

## WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Keeping food fresh aboard ship was a nightmare. Months at sea meant that any fresh food went rotten and water became tainted. Their main diet was salted meat (salted to keep it from going bad and sometimes years old) and hard-baked biscuits. How would you survive on a sailor's diet? Remember that they had to do very heavy work.

Our ship was full of rats, and one morning we caught four which we had baked in a pie with some pork chops. When it came to the table he began greedily to eat saying 'What a treat!' One of our lieutenants got up from the table and threw his dinner up. When he had finished, he said one of the rat's flesh was black, but whether from a bruise or disease he was not sure.

**Lieutenant James Gardiner 1802**

We had hard sea biscuits, fresh beef when in port but salt pork and beef at sea, pea soup and burgoo. Burgoo was oat meal boiled in water to a sticky mass. Sometimes flour was mixed with raisins to make 'duff'.

**Samuel Leech**

The salt meat was so old that it was often carved into goods such as little boxes.

Our men got a barrel of butter and when it was half used it was found to be full of small hairs. We swallowed butter and hairs and as the butter got lower the hairs became more numerous until we got to the bottom, where we found a mouse with all its hairs off.

**Jeffrey Raigersfield**



The Ship's cook. What do you notice about him? Why might he have become the cook?

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London