become cheap enough to come within the reach of the poorest." This is exactly what will happen later in the century, but it is equally fascinating that he does not suggest the favas might serve the same purpose.

Most interestingly, quietly through the course of the centuries, fava beans are replaced with New World species, even in traditional dishes which retain the name of fava, like the *fabada asturiana*. In others, like the *cassoulet*, the new beans at some unrecorded point in time become traditional, and the original dish is entirely forgotten. These will be discussed in subsequent chapters, but for the moment, favas do retain a significant place in modern cookery, especially when green and fresh as harbingers of spring. For some inexplicable reason fresh favas were rediscovered in the last decade or so and can be found in most grocery stores, farmers' markets and on the menus of even posh restaurants.

Dried favas have enjoyed a fleeting revival too, though nowhere near the enthusiasm afforded to heirloom *Phaseolus* varieties. As an English writer put it (W. Teignmouth Shore) fresh favas are lovely while young. "But alas, he quickly grows old, and as an 'old bean' is not so pleasant." They remain one of the few beans eaten only in traditional contexts, as in the festival of San Guiseppe. This is celebrated fervently by devout Sicilians and recalls a drought during which the populace prayed to Saint Joseph for succor. He answered their prayers by making sure the crop of fava beans was spared, thus saving the people. Because the festival is celebrated on March 19, it falls during Lent so no meats are served. Rather it features a special bread given away to the poor, vegetables, sweets and other treats like *zeppole*, a fried horn of light airy dough. But the star is a soup of fava beans, broad noodles and other vegetables sprinkled with breadcrumbs

to recall the sawdust of St. Joseph's workshop. A stepped altar is also erected to hold offerings to the saint, which include all the aforementioned foods, and as it is celebrated by Sicilian-Americans, a huge variety of sweet pastries formed into various symbolic shapes, like carpenter's tools and such. Sicily has remained devoted to the fava bean, Pythagoras and favism notwithstanding. A frittedda is a traditional springtime dish of chopped and lightly boiled artichokes and fava beans dressed simply with olive oil, which can also be used as a sauce. There is also maccu, a crushed fava bean soup (*maccare* means to crush) made with wild fennel. Why are such dishes still eaten today, especially by expatriates? They are a way to remember one's roots and homeland, and especially to recall hardship in a life of relative affluence.

When you mention fava beans to modern Americans inevitably someone thinks of the scene from *Silence of the Lambs* in which Hannibal Lecter discusses how he ate the delivery boy – his liver in particular with fava beans and a “nice chee-aunt-ee.” Actually in the original book it wasn't chianti, but an amarone, a much darker and richer wine that would go much better with liver, as this gourmet would know.

Lastly, fava beans have a single if totally obscure use in modern medicine. They are the primary source of L-DOPA, used to increase dopamine levels in Parkinson's patients, and thus they take central stage (indirectly) in Oliver Sacks' *Awakenings*, which recounts the drug's use for briefly curing neurological disorders.