

Feeding the city

The supply of Barcelona, from
the 13th to the 20th centuries



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Ajuntament
de Barcelona

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“Feeding the city. The supply of Barcelona, from the 13th to the 20th centuries” has been published with the support of the Barcelona Institute of Markets. It covers a wide range of proposals for study, debate and public programmes about this key aspect of city life, which the Barcelona History Museum intends to develop over the next few years through conferences, seminars, publications and exhibitions, in collaboration with other municipal organisations and European museums with whom it regularly cooperates.

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Introduction

Mercè Renom Pulit

The booklet you are holding presents the basic features of the food supply system in Barcelona and its transformation over the centuries. It brings together the key topics incorporated in the Feed Barcelona project that is currently being developed by the Barcelona History Museum in collaboration with the city's Historical Archive and the support of the Barcelona Institute of Markets.

In Western Europe, in both medieval and modern times, the main role and responsibility for the "good governance" of cities was to ensure the subsistence of their inhabitants in terms of the quantity, quality and "fair price" of basic foodstuffs. In the dialectic between crises, famines and epidemics, the main towns and cities built a protected market system to ensure, on a collective basis, that the people had food. This system lasted for centuries, until economic liberalism emerged at the beginning of the 18th century.

The city of Barcelona managed to acquire a privileged position based on royal authority in ensuring the supply of the most basic products, despite dysfunctions and conflicts.

This process took place in parallel with the development of political ideas related to the concept of the "common good".

The protected food market had similar features to various cities in Western Europe, with each city adapting to its own circumstances, shortfalls and opportunities. Barcelona, a city open to the sea, promoted cereal imports and protected the supply of bread very strictly.

The Barcelona system was modified after 1714 with the dissolution of the *Consell de Cent* (Council of One Hundred), as one of the measures of the *Nova Planta* decree, and the direct royal intervention in the government of the city. During the eighteenth century, the city's privileged position in organising the subsistence of the local population weakened. The first liberalisation measures were introduced while Barcelona's population was growing from 35,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. A process then began that culminated in the 19th century with the deregulation of markets (food, labour and land), the seizure of the municipal food supply assets and the

reduction, within a framework of liberal economics, of the local people's ability to influence the moral standards of their own subsistence.

Nevertheless, Barcelona City Council adapted to the changes of the nineteenth century, and refocused its capacity for intervention in the city's food market, devising original and unique formulas, such as the central market and the city's network of markets. Also, beyond the reach of the markets, society put in place other ways, such as consumer cooperatives, of making the food supply affordable.

In the twentieth century, after the dramatic circumstances of the 1936-1939 war and the post-war period, changes started to take place that slowly opened the door to new forms of supply, such as large retail outlets and specialised shops. At the same time, Barcelona City Council, after the return of democracy, made a commitment to upgrade the network of local markets and kept its position as majority shareholder in Mercabarna, the wholesale market of Barcelona, which is an essential instrument for feeding the city.



The food market in medieval and modern times

*Reredos of St. Justa and Rufina, Studio of the Vergós,
Barcelona, 15th century
© Ramon Manent*

The formation of the protected market system

To guarantee the city's food supply, the municipal authority gradually set up a food market system based on monopolies, the fixing of prices and, if necessary, the requisition of products. They also established a series of taxes, which were applied to some products in order to subsidise others, and created various control positions. Political policies were aimed at the "common good" and were backed up by ethical and moral criteria, which were demanded by the people.

The most basic products

Bread was for centuries the most basic food of the population in Western Europe and the Mediterranean. In the cities, whether people made their own dough and baked their bread at home, or bought it from bakeries, enough grain and other bread-making products were needed. Wine was also an essential source of calories. The municipal authorities gave special protection to the supply of these products.

Meat, fish, fruit and vegetables and poultry

Meat consumption was in high demand in the city. The presence of fish in meals was required by the Church on almost half the days of the year. All meals included fruit and vegetables. Eggs were also common, while poultry was for exclusive dining or for feast days. The supply of these products was less protected by the municipal authorities, and reached the city's larders through various channels.

Supply from the hinterland

Joan J. Busqueta Riu, University of Lleida

The medieval towns and villages were centres of a vast territory with a sphere of economic, fiscal, legal and operational action that was controlled by the dominant groups. Especially from the 13th century, when the urban centres had been institutionally consolidated, they started firstly to conquer the territory around them, and later extended further, eventually by establishing a manorial system in distant towns that had a high strategic value, especially with regard to food supply. We must remember the oligarchic character of the distribution of power in medieval towns, which was always in the hands of a few families who were the main beneficiaries of the manorial control. These families sought social prestige through exercising control over the land and the labourers who worked on it, and they also brought a urban mindset to the countryside that led them to make a greater profit, to control market prices from

their position of dominance in the city and, as far as possible, to dominate areas of production and communication channels such as rivers, which were more efficient than roads, to ensure the urban food supply and benefit from it.

Among these families the Sant Climents are worth a special mention, a line of merchants, knights and future *ciutadans honrats* (members of an oligarchy endowed with special prerogatives), linked from the 13th century to the cities of Barcelona and Lleida. Between the mid-13th century and mid-14th century, the Sant Climents, from a hegemonic position in the two cities and alongside the monarchy, consolidated an extensive estate that included strategic areas that gave them control of the roads and the waterways that provided access to urban centres. In the case of Barcelona, the Sant Climents effectively controlled a large area on the eastern side

that covered major production sectors: the mill, the smithy, the grain fields, vineyards, orchards, livestock and derivative products, among others. Their domain included the Bell-lloc Tower at Sant Andreu de Palomar, access to Barcelona via Montcada on the Rec Comtal irrigation channel, La Murtra House and the Badalona Tower on the other side of the Besòs River, guarding access to the city from the Maresme, and lastly various properties in Santa Coloma de Gramenet (the Villalonga mills) and other neighbouring towns and villages. In the west of Catalonia the Sant Climents controlled various production facilities and distribution channels for wheat and wine, as well as major livestock grazing areas and cattle trails, key elements for the supply of Barcelona.

Among these strategic points in the hands of the Sant Climents, the town and castle of Flix on the Ebro River are of particular note. It was a centre for the collection and distribution to Barcelona of wheat from Aragon

and western lands along the Ebro. Shipments were diverted before they reached the sea in order to avoid the age-old conflict with Tortosa, which in times of shortages confiscated the cereal that came down the Ebro from the production regions. Therefore, the city of Barcelona, which was always short of cereal, had great interest in taking control of this point on the Ebro, and finally achieved this at the end of the 14th century, acquiring the ownership of Flix from one of the Lleida branches of the Sant Climent family.

Cataloniae Principatus novissima et accurata descriptio, Jan Baptist Vrients, 1608
© Cartographic Institute of Catalonia



Subsistence crisis and grain policies

Pere Benito i Monclús, University of Lleida

Like all the big cities in the West, during the Middle Ages Barcelona suffered, cyclically and with an irregular frequency, food crises of very diverse duration, scale, intensity and impact, from simple seasonal shortages to great famines associated with episodes of extraordinary death rates, such as those of the years 1092-1095, 1194-1196, 1333 and 1374-1376. These food crises, which the contemporary chronicles or documentary sources describe using the terms *shortage*, *poverty*, *hunger* and *scarcity* or their equivalents in Latin, were mainly grain crises, caused by the increase in the price of the grain consumed by the privileged classes, the bourgeoisie and the common people of the city, as a result of a market imbalance between the supply and demand for cereal.

Natural causes (bad harvests) were not always behind the onset of grain difficulties and do not, in any case, by themselves explain

the extent of the crises. Stockpiling and the profit that could be gained from it and the speculative manoeuvres of the grain owners and some merchants caused frequent price increases in the wheat and bread that were sold in the city's markets, ovens and bakeries. Therefore city officials and even the kings of the Crown of Aragon were obliged to intervene with emergency measures to ensure food supplies for the population at affordable prices and thus prevent humanitarian catastrophes.

Moreover, although Barcelona was the epicentre of some strictly regional shortages, at least from the twelfth century onwards, the city was more commonly affected by the increases in the price of grain in the markets of the richer and more urbanised regions of northern Europe, which often suffered severe famines. Barcelona, which was a commercial emporium and grain redistribution centre

St. Nicholas frees the city of Izmir from hunger, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 1319-1348. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence © Photo Scala, Florence - granted by the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali



in the late Middle Ages, contributed to the spread of high prices to other centres of consumption and to producing regions in the western Mediterranean and the Iberian Peninsula. The city of Barcelona itself, therefore played a part in creating and exacerbating the difficulties, not only in the hinterland that it dominated politically and exploited economically, but also in quite distant grain producing and exporting regions.

The shortages became so frequent and severe by the end of the 13th and the first half of the 14th centuries that the supply of Barcelona and the struggle against high prices became one of the main concerns of the local oligarchy, who, together with Valencia, strove to obtain royal privileges, such as that of *Vi vel gratia* granted by Alfonso IV 'The Kind' in 1329, which strengthened their power on land and sea and authorised them to implement a whole series of counter-cyclical measures.

From the late 12th century, the Kings of Aragon also developed their own grain policy, banning exports by land and sea and to complement this, awarding themselves the power to grant export licenses. These measures generated an extraordinary income for them, but did not help to expel the spectre of famine in their lands. Also exceptionally, in 1235 and 1374 the monarchs, with the complicity of the country's political elite, intervened in the Principality of Catalonia in the enactment of the two statutes specifically targeted at combating the stockpiling and the speculation which caused the famines, unprecedented measures which due to the complexity of their implementation, were apparently not successful.

Protection and control of the food market: from royal to municipal taxation (12th-14th centuries)

Pere Ortí Gost, University of Girona

During the 12th century, the Catalan Counts-Kings revolutionised the indirect tax levied on Barcelona's commercial and artisanal activities by reformulating the *lleudes* and *passatges* (taxes levied on the entry or passage of goods) dating from Carolingian times and by creating *mesuratges* (measurement tax on goods) and certain monopolies (mills, bakeries, butchers and fishmongers). This process was accompanied by the development of an infrastructure able to control the economic transactions that took place in the city. Points were established where the tax was paid: the entrance gates to the city, the beach area where ships unloaded goods, some measurement points and some places for monopoly services (especially butchers and fishmongers) that centralised the transactions on certain products. At the same time, local legislation was enacted to manage the market and allow the prosecution of tax fraud. Lastly,

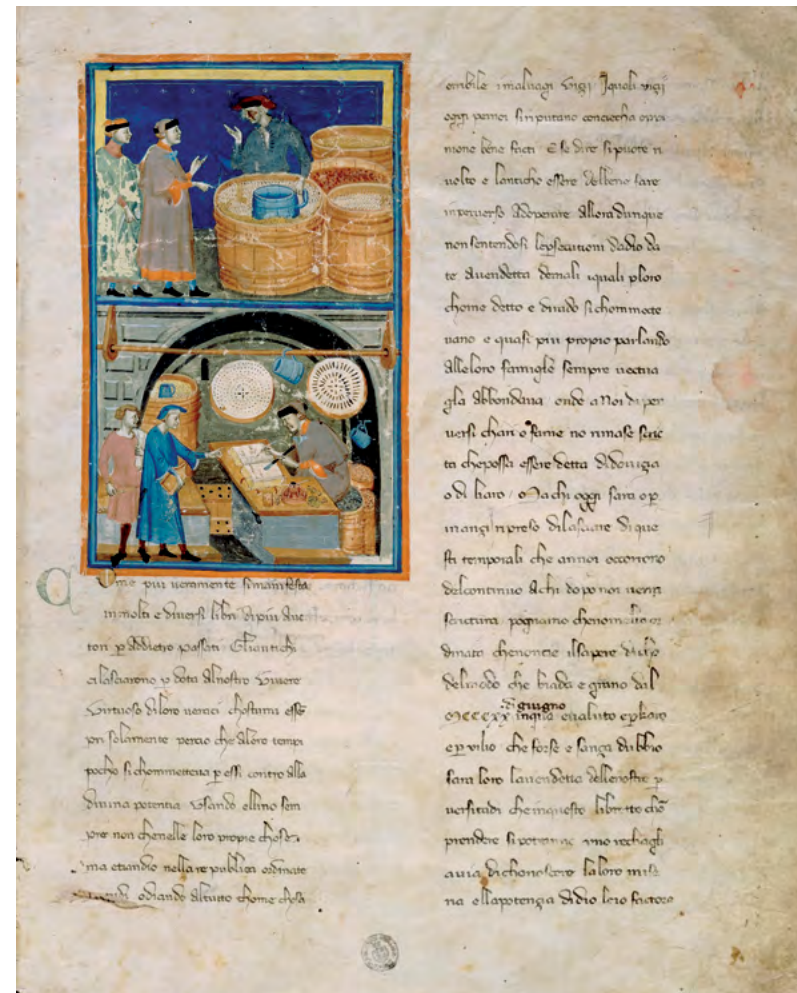
positions were created with the power to collect taxes and to judge and punish fraudsters. This process facilitated the control of the market for certain basic foodstuffs such as cereals, meat and fish, all of which were under some kind of seigniorial monopoly (bread, bakeries and mills, butchers and fishmongers) and introduced the levying of various taxes.

From the 14th century, the local government established a new range of indirect taxes. The *imposicions* (an indirect municipal tax), among others, were levied especially on the consumption of basic food products such as cereals, meat, wine and later also fresh fish. During the first century of existence of these taxes, the city relied on the tax infrastructure of the monarchy, created in the 12th century. When this required improvement, it pushed ahead with the creation of new offices and institutions, such as the *mostassaf* (a municipal official responsible for the control of weight

and measurement), or the House of the Flour Weight, which enabled control of the city's trade of grain from the city to the flour mills built on the Rec Comtal (channel that supplied Barcelona). The municipal authorities, in addition to imposing a levy on foods that were in short supply, like cereal and meat, had to ensure that there was sufficient.

Both needs (tax and supply) sometimes clashed with the royal control of the market, especially with developments relating to the monopolies. The municipal policy in this respect was diverse. For example, they took

advantage of the financial needs of the monarchy to temporarily acquire the royal mills of the Rec Comtal, or the fact that the old fish market was privately owned to build a new one. And, in the case of the meat market, the municipal authorities could only intervene through their legislative power, exercised on behalf of the king, which allowed them to fix the price of the meat. These powers enabled the city council to negotiate the supply and tax levied on the consumption of meat with the butchers, although, theoretically, this market was still controlled by the monarchy.



Biadaiolo codex, Master of Biadaiolo, 14th century
© Archivi Alinari, Florence – granted by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali

Taxation and supply: two sides of the same coin?

Pere Verdés-Pijuan, CSIC Barcelona

In 1391, coinciding with the assault on the Call (Barcelona's Jewish quarter), the rebellious masses demanded that the *Consell de Cent*, among other things, abolish the *imposicions*, although they only achieved a reduction in duties on food products. Fifty years later, the representatives of la *Busca*, the Catalan party of the popular classes, also demanded that the *ciutadans honrats* government reduce taxes on certain foods, while calling for an improved supply to the city (especially of cereals and meat). At the end of the 15th century, the leaders of the "*redreç*" (reform of local finances) sought to balance the municipal budget without resorting to the establishment of new taxes, and thus attempted to shift the tax burden on to the Church and outsiders.

All these events (and others) attest to the fiscal awareness gradually acquired by the people of Barcelona from late medieval times,

as well as the clear impact the Council's financial policy had on food supply in the city. This impact corresponded to a fiscal model which, from the mid-14th century, pivoted virtually exclusively on indirect taxation and, more specifically, on the taxes levied on the consumption of basic foodstuffs (bread, wine, meat and fish). It is quite understandable, therefore, that people were particularly sensitive to any increase in tariffs which, at the end of the fourteenth century, in some cases, already accounted for 20, 30 or even 50% of the price of the product.

During the 15th century, the municipal authorities sought to increase indirect taxation while trying to optimise their management of the imposition in order to achieve greater (or at least not less) revenue from their taxes without stirring up popular unrest. The *consellers* (aldermen) tightened the control they already exercised over trade



and the movement of goods, as shown by the avalanche of ordinances enacted in the course of this period to reduce tax evasion and food smuggling. When the tax collected was insufficient, they decided to collect it directly, relying both on the various officials in charge of keeping watch over the market (*mostassafs*, weighers, administrators of squares...) and on gateway guards, *albaraners* (those in charge of delivery notes) and tax collectors.

However, the negative climate of the mid-15th century, compounded by the effects of the Civil War (1462-1472), rendered these administrative measures insufficient. This explains the unavoidable and periodic establishment of new extraordinary taxes on bread, wine and meat, and probably the creation of the first municipal monopolies, such as the bakery. In principle, these monopolies were aimed at ensuring a better supply to the population, but the conflicts that they generated almost from their inception, at the end of the century and in modern times, lead us to question whether the *pastim*, Barcelona's communal bakery, and other monopolies on certain products did not end up becoming another form of indirect taxation, more or less covert, and an opportunity for private profit.

Consell de Cent, Special ordinances, 1412
© Historical Archive of the City of Barcelona

Bread and politics in Barcelona during the 16th and 17th centuries

Luis R. Corteguera, University of Kansas, US

In the 16th and 17th centuries, bread was more than a basic consumer good. The supply of wheat to Barcelona had become the subject of a fierce conflict between the city, the rest of Catalonia, the Catalan nobility and Church, the Spanish Crown and the Papacy. Between 1561 and 1580 the price of wheat almost doubled. Although Barcelona was supplied with wheat by the town of Flix, where the produce that came down the Ebro was collected, the supply was insufficient, especially in times of scarcity. The scarcity was a threat to public order, as a hungry population was more likely to revolt. More than hunger, however, the main reason for the popular unrest was rooted in a sense of injustice. Many considered that the price increase was not due to natural causes. Hoarders (*agabelladors*) took advantage of the shortage of wheat, caused by droughts, floods and frost, to make money, hiding the wheat to subsequently sell it at even higher

prices. Clerics and nobles connected to the Spanish court were also blamed. They sought royal licenses to export wheat to the best possible buyer, reducing the supply for local buyers and putting their own interests before the common good.

The scarcity of bread was a problem that had theological, moral and political implications. It called for extraordinary measures to be taken, such as requesting the Papacy's condemnation of the oppression by the hoarders, who were considered to be "bad Christians", unscrupulous people who "sucked the blood of the poor". Meanwhile, at critical times, the Barcelona authorities defended the requisition of ships loaded with wheat that sailed close to their coast, and refused to pay more than their "fair and true price": a concept inspired more by a moral than a strictly economic sense. Faced with these measures, the Church and noble orders and other Catalan

cities and towns defended their own interpretation of the common good. Barcelona looked out only for its own interests, affirmed critics of the Barcelona bread policy, and thereby obstructed free trade, ignoring the laws and privileges of the land and the common good of Catalonia as a whole.

Today we might see these ideas as irrational but we would be wrong. Rather than an incorrect perception of the economy, as it is defined nowadays, notions such as fair price, the perception of the *agabelladors* as bad Christians, or considering the common good as a moral principle above economic criteria were a response to a concept of an economy based on love of one's neighbour, in which profit-seeking, in the face of the suffering of the poor, was immoral. In practice, of course, these principles were transgressed by different kinds of abuse and their interpretation was debated. The struggle for bread offers a

new perspective on the history of Barcelona and the close links between economics and Christian morality, psychology and state interest.



The supply of grain

Juanjo Cáceres Nevot, SEIAHS

During the 14th and 15th centuries, Barcelona had a set of mechanisms for the supply of grain that were periodically put to the test by the emergence of grain shortages. The new demographic and economic cycles that occurred in Western Europe from the 12th century led to a sustained growth of city populations up to the first third of the 14th century, due to both the natural population growth in urban centres and the migration that took place from rural areas. As a result, the demand for products grew, as did the need to improve supply systems so that the cities could be permanently supplied with a range of basic products, including cereals, the main food of the urban population.

In the case of Barcelona, the possibilities for supply were very much conditioned by the geographical characteristics of the north-east Iberian Peninsula. Production in the Catalan territory was insufficient to ensure an

adequate supply of grain for the entire population, which generated a permanent dependence on foreign markets and, therefore, the need for appropriate external sourcing strategies. Outside markets were accessible when productive areas generated abundant harvests, but became much more expensive and difficult to access when harvests were poor. Thus, until the fourteenth century, Barcelona's grain supply was largely dependent on the private initiative of the Barcelona traders, despite the recurring shortages. However, when the most important grain crises broke out, during the 14th century, private initiatives were insufficient to cover the supply to the city and it was then that the authorities assumed a more active role.

In light of the cereal crises of greater intensity, the municipal councils and the Barcelona council in particular were forced to implement specific measures to attract



Reredos of St. Nicholas, Jaume Cabrera, Santa Maria de la Seu, Manresa, 1406
© Ramon Manent

consignments of grain and enable the shortages and emerging internal tensions to be overcome. The efforts resulted in both a greater dedication by the city council to search for grain, and new regulations and new intervening bodies with the power to regulate and supervise the urban market. It also entailed the injection of significant financial resources, which meant increased pressure on municipal finances.

The strategies developed in Barcelona to alleviate and overcome the shortages eventually contributed to the establishment of a supply system which, during the 15th century, became more secure and reliable, and enabled the situations of great food insecurity experienced in the previous century to be left behind. The process did, however, result in significant regulatory development which increased the city council's influence and capacity for intervention in the grain market.

In addition, the council also became another market trader, acting both through the direct purchase of grain and through incentives that it granted to other trading agents.

Bread in medieval Barcelona

Antoni Riera Melis, University of Barcelona

Since the beginning of the 11th century, bread had become the basic product of the ordinary diet of many people in Barcelona. Initially, most made their dough at home and took it to be baked at the neighbourhood bakery, which kept part of the batch to sell. Then, a growing sector of society opted out of this task, which was taken over by a new artisan, the *flequer* or baker, who bought the grain in the local market, had it ground by the mills in the surrounding area, made the dough, took the bread to the bakery to be baked, and sold it to the public. From 1350 onwards, as an increasing number of families in the city started to buy bread, the distinction between *flequers* and *forners*, the bakery owners, became more blurred. However, the authorisation to build ovens remained a royal monopoly.

The municipal authorities hastened to closely supervise the sale of bread, assuming control of its weight and quality, and es-

tablishing hefty penalties for swindlers. To facilitate the people's access to bread, they fixed the prices. They established that the value of the grain would determine the weight and quality of the bread but would not affect the price. The *flequers* and *forners* made daily units of bread ("*dinerada*") for each of the main qualitative types, which cost a "*diner*", and the weight of which depended on the price of the wheat, or of the other cereals from which the bread was made. In normal times these pieces would cover the daily requirements of an adult.

At that time the system of fixed prices was widely socially accepted. Sellers and buyers, despite the constraints imposed by a continually changing product, were fairly satisfied, except in times of famine. With inflexible wages, the lower strata of artisans, who suffered from an almost chronic shortage of savings, found a security - more illusory

than real - in the fixing of the price of a staple food, which alleviated their fear of the future. Whereas the *flequers* had acquired sufficient techniques to be able to overcome the challenges imposed by the municipal authorities, and evade the effective reach of their controls.

From the mid-13th century, the supervision of the *flequers'* production was entrusted to bread weighers, who were chosen annually by the mayor and councillors and ratified by Peter the Great in the *Recognoverunt proceres* (recognition of ancient customs and existing privileges). Bread that was qualitatively or quantitatively defective was seized and distributed among the city's welfare institutions. Fraudsters were punished with a fine, the penalty being increased for repeat offenders, who could even be sentenced to public ridicule.

Barcelona, like the other Catalan towns and cities, failed to guarantee the complete satisfaction of local demand for bread from

their own resources. They had to accept that, both in normal times and times of hardship, the residents of surrounding towns came laden with bread they had baked themselves.

Franciscan missal,
15th century
© Bibliothèque
municipale de Lyon



The interventions of the cathedral in the supply of bread

Pol Serrahima Balius, University of Lleida

The cathedral of Barcelona was a major institution in the life of the city. In addition to representing its spiritual centre, it was one of its main economic structures, as the owner of a large amount of property, infrastructure and farms, the recipient of various kinds of taxes and the provider of work to hundreds of individuals (from prelates to artisans, notaries or lawyers). The cathedral's relationship to food resources, especially cereals, had many dimensions. Firstly, both the chapter and bishop of the cathedral owned a considerable amount of land on which grain was produced. Secondly, the cathedral's representatives taxed production through church tithes and trade through an entitlement to the tax on flour. Lastly, the most obvious manifestation of the role of the cathedral in the city's grain supply lies in two of its institutions, the House of Charity and La Pia Almoina.

The House of Charity was not a welfare institution, as it might suggest. Under this name, an authority was created in the 13th century to centralise and obtain a financial return on the chapter's resources, which had previously been administered by the provosts. The institution obtained its income from property leases or the yield from loans. However, to reap further benefits from its capital, it also ran other businesses, one of the most important of which was making "*canon bread*". Thanks to the tax exemptions enjoyed by the canons, the House of Charity obtained a big profit from the sale of this bread, which its competitors complained about on more than one occasion.

The Casa de La Pia Almoina was also established in the 13th century. Its purpose was to manage a series of investments owned by the chapter. Unlike the House of Charity, the assets exploited by La Pia Almoina had been

donated on the condition that they were used to feed a certain number of the city's poor. Thus, La Pia Almoina bought grain from the Barcelona market and imported more from its own sources to feed its circle of poor every day. This made it one of the city's biggest purchasers of grain.

The two institutions together turned about 1,500 *quarteres* (a dry measure in Catalonia, containing about 70 litres) of wheat into bread every year, which could represent over 1% of the grain distributed annually in Barcelona. However, their importance did not end there: they managed large grain harvests and participated in the market, not just as a buyer but also distributing grain and receiving taxes. In addition, the prelates, from the bishop to the *beneficiats* (priests entitled to benefits), took advantage of their privileges to personally take part in the lucrative business. Understanding, therefore, the multi-faceted involvement of

the cathedral in the Barcelona grain market is crucial to a better appreciation of the complex relationship and conflict between these institutions and the municipal authorities.



Mural painting at La Almoina in Barcelona, Jaime Serra, 1875

Municipal management of the supply of bread (1714-1799)

Marina López Guallar, historian

The legal and political context significantly influenced the actions of the Barcelona City Council and the management of the supply of bread throughout the 18th century. There were three key events: the foundation of the Council, in 1714-1718; the Carolina reforms, in 1760-1775, and the end-of-century crisis, especially in 1789-1799.

The day after the defeat of 1714, the *Consell de Cent* was dissolved and its property confiscated. It was immediately replaced by an interim authority, while other local governments in the Principality continued to operate until 1719. The Barcelona City Council, established by the *Nova Planta* decree in 1718-1720, differed from the old Council in four fundamental aspects: the composition of the council (twenty-four councillors appointed by the crown for their lifetime and selected from among the nobility); the financial resources (allocation of a fixed annual income in

perpetuity and allocated in set amounts); the municipal authorities (drastic reduction of the council's services and staff); and the subordination of city decisions to ratification by higher authorities representing the king.

There was continual outside interference in the municipal bread supply. Periodic shortages, price increases and the resulting protests posed a threat to public order, a major concern of the ruling military leadership of Catalonia. However, the pre-existing system, based on the free trade of grain and the city's bread-baking monopoly, survived in day-to-day running until 1767.

This traditional system was abolished as part of a series of municipal reforms implemented across Spain in the 1760s. Apart from the abolition of the taxes that until 1765 were levied on the wheat trade, which did not apply to Barcelona, the two most important reforms were: the creation in 1766 of offices represent-

ing the third estate *diputats del comú*, (elected deputies), and *síndic personer* (the public prosecutor representing the people) to oversee city policies on supply, and the freedom of activity for bakers and oven owners in 1767. The latter forced the Barcelona City Council to give up their facilities for the exercise of the monopoly on bread making and selling, despite all their attempts to keep them. The central government entrusted the design of the new system to a Special Courtroom of the Royal Agreement (the Royal Audience chaired by the Captain General). From 1775 onwards, the Audience gained strength in the government of the Principality. Despite the many vicissitudes of the new system, the policy of liberalisation was maintained until the crisis of 1789.

In March 1789, following the uprising known as *Rebomboris del Pa* (the Bread Ri-

ots), the Special Assembly was dissolved and the Captain General dismissed. A charitable board took over the supply when the City Council, the first choice, refused. In December of the same year, the central government, while confirming the conditions established in 1767, chose to return the supply of bread to the Council, strengthened by the increase in the number of councillors and the appointment system that prioritised members of the higher nobility. The Audience, holding onto the freedom of bread making, could not overcome the crisis of the end of the century. At that time, the municipal government, in favour of the monopoly, allied with the Captain General, who, in turn, supported the City Council. Thus, for several decades, the municipal authorities regained control of the baking and selling of bread.



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Bread in Barcelona in the 18th century: continuity and change

Gaspar Feliu, Institute of Catalan Studies

In the eighteenth century, the supply of bread in Barcelona continued under the same system that had been established in previous centuries. In fact, the management of the city's supply of bread and meat was one of the few matters that in theory continued in the hands of the municipal authorities after the *Nova Planta* decree. The municipal government kept the monopoly on the sale of bread. Generally, it did so through leases, however, in difficult years when the tenants pulled back, it was the municipal authorities who had to take charge. The monopoly was limited by the possibility of making dough and baking bread at home, of making the dough at home and having it baked at the bakery and taking flour to the bakers and getting it back in the form of bread (*pa de talla*), as well as the privileges of certain ecclesiastical bodies, especially the cathedral and the Inquisition, to sell their surplus bread. The

latter two circumstances gave rise to abuse and litigation.

The system was structured in this way both to ensure the supply of bread and to subsidise black bread, the bread of the poor, the price of which was reduced at the expense of an increase in the price of white bread. However, the beneficial aspects of the authorities' intervention in the market were accompanied by difficulties that could become serious. Firstly, despite the ban, bakers sold white bread more cheaply, making it pass as *pa de talla* and, secondly, the cost of the supply of wheat placed great strain on the city's finances, as they had to advance large sums of money to keep the market supplied. There was too much corruption within the municipal authorities, but, even without this, the system often posed problems of excess grain, which was bought at high prices, and which it was difficult to dispose of subsequently if ce-

real prices dropped. Conversely, if the city did not have enough wheat stored, they suffered in times of scarcity, when the other providers withdrew from the market. These problems were exacerbated by the fact that the people blamed the city council for the rising cost of bread and therefore they became the target of their anger.

Nevertheless, the system was working reasonably well, despite the increasing intervention of the Bourbon authorities, until the crown's decision to liberalise the markets, firstly the wheat market (1765) and later the bread market (*libre panadeo*), without taking into account the factors determining these markets. This caused problems of shortages and especially price increases, which led to the serious conflict known as *Rebomboris del Pa* (1789). Once the riot had been suppressed,

the previous situation was restored, and keeping a peaceful population became the main concern of the municipal authorities. The decrees of liberalisation were not withdrawn but they were not applied.



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Wine and inns in medieval Barcelona

Manuel Sánchez Martínez, CSIC Barcelona

Undoubtedly, indirect taxation on wine became one of the most important revenues for city finances, not only in Barcelona or Catalonia, but in most western Mediterranean cities. In the case of Barcelona, from the 1330s onwards, the *imposició del vi* or wine imposition was the most productive of all indirect taxes: in those years it represented 35% of all taxation and no less than 28% over almost all the second half of the 14th century. The importance of wine for city treasuries was highlighted by the volume and detail of the regulation of the entry, sale and consumption of this product in the city.

In general, the *imposició del vi* included three different types of taxes: one taxed the entry of the grape harvest into the city, another applied to the wholesale of wine and grapes, paying a certain price for each load; however, over and above these two charges, the most significant tax on wine was that ap-

plied to retail, both by innkeepers and landlords and by owners of vineyards or wine who decided to place their surpluses on the market and “*set up a tavern*”, albeit only a temporary one. As some courts in the first half of the 14th century laid down, this third tax consisted of a payment of an eighth of the retail sales of wine. The most characteristic form of collecting the tax was to reduce the measure of the wine so that the buyer received one eighth less of the product. It should be noted that, given that this tax affected all retail wine consumers, not only was this the biggest income for the city from the complex taxation of the grape harvest and its end-product, but this tax also had the greatest impact on the social fabric. Indeed, the one eighth tax hit the poorest layers of the urban population (the poor, workers, craftsmen), who did not own vineyards and were unable to purchase the wine that they needed for their family

consumption at wholesale prices, while people who owned land on the outskirts of the city were much less affected.

The extensive body of ordinances aimed at achieving the effective collection of this tax, and especially to prevent the numerous cases of fraud (the “*wine cry*” or *crida del vi*, the identification of its point of sale, the ban on blending, control of measures, requirements for manufacturers of barrels, hygiene measures, rivalries between innkeepers and

landlords, etc.) enables us to go beyond the purely fiscal aspects and reflect more broadly on the production, import, sale and consumption of wine in medieval Barcelona.



British Library

Supplying the city with meat

Ramon A. Banegas López, University of Barcelona

The supply of meat in Barcelona at the end of the Middle Ages had three main stakeholders: the butchers, the municipal government and the consumers. Understanding the relationship between them is fundamental in understanding the dynamics of the meat market at that time.

The butchers in Barcelona during the 14th and 15th centuries were both manual workers and businessmen. They usually organised themselves into companies to buy livestock in the markets located on the transhumance routes and take it to the city. Once in Barcelona, the fattening of the animals was completed in the Besòs and Llobregat deltas, while awaiting the time to come to town to be slaughtered, dismembered and sold on butchery tables. The butchers had enormous control over the city's supply process, having achieved significant vertical integration in the distribution network.

The fact that the majority of Barcelona's butchers worked in a similar way does not mean that they were all financially equal or had the same volume of business. There were those who ran a single butchery stall and handled a small number of animals per year with the help of a couple of assistants, while others had more than one stall, handled thousands of cattle annually and worked with a small team of employees. Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries the butchers managed to create quite complex economic structures through which they tried to optimise the business. In contrast, their internal cohesion was precarious.

The butchers' guild developed slowly over the two centuries. One reason is that there were significant financial differences separating members of the profession, which often led to tense competition. In addition to this, it must be added that the municipal authorities

Theatrum Sanitatis,
14th century Ms. 4182
tav.138
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were always hostile to the creation of a strong butchers' organisation.

Regarding the municipal government, the high local demand, along with the introduction of taxation on consumption of meat during the second half of the 14th century meant that the city of Barcelona had a constant concern with keeping a smooth supply of cheap meat. It was the city government who fixed the prices of meat, who dictated the rules governing the process of skinning, quartering and sale and, from 1339 onwards, who nominated to the king the officer who would monitor compliance with the city's regulations. This strict control generated many conflicts between the municipal authorities and the butchers. The tensions, mainly price-related, caused problems of supply in the city.

The consumers were in no way a uniform group. They were very diverse, ranging from major customers, who benefited from advan-

tages in their dealings with butchers to small buyers, who bought small pieces of meat for their daily consumption.

In short, the difficult interaction of these three elements marked the evolution of the supply of meat in the city over the last centuries of the Middle Ages.

Pastures for the livestock of Barcelona (16th-18th centuries)

Josep M. Bringué Portella, historian

It is well known in modern historiography that the jurisdiction of the city of Barcelona expanded widely across its neighbouring territories. Discrepancies arise when one seeks to define and demarcate “the boundaries and territory of Barcelona” in the 16th-17th centuries.

Barcelona based its territorial claims on a privilege of 1319. Until 1716, the city interpreted it as jurisdiction over its own area (from Montgat to Castelldefels, from Collserola to the sea), a single university and 23 parishes that had institutions without any political capacity. At the end of the 18th century, consideration was given again to the inclusion of this area within what was referred to as *the territory of Barcelona*.

Barcelona obtained resources from its expansion into the surrounding area. At the same time, however, problems arose that differentiated the city residents from those who

lived outside. For example, pressure from the Barcelona population on farmland outside the city (farmhouses, country houses) led to conflicts regarding the enclosure of land (*bans*). The imposition of taxes that provided income to Barcelona triggered opposition from some villages in the territory, such as Sant Martí de Provençals or Sant Andreu de Palomar. And most of all, the pasture land that was so necessary for the herds providing meat for the city was not always easy to maintain, as evidenced by the opposition initiated in 1657 by the residents of L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, shared by the inhabitants of Sarrià and some other villages in the 18th century.

The importance of the pasture areas around the city came from the system for the supply of lamb. The city or its merchants bought the rams that came down the cattle trails. Before containing them in pens in Barcelona, they required fattening. Barcelona

needed to have nearby, on an ongoing basis, between 4,000 and 5,000 sheep, a reserve of meat that guaranteed the supply for about two weeks. For fattening the livestock, they used the grass of the Besòs and Llobregat deltas, and the pasture that was left in the cultivated and fallow fields.

Grazing ground became increasingly scarce as Barcelona landowners gradually displaced the local owners of the outside parishes as crop growing spread and as a more intensive agriculture prevented the grazing of stubble or fallow land.

In Llobregat, Barcelona had a defined territory, Els Joncars, right inside the land belonging to the parish of Hospitalet. Conflicts arose there with landowners due to the city's ban on the expansion of cultivation. In the actual farming area, between the boundary markers and the Valencia road, conflicts revolved around stubble and fallow land.

The communal institution of the 22 butchers from the villages in the area was crucial in raising the awareness of the people in the parishes about the value of the area and its boundaries. They fought against the restrictions imposed by Barcelona, which considered itself the lord and master of all the farmland. The new social groups which controlled local life in the 17th century (artisans, farmers, etc.) were the protagonists of these conflicts. However, this did not affect the class structure, since at the same time the labourers and the poorest smallholders were prohibited or restricted from gleaning.

Allegory of good and bad government, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 1338
Palazzo publico, Siena
© Photo Scala, Florence



sturgeon or swordfish, and small fish, such as sardines or anchovies, which were less valued and more typical of the poorer classes. Salted fish was also prepared and sold: tuna, eel, sardines, shad, herring...

The fish market was a covered area which during the day became a crowded and lively space in the city. Municipal records provide information on its perfectly regulated operation, social conflict, gender roles and fish prices. Moreover, medieval recipes, the records of various institutions and private accounts provide information about fish eating habits in Barcelona, especially during the last medieval centuries, the taste for produce of the sea and ways of cooking it.

Fishing and the supply of fish

Mireia Comas Via and Teresa Vinyoles Vidal, University of Barcelona

The supply of fish was vital for medieval towns, especially due to the obligations of the liturgical calendar, under which the eating of meat was prohibited for more than 160 days of the year, especially on Fridays and during Advent and Lent. Barcelona was no exception to this. Councillors restricted the sale and consumption of meat during Lent, while guaranteeing the supply of fish and monopolising its market.

In Barcelona and the coastal towns under its area of influence lived a group of seafarers of particular note. They were fishermen, who used different techniques and skills, depending on the type of catch, such as long line fishing, seine or small dragnets. The majority lived in the Ribera and Còdols districts. The lifestyle of fishermen and their families were very different from their neighbours.

All the fish that were caught, from Maresme to Garraf, and twelve leagues into

the sea off the coast of Barcelona, had to be sold to the municipal *Pescateria* (fish market) located in the Ribera district, very close to the beach. The sale of fish, both fresh and salted, was governed in accordance with the ordinances of the municipal authorities. The comprehensive nature of the regulations that they established enable us to define the operation of the fish market, the activities that took place within it and the relationships that were established. The rules were essentially aimed at ensuring the supply, especially during Lent, and at monitoring the quality, favouring the sale of the daily catch and on a retail basis, selling as directly as possible to consumers and using well-established intermediaries.

In medieval Barcelona a wide variety of all types of fish was consumed. In particular, distinctions were made between cut fish, i.e. large fish that were cut into pieces and were more highly prized, such as tuna, grouper,



Reredos of Corpus Christi, Master of Vallbona de les Monges (Guillem Seguer?), 1335-1345
© MNAC- National Art Museum of Catalonia.
Photographers: Calveras/Mérida/Sagrilà

Fruit, vegetables and poultry in the markets

Mireia Comas Via and Teresa Vinyoles Vidal, University of Barcelona

Urban growth, which in Barcelona was dramatic and constant from the 11th century, raised the problem of food supply for a population which for the most part did not live off agriculture or, in other words, required external supply. However, fruit and vegetables were an exception to this. Gardens were cultivated within the city walls, especially the *Hortes de Sant Pau* gardens in the lower part of Raval district, where many residents had vineyards and vegetable gardens that they exploited for own consumption. In addition, the *Hort i Vinyet* (orchard and vineyard) area occupied the plain of Barcelona almost up to the gates in the walls.

Fruit and vegetables were an essential dietary complement, especially for the lower classes. In addition, herbs were grown in the kitchen gardens that were used to flavour food and were more affordable than imported spices. They also grew medicinal plants. In

addition, the gardens provided a recreational area for local people.

Vegetable gardens and orchards required irrigation systems, which could be natural or man-made. These were established both on the plain of Barcelona and within the city boundary.

The rhythm of the weather marked the seasonality of agricultural products. At the end of April, the first cherries appeared and, in a sense, the summer schedule began, which went on until late September when the last figs and grapes ended. In Barcelona's vegetable gardens at the end of the Middle Ages, turnips, cabbage, head cabbage, leeks and spinach were harvested in winter, which were combined in meals with pulses and cereals. In spring there were beans and peas, and, from June, the ubiquitous pumpkins. We also know that they grew cucumbers, carrots, radishes, parsnips, garlic and onions. As for fruit,

fresh fruit was of particular importance, such as pears, cherries, peaches and figs, although dried fruit and jam were also eaten, especially raisins, dried figs and quince jam.

The production of the urban gardens was insufficient to meet the needs of the population. There was, therefore, a food market that guaranteed the supply of these products, which were in high demand, given that the daily meal consisted of a stew made principally from vegetables and small amounts of meat. Markets specialising in vegetables were spread across various squares in the city, such as Plaça de les Cols (cauliflower), Plaça de les Cireres (cherries), Plaça del Born or Plaça Nova, which were entirely regulated by municipal ordinances. The sale of these products, along with poultry and eggs, was essentially carried out by women: some were engaged in re-sale, but there were also women farmers from the area surrounding Barcelona who came into the city every day to directly sell their products.

The poultry market, located in Plaça de l'Oli (oil) or Plaça Nova, had a slightly different clientele, as the consumption of poultry was more widespread among the wealthy,

and was reserved especially for feast days and celebrations and for the sick.

The presence of fruit, vegetables and poultry and eggs on the Barcelona medieval dining tables is reflected in the recipe books and in private and institutional accounts.

El Bornet of Barcelona,
18th century
© Barcelona History
Museum – Pere Vivas





Supply and consumption in the 19th–20th centuries

View of Plaça Nova, Alexandre de Laborde, *Voyage pittoresque et historique de l'Espagne*, 1806–1820

© Historical Archive of the City of Barcelona, Gabriel Serra

The liberalisation of the food market

During the 18th century, the mechanisms that allowed the municipal government to protect and control the supply of the most basic products through commercial monopolies and regulatory control grew weaker. The gradual liberalisation of the markets was a controversial process that culminated in the nineteenth century. The Barcelona City Council endeavoured to keep the protected market system. However, eventually they adapted to the changing times, and created new institutions and functions.

Living standards, diet and health

Over the 19th century, Barcelona became an industrial city, while a major transformation took place in the social structure and living standards of the people. Social differentiation also meant food differentiation: diets changed with the introduction of new products, reflecting differences in class, gender and age.

Adapting to exceptional circumstances and new times

In the 20th century, especially during the war and post-war period, the people of Barcelona lived through periods of food insecurity. They were exceptional times, highly subject to governmental intervention. In the second half of the 20th century, the economic changes brought new eating habits, new distribution systems and new supply options, such as large retail outlets or shops offering specialised products.

The geography of food supply around 1850

Francesc Valls-Junyent, University de Barcelona

According to Laureà Figuerola's *Statistics of Barcelona in 1849*, the capital of the Principality had a population of over 186,000, not counting the large floating population. Although the Catalan capital was much smaller than the major European capitals such as London (more than two and a half million inhabitants), Paris (approximately one million) or Berlin (approaching half a million), it surpassed the other Spanish cities. It was just bigger than the capital of the country (180,000 inhabitants) and substantially bigger than the only other two Spanish cities, Seville and Valencia, which had around 100,000 inhabitants.

In the publication mentioned above, Laureà Figuerola provides an estimate of the consumer product needs generated by an urban area of this size. About three and a half million kilos of lamb, beef and veal came into the city every year, together with around fifteen thousand pigs and a number of poultry

that is difficult to pin down (including, according to Figuerola's estimates, approximately two hundred thousand chickens).

One of the most important sources of calories in the mid-19th century diet was wine. Annual consumption in the city of Barcelona was nearly 200,000 hectolitres, according to the author of *Statistics of Barcelona*. However, in the food context of that time, it was cereals that were absolutely central to the diet. According to Figuerola, in 1848, 489,465 *quarteres* of wheat, 1,344,440 arrobas of flour, 10,964 *quarteres* of barley, 40,438 of corn, 55,063 of barley and 326,000 arrobas of rice were brought into Barcelona for consumption by its inhabitants.

In addition to these products, which could be considered as the main foods supplied in Barcelona, both due to their importance in the diet and the volume of trade they generated, there were other



© Francesc Valls-Junyent

very significant products, such as olive oil, brandy or cod, which Figuerola called the *meat of the poor*, and of which, according to his estimates, about 62,000 quintals were consumed in Barcelona.

In terms of the main sources of this huge volume of products which were essential to the daily consumption of the city and the outlying towns, the publication of the *Balance of trade of imports and exports verified by Barcelona Port and Customs in 1848* by the Trade Board provides us with a wide range of data that enables us to reconstruct Barcelona's main commercial supply networks in the defining moment of its emergence as one of the key industrial centres in southern Europe.

In addition, the *Balance* of 1848 also highlights a matter of great consequence: Barcelona in the mid-19th century had become the gateway and hub for supply networks

linking the rest of the country for a large number of essential items, especially those which necessarily had to come by sea.

The supply of grain and flour

Pere Pascual Domènech, University de Barcelona

During a period in which wages had a very low purchasing power, the diets of working-class families did not diversify and bread remained the staple food that absorbed a considerable percentage of disposable household income. During the first third of the 19th century, the Barcelona market was still supplied with a high proportion of foreign wheat. This pattern disappeared when a ban was imposed on cereal and flour imports, which led to a progressive increase in wheat, grain and flour supplies from inland Spain, although for some years there was extensive smuggling.

The construction of the railway meant that the distribution of these products to cover the huge deficit in Catalonia and especially Barcelona, which at the outset had been transported by cart to the ports of the periphery and by coastal shipping to Barcelona, was carried out by train, and a very high proportion of that on the Barcelona-Zaragoza line.

The new system of supply of wheat and flour changed in the last two decades of the 19th century due to the end-of-the-century agrarian crisis (Europe-wide) that was characterised by a huge influx of overseas grain at extremely low prices that swamped the tariff barriers of all the countries of the Old Continent. At this juncture, the port of Barcelona became the main port of entry into Spain for American wheat, which not only met the demand of the Barcelona population, but large quantities of which were re-shipped (both by sea and by rail) to the rest of Catalonia and Spain. In those years, the flow of imports facilitated the consolidation in Barcelona of an important flour industry engaged in the milling of foreign wheat.

The availability, during the second half of the 19th century, of statistics on the movement of wheat, other cereals and flour which converged in Barcelona on the railways, and

which, through long-distance maritime trade and coastal shipping arrived at the port of Barcelona, makes it possible to quantify the volume and pinpoint the increase (as well as the origin) of the net imports made to meet the demand created by the large population on the Barcelona plain. The quantitative information available is complemented by qualitative data relating to the vicissitudes of the transportation and commercialisation of wheat and flour, which is reflected in the reports published by the railway companies and the minutes of their boards of directors.

In the analysis of the supply to Barcelona of wheat and flour, and consequently, bread, it is also very important to bear in mind the development of the tariffs that were applied by the railway companies, given that the transport costs were of very great importance in determining the price of bread on the Barcelona market.



Port of Barcelona,
Josep Esplugas Puig,
1880-1889
© Photographic Archive
of Barcelona

Taxes and protests

Mercè Renom, University of Barcelona

Until the 18th century, the system of food supply in the towns and cities of Western Europe had been based on the guarantee of supply of basic products and protection against excessive price increases. The right to subsistence was a constituent part of the “common good” that governments had to protect in the name of “good governance”.

However, from the second half of the 18th century, a number of trends appeared which were contrary to the protected market regulated by the municipal authorities. Some theorists and the grain producers defended free trade, arguing that it was a way to end the shortages. The first attempts aggravated the situation and caused widespread protests, such as the riots of 1766 in Madrid and other Spanish cities (while Barcelona, which kept its regulation, remained peaceful) or the “flour war” (*guerre des farines*) of 1775 in Paris.

Economic liberalism gained support in Spain over nearly a century, in parallel with the construction of centralism, which favoured the expansion of capitalist business interests while also introducing elements of instability and social neglect to certain groups in the rural and urban population. In the process, municipal governments lost the instruments for control of the food market and the traditional resources of the local tax office, while, at the same time, their roles and responsibilities increased.

The Spanish tax reform of 1845 was based on an inefficient single direct tax applied to personal, commercial and industrial wealth. It was supplemented by an indirect tax on certain food products, which affected more modest family budgets disproportionately. The tax which was much easier to collect and raised large sums was the “tax on consumption”, which was also intended to swell the coffers of the local tax office.

From the outset, the products affected by the tax on consumption (*consumptions*) were wine, cider, *txakoli* (a Basque wine), beer, brandy and liqueurs, olive oil, soap and meat. Despite the fact that bread, pulses and vegetables, the mainstay of most people’s diets, were exempt from the new tax, it sparked off a widespread protest movement. This brought together the popular uprisings against the *consumptions*, the criticism of certain groups of public finance officials and publicists, and the political campaigns of some parties, mainly the Republicans, who on certain occasions managed to persuade the progressive liberals to support the cause. The suppression of the tax on consumption was achieved temporarily in periods of increased political openness [Progressive Biennium (1854-1856) and Democratic Sexennium (1868-1874)], but was maintained until the middle of the 20th century.

After the revolution of 1868, the Revolutionary Council of Barcelona decreed the

abolition of the tax on consumption, even before the Madrid government decree. However, after two years, to alleviate the local tax deficit, *consumptions* were gradually restored, despite opposition from large segments of the population, including shopkeepers. At the beginning of 1872, the protests of men and women of all ages in Barcelona were so violent that some collection booths were set on fire and there were even some deaths.

The Old Born, Ramon Martí i Alsina, 1867
© MNAC- National Art Museum of Catalonia.
Photographers: Calveras/ Mérida/Sagristà



The municipal market network

Manuel Guàrdia Bassols and José Luis Oyón, Polytechnic University of Catalonia

Unlike the UK or France, the modernisation of the traditional markets in Barcelona took place late and was laborious. The enlightened conception of markets as facilities did not become clear until the creation of the Sant Josep and Santa Caterina markets, and especially Cerdà's Ensanche project. Between 1850 and the 1870, the traditional guarantee of the supply of grain - the *pallols* or municipal granaries - became obsolete, as the markets, which had not been modernised, became the main instrument of control over food prices. Therefore it is not surprising that over the last three decades of the 19th century, with intense population growth and the impact of new technical networks, a sustained effort was made to modernise the city's food supply system.

While the metallic structures of the markets were the most visible expression of the desire to completely renew the system, other good examples are the efforts to resolve the

outstanding issue of the slaughterhouse and the attempt to create a large central wholesale market. The new forms of transport and the change in the scale of the city - endorsed by the aggregation of municipalities - meant an increase in the catchment area, particularly for meat and poultry, and the growing importance of the wholesale trade. The insistent demands for reorganisation of the markets by fruit, vegetable, fish and poultry wholesalers finally ended in 1921 with the conversion of the Born into a fruit and vegetable wholesale market, and the removal of fish wholesalers to the Galeria de Màquines on Wellington Street. The reorganisation of the system was completed during the first half of the 20th century, with the construction of new retail markets.

Therefore, until the end of the Civil War, following, somewhat behind, in the footsteps of other European cities, a very substantial



network of retail markets was completed. However, the critical circumstances of the post-war period led to a marked divergence from other more advanced countries. While many European cities showed a rapid modernisation of commercial distribution from the 1950s, involving the progressive erosion of traditional markets, in Spain, the containment of prices depended almost exclusively on the markets. This policy to combat the high inflation in Barcelona was written into the guidelines of the first Development Plan, led to the project for a new wholesale market in the Zona Franca district, opened in 1971, and resulted in a strong expansion of the network of retail markets. As a result, between 1939 and 1970, when the number of markets in Europe was declining, Barcelona went from having 18 to 40 markets.

Around 1985, the deterioration of the commercial fabric, accelerated by the crisis

and the growing threat of large retail outlets, prompted the exploitation of the inherited market network by the municipal government, who used it as a lever in its initiative to regenerate trade in the local communities. This strategic choice implied, in recent decades, a renewal of the markets and a very distinctive municipal management in the international context.

The Born Market,
c. 1900
© Photographic Archive
of Barcelona

Consumer cooperatives

Ivan Miró Acedo, sociologist

The food supply in the city of Barcelona has had an often invisible actor: the working classes, organised as consumers.

From the mid-19th century, in order to deal with the economic difficulties of the emerging industrial proletariat, groups of female and male workers, often influenced by the ideas of federal republicanism, developed initiatives for mutual support. These became progressively more complex and grew into workers' consumer cooperatives. In the context of the textile factories, where work was badly paid and unstable, especially in the settlements around the edge of the Barcelona plain such as Sants, Poblenou, El Clot or Horta, which did not have effective access to the central food supply markets, small initiatives sprang up, aimed at eliminating bourgeois commercial intermediaries and buying basic products wholesale, at a better price and of a better quality. L'Antiga del Camp de l'Arpa

(1866), La Constància Martinenca (1868) and La Fraternitat de la Barceloneta (1879) were some of the cooperative pioneers. Rented premises, a cask of wine, a large earthenware jar of olive oil or a sack of vegetables, obtained with the humble weekly contributions, symbolised the very modest beginnings of the movement.

Later, projects were started up such as the Flor de Maig (1890), La Lleialtat Santsenca (1891) and the Model del Segle xx (1901), which became important institutions, with buildings of their own that housed not only fraternal financial relationships, but also a rich social and cultural life. Self-managed consumption not only served to ensure equitable and effective distribution of food products among the working classes, but was the basis for establishing their own social policies that neither the state nor the capitalist market were in a position to guarantee. Thus, with

the surpluses from the collective purchasing, the workers' cooperatives developed social, cultural and educational services; provident funds to cover illness, old age or death; strike funds, and mutual health funds; social dimensions that improved the life of workers who aspired to replace capitalist relationships with the practice of cooperation.

The Barcelona consumer cooperatives developed and expanded in line with general historical events. Episodes such as the big strikes in the second half of the 19th century or the lockouts helped to increase the importance of institutions which guaranteed access to food in troubled times. With the advent of the Second Republic in April 1931, the cooperative movement had, for the first time, specific laws that protected it against the regular attacks from the merchants' guilds, while at the same time they developed secondary industries of their own (which produced pasta for soup, chocolate or carbonated water) and encouraged female participation in their organisations. In 1935, around seventy cooperatives articulated the workers' geography of food self-sufficiency in the city.

With the Civil War, the consumer cooperatives reached their heyday and, along with industrial collectivisations, structured the revolutionary new economy. That workers' economy, however, would be eradicated on the entry of the fascist troops to Barcelona in January 1939.



La Artesana cooperative

Public health control

Joaquim M. Puigvert, University of Girona

Before the 19th century, the city administration in Barcelona did not entirely ignore the control of food quality. A good example of this is the *mostassaf*, the former municipal official, who, in addition to having responsibility for the control of weights, measures and prices, ensured the good quality of food products. However, it was with the introduction of the liberal state in the mid-19th century that the foundations of the municipal health administration were laid down.

Indeed, from that time onwards the notion spread that the authorities should be involved in public health in general and the health control of food in particular. These responsibilities led to a certain organisation of the health administration. The new liberal state delegated *de facto* most of these responsibilities to provincial and municipal authorities. Therefore the political leaders of the provinces, mayors and their subordinates

in charge of medicine, pharmacy and animal health had the ultimate responsibility for food health.

It would be a mistake, however, to merely identify the food-related health problems and produce a list of the preventive measures that were adopted, in order to subsequently analyse their successes and failures. The issue is far more complex and has many implications. Firstly, the municipal health control must be linked to the introduction of new consumer habits, particularly the increased consumption of meat and milk among the affluent and the emerging middle classes. The increase in meat consumption opened up new areas of work for vets who, in 1859, obtained the prerogative for the control of meat inspection in slaughterhouses. The vets, in collaboration with engineers and architects, strove to modernise, sanitise and update these facilities, as in the case of the new big slaughterhouse that



Slaughterhouse buildings on Diputació Street in Barcelona, Brangulí photographers, 1935-1945
© National Archive of Catalonia

was built in the left Eixample district in the late 19th century. Increased consumption of milk by the Barcelona population led to a considerable increase in the number of dairies, initially within the city (with the ensuing hygiene problems) and later in the neighbouring areas. Vets were also responsible for the health control of foods of plant origin (bread, vegetables ...) and water, in addition to having herbalists, spice merchants and pharmacists under their control.

In the health control of foods, in addition to the involvement of various professionals, important scientific and medical advances took place in the last quarter of the 19th century that led to a major paradigm shift in hygiene policies. The new bacteriological theory related infectious diseases to specific pathogens, which led to the development of physicochemical techniques, such as pasteurisation, antiseptics and asepsis, and the

creation of laboratories and public institutions managed by scientifically-trained professionals. In this respect, a notable role was played by the Barcelona City Microbiological Laboratory, directed by Dr. Jaume Ferran between 1886 and 1905.

Development and social differentiation in diet

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The diet of the Barcelona population underwent a number of changes during the 19th and 20th centuries, a period marked by major economic and social changes and urban development of the city.

During the first half of the 19th century, the feeding of the population was still closely linked to the production of the surrounding area, which came from the Barcelona plain and the regions of Vallès, Maresme and Baix Llobregat, despite having important foreign trade links which, on account of its status as a port, enabled any possible shortfalls to be covered.

In the process of industrialisation, urbanisation and population growth, the diet of the inhabitants of Barcelona showed a marked social differentiation between the diet of the growing working class and that of the middle classes and ruling upper bourgeoisie.

The diet of the Barcelona inhabitants underwent a transformation through what is

known as the modern nutritional transition. This can be defined as a process starting from a basically vegetarian, local and seasonal diet, which is often monotonous, irregular and insufficient for a large majority of the population. This evolves into a diet, today's diet, which is relatively varied in terms of its components, stable and de-seasonalised in the supply of all kinds of products, and increasingly more globalised while excessive and unbalanced.

Two phases can be distinguished in the development of the modern nutritional transition. The first is characterised by an increase and stabilisation in the supply of basic products of the traditional diet, such as cereals, and a second is characterised by the diversification of the diet, especially by the increase in the consumption of animal products, following the bourgeois dietary model, to the detriment of foods that until that time had

Comerç Street and the Born market, Josep M. Marqués, 1934
© Photographic Archive of Barcelona



been staples, such as grain for bread making, pulses and, at a later date, potatoes.

Several factors explain these changes. They were initially attributed to economic development, in particular, an increase in income, a key factor. However, it has been shown that other factors were important, such as scientific progress in food conservation and processing, improvements in transportation, increases in agricultural production, the process of urbanisation, advertising and the ecological context.

In the case of Barcelona and the working classes, we started from a traditional diet based on the Mediterranean trilogy (cereals, olive oil and wine), with larger or smaller quantities of pulses, potatoes, fruit, vegetables, fresh or canned fish, animal fats, and marginally, other animal products such as meat, milk or eggs. The process of urbanisation, population growth, the development

of a modern food industry, improvements in shipping and the emergence of the railway were instrumental in driving the changes that characterised the first phase of the transition. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie enjoyed a more varied diet with a significant amount of meat, or imported products such as sugar, coffee, tea or chocolate. Their diet became a model of reference for the changes that characterised the second phase of the nutritional transition.

In the first decades of the 20th century the changes accelerated, and once the traumatic interruption of the Civil War and the post-war period had passed, in the last decades of the century, the changes to the current diet were completed.

Nutrition and gender in working class Barcelona

Cristina Borderías, University of Barcelona

Concern about the nutritional state of the population and, in particular, the establishment of a suitable diet to maintain the workforce formed part of the hygiene and reform programmes aimed at mitigating the increase in morbidity and mortality in the working class neighbourhoods of cities during the industrialisation process. The most prominent works of Barcelona doctors and hygienists show that the subject of these new “scientific” diets was the adult male worker, and that the only specific differences on which they focused were those that it was of interest to establish in relation to the physical effort for each particular trade.

In these works, the prevailing attitude, which was both ideological and unrealistic, was that women did little work or that they did work which required minimal physical effort, and therefore, in addition to their physiology, they could subsist on a poorer diet. This ig-

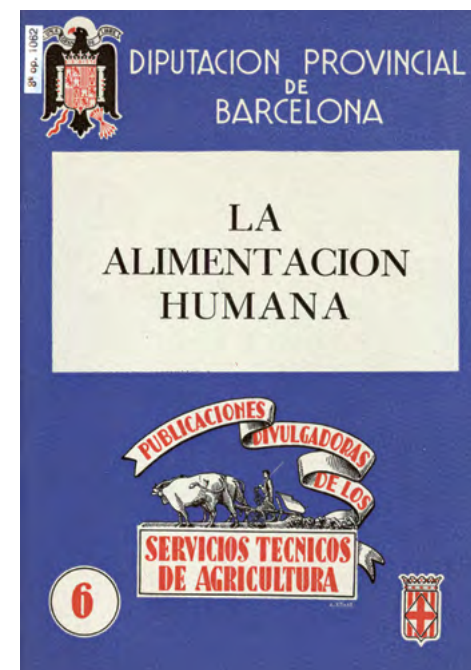
nored, the reality of industrial growth both in Catalonia, and especially in Barcelona, because extensive use was made of female labour. This was the case in the textile and clothing industries, in domestic service and the markets. The enormous physical effort that household chores entailed at that time was also ignored, and no mention was made of the fact that the higher female morbidity, as had been pointed out by Pere Felip Monlau, was due both to the hard labour that they undertook and to poor diet.

When the consequences of industrialisation for the health of the working class led medicine to review the traditional nutritional parameters and establish diets that were more suitable for the requirements of new production systems and new ways of life, the traditional ideas on female nutrition were left untouched. This bias of medicine is related to the development of social discourse regard-

ing the new gender models that came with industrialisation. This discourse attributed responsibility for the financial maintenance of the home to men, and the work caring for the family and home to women. In this process, the development of wages as the main means of obtaining an income favoured the reductionist attribution of the concept of work as that which is carried out for the market. Meanwhile, the work done by women in maintaining the home and family members remained as such invisible.

The process of differentiation between production or market work and the work of human reproduction or housework also meant a difference in the importance attributed to each, both in social reproduction as a whole and the reproduction of individuals and families. In addition to this, there was a

view that the supposed lower financial contribution of women to family subsistence should result in less access to the family’s financial resources: they would receive less education, eat less, dress modestly, not have access to their own money and not spend money on social activities. Therefore, although women worked hard, and despite their frequent pregnancies and births, their diet was worse than that of the men around them, which had a serious impact on their health and that of their children. Barcelona’s case was not, in this sense, different from other European cities in the years of industrialisation.



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Milk, the new food of the 20th century

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Until the late 19th century, milk was not a staple food in the diet of the Barcelona population. At that time its most important nutritional properties were still unknown. In addition, milk was a product that was easily contaminated by microorganisms harmful to health. Nor did the agricultural specialisation of the province in viniculture and various tree crops favour its consumption. By the mid 1800s, milk consumption in Barcelona was still less than 15 litres per inhabitant per year, which means that few people drank it. In fact, consumption was concentrated basically in those sections of the population who needed to ingest liquid diets, for age or health reasons. Indeed, consumption of milk and illness were two closely-related concepts.

This situation changed in the subsequent decades, when the nutritional contribution of milk in terms of calcium and vitamins started to become known, and when, through a wide

range of initiatives undertaken by the City Council, the health specialists - and the new dairy companies that were created from that time onwards - promoted its consumption, especially among the young. As a result of these initiatives, milk eventually became considered as a staple food and its consumption continued to grow, reaching an average of 80 litres per inhabitant per year in 1930.

In this process, the milk supply to the city also changed significantly. In the late 19th century, the consumption in Barcelona was covered mainly by goats which were milked locally on pre-arranged streets and places, by the milk produced in the surrounding area which was sold on an itinerant basis, and by cows kept in cowsheds within the city, mainly Swiss and Dutch breeds or their descendants.

From that time on, the number of city cowsheds started to increase and replace other sources of supply, until, around 1920, when

public health problems caused by the cows in the city led to their expulsion from the neighbourhoods with higher population density, and new municipal regulations limited their presence in other neighbourhoods. For these reasons, milk production in the areas surrounding the city greatly increased to the detriment of other less remunerative agricultural products. In the 1930s far more milk reached Barcelona from Barcelonès, Maresme, Vallès and Baix Llobregat, and, albeit less volume, from Osona.

At the same time, new businesses became increasingly prominent, such as dairies and so called *granges*, which often also sold various milk preparations. New dairy companies also acquired a growing importance, such as *Granges Soldevila*, *La Industria Lechera*, RAM, and many others, especially the *Granges Viader and Letona*. The latter became the main importer of milk into the city.



Itinerant sale of milk,
Frederic Ballell, 1907–
1908
© Photographic Archive
of Barcelona

Food and health

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The first estimates made in the late 17th century in some European cities of mortality according to age, and of their inhabitants' life expectancy, showed that child mortality, particularly in the first two years of life, was extremely high and greatly reduced life expectancy and the natural growth of urban populations. Barcelona confirmed this situation when, in the mid-19th century, a centralised registry of deaths was established and the first detailed demographic tables broken down by age were published.

Barcelona, like other major European cities, experienced an increase in the number of children abandoned at birth in the 18th and 19th centuries, and a notably high death rate among that group. Thus, the *inclusas* or homes for abandoned children - the Provincial House for Maternity and Foundlings in the case of Barcelona -, became a focus of the debate regarding the causes of the high urban

infant mortality. Its administrators attributed a large part of the high death rate of the children they took in to the disadvantages of replacing mothers' breastfeeding with mercenary breast-feeding – provided by wet nurses - or even worse, by what was known at the time as “artificial feeding” (replacing breastfeeding with other foods). The permanent shortage of wet nurses forced the experimentation with different foods and diets and the rough evaluation of their respective benefits in reducing mortality.

Changes in the practice of breastfeeding were not only a problem for children taken into homes. Women from various social sectors increasingly found more activities and reasons for giving up breastfeeding and the use of wet nurses and artificial feeding spread. In order to be able to intervene from a health point of view in these changes, organisations were created in Barcelona such

as *Gotes de Llet* (Milk Depots) (1890 and 1904) and the *Casa Municipal de Lactància* (Municipal Nursing Mother's Home) (1913). The importance of these institutions, beyond assisting children with nutritional problems, stemmed from their ability to correct the deficiencies in the composition and hygiene of children's diet through their publications and short courses, and the relationships they established with larger sectors of society and among the professionals working there and the families they helped.

The medical knowledge of the early decades of the 20th century enabled the understanding of the links existing between the nutritional and environmental situation of children and their biological growth. In Barcelona, specific attention to the child population was developed at that time through the creation of school health services and a series of initiatives such as summer camps,

canteens and medical examination. From the second decade of the 20th century, infant mortality in the city of Barcelona began an irreversible decline interrupted only by the Civil War, enabling a figure of less than 100 deaths per thousand births to be reached, while in Spain as a whole the figure remained above 125 per thousand.

Detail of the facade of the Municipal Nursing Mothers' Home (*Lactància Municipal de Barcelona*), 1910-1912
© Urbanisme, Hàbitat Urbà - CR POLIS, University of Barcelona



War and hunger (1936-1939)

José Luis Martín Ramos, Autonomous University of Barcelona

The Civil War had a far-reaching influence on the food supply of the population of Barcelona. The division of Spain into two areas led to a drastic reduction in the inflow of products such as wheat or most of the fish, which at this time came from the centre and the northern regions of the peninsula, and which were now in the hands of the rebels or isolated from the rest of the republican territory. In addition, social changes and the fragmentation of political power severely affected the Catalan market, making the distribution of local products scarce and expensive. On top of this, the inflationary process, stemming from the war and more acute in the Republican camp, exacerbated the sudden and significant decline in the availability of food products.

At first, local committees attempted to organise supplies, initiating a process of unionisation of distribution, which essentially took place in Barcelona. Not only did the initiative

not solve the problems but it created others, replacing the chain of financial intermediaries with one of political intermediaries. In the *Generalitat* (regional government of Catalonia), the first government of national unity led by Tarradellas in September 1936 kept the policy of supplies under the CNT's responsibility, which blocked any institutionalised organisation under a war economy. The second Tarradellas government, formed the following December, granted the Ministry of Supplies to the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) who attempted to exercise exclusive institutional authority over the process of food distribution, in anticipation of the improvement in availability of wheat imports, especially those that were expected from the USSR. In this way the political distortions were reduced, but the underlying problem remained.

The continuation of the war and the arrival of refugees from the areas of defeated

Republican territory, which increased the population by about 20%, made the situation worse. The financial resources allocated by the *Generalitat* for the importation of basic commodities were used up, and their request to the government of the Spanish Republic to make foreign currency available for purchases from abroad was turned down. Although in January 1938 the government of the Republic assumed the responsibility for supply, held until that time by the *Generalitat*, it was unable to establish a better system. Instead, the clashes of interest between the needs of supplies to the front and those of the rearguard, which had previously been negotiated between the two political powers, were now in the hands of a single authority, with increasingly unsatisfactory bureaucratic solutions.

The accumulation of administrative inadequacies and shortcomings was compounded, finally, by the reluctance of a significant proportion of farmers to comply with the production and distribution rules imposed by the government, particularly the difference between the producer's sales prices and the urban consumer's prices, in which the latter were clearly favoured. The availability of manpower for harvesting had been significantly reduced as a result of successive levies for the popular army. The harvest had declined, naturally, also as a result of the farmers' decisions, and much of it ended up on the black market. In the final stages of the war, hunger or malnutrition of the urban population had become a fact of everyday life.

Black market food discovered by the Control Patrols, Pérez de Rozas, 1937
© Photographic Archive of Barcelona



The everyday misery of the post-war

Carme Molinero, Autonomous University of Barcelona

The last months of the Civil War were never-ending for Barcelona's population, who were suffering from hunger. However, contrary to their expectations, the end of the conflict did not bring a gradual return to normal food availability. Rather, the very opposite happened: the years that followed were even worse and the Franco policies were, largely, responsible for that desperate daily reality.

The "New State" opted for an autarkic policy and, in that context, the supply of the population was not a priority. In Barcelona, as elsewhere, despite the disproportionate increase in food prices, it was very difficult to buy staple products in the market. In these circumstances, and to address the shortage and high cost of food, in May 1939 the Spanish government established a system of rationing of essential items, and the following month, fixed the individual amounts that would be given at a fixed price and which var-

ied according to sex and age: an adult woman or a person over sixty received 80% of the amount allocated to an adult male and a child under fourteen was allocated 60%.

The intervention was an absolute failure. In Barcelona, the supply of rationed goods was higher, given the concentration of population and workers. However, between 1944 and 1950 - in the previous years the levels were lower - a ration card could only purchase 20-50% of the olive oil that was consumed before the war, 15-35% of the rice, 25-50% of the sugar, and 15-45% of the potatoes. In this situation, in order to ensure survival, the only remaining option was to buy food on the black market, where prices were exorbitant. Despite the variability of prices, the available data indicate that the average prices on the black market were two to three times higher than those of the fixed price. For example, according to the report of

the Chamber of Commerce and Navigation of Barcelona, in 1946, olive oil on the black market cost 50-55 pesetas a litre, while the fixed price was 5.15 pesetas.

The purchasing power of the inhabitants of Barcelona plummeted, as in many other industrial cities, given that these extremely high prices were combined with the low wages imposed directly by the Ministry of Work. Therefore, it is not hard to understand that the population's food consumption declined dramatically both in terms of quantity and quality. There were years of hunger, especially between 1942 and 1944, and the majority of people could only just ensure survival with great difficulty. Permanent hunger induced many people, both working class and middle-class, to steal from orchards close to the towns. At the same time, many foods in the normal diet had to be replaced by others that were cheaper and more available. The

physical impoverishment caused by insufficient diet was an essential agent in the spread of tuberculosis, one of the features of the post-war period.



Concepció Brangulí Claramunt, laying the table, Brangulí photographers, 1936-1939
© National Archive of Catalonia

From grocers to large retail outlets and delicatessens

Steven Forti, Autonomous University of Barcelona

From the 1960s, the period of economic growth and increased purchasing power experienced by the countries of Western Europe brought about new consumption patterns. Albeit some time later, these phenomena also occurred in Spain of the *desarrollismo* (developmentalism). From 1964 to 1978 in Catalonia, real wages increased by 7.6%, which represents a considerable increase in family income and the transition from a basic consumer society to a mass consumer society. Therefore, if in 1955 more than half of the household budget was spent on food, in 1973 it was less than 40%, although in constant pesetas the budget allocated to food had grown by two-thirds in the same period: a much greater variety of food was eaten and of a higher quality.

At the same time, technological changes associated with production, storage and transportation led to changes in the type of

businesses. In addition, the increasing participation of women in paid work and the availability of refrigerators in homes transformed patterns of household consumption. The initial steps of technological innovation led to the creation of the first large retail outlets, such as the hypermarket opened by Carrefour in Sant Boi de Llobregat in December 1973, and also introduced new ranges of perishable food products. Other important new developments in those years included the creation of infrastructure for wholesale marketing and the establishment of the network of *Unidades Alimentarias* (wholesale distribution complexes); the opening of Mercabarna in the Zona Franca district in the early seventies, which in 1971 integrated the fruit and vegetable market that was previously located in the Born market; in 1979 the Barcelona slaughterhouse, previously located in what is now the Joan Miró park, and in 1983 the Central

Fish Market, which until then operated on Wellington Street.

These factors, among others, laid the foundations for the great transformation that took place in the food distribution system and prompted the gradual switch from a market orientated to satisfying immediate needs towards a market designed to satisfy desires, with a huge diversification of the product offer.

After 1980, and especially with the urban redevelopment carried out for the 1992 Olympics Games in Barcelona, the situation regarding the commercial food distribution system was comparable to that of the most developed European cities. The small-scale businesses with low levels of concentration and innovation (grocers - *colmados* - and other food shops) had disappeared to make way for large retail outlets and hypermarkets. In addition, a parallel phenomenon had begun to appear that was accentuated after 2000:

the emergence and spread of specialty or delicatessen shops, which in many cases were traditional stores that were converted, consumer cooperatives and minimarkets, generally run by Asian immigrants. The most recent innovation are the networks for the distribution of organic and local farming produce.



Outside the *Múrria colmado* in Barcelona
© Joan Múrria

“Feeding the city. The supply of Barcelona, from the 13th to the 20th centuries” is a Barcelona History Museum project, in collaboration with the city's Historical Archive and with the support of the Barcelona Institute of Markets.

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The system of food supply in Barcelona changed over the centuries, from the protected market of medieval and modern times, to the liberalisation initiated in the mid-18th century.

The city adapted to the new context with original forms of intervention, such as the central market and the network of municipal markets, and society has contributed others, such as the consumer cooperatives, large retail outlets and specialist shops of today.

And new products were incorporated into diets, which for centuries had been based on cereals, contributing to an overall improvement in health.

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