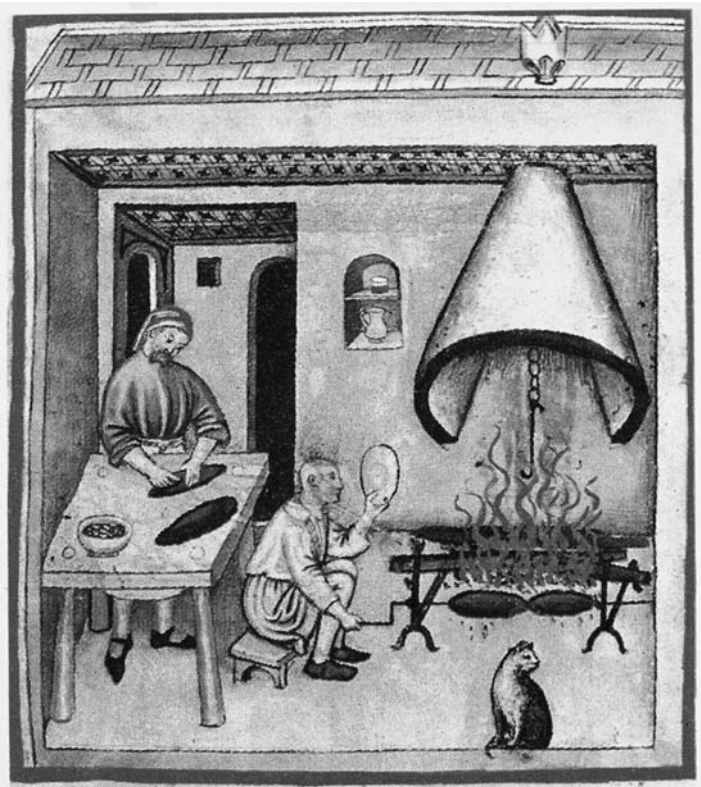


In Britain, little is known about kitchens until Norman times. After the Romans left Britain in AD 407, the culinary arts were largely forgotten. Food was often cooked outdoors on cauldrons or spits. This was to avoid the risk of fire and to keep smells out of the houses.

The central hearth

In Saxon times, food was cooked on central hearths in large, high ceilinged halls. Smoke drifted out of unglazed windows or



Turnspit rotating meat by hand – Italian manuscript (15th century)

a hole in the roof. Everyone ate communally on trestle tables, with the lord sitting at the centre of a table set across one end of the hall, overlooking his household who sat at tables placed along the hall before him. Later on, the lord's table was often raised on a dais to become, literally, a high table. Close by *cupboards*, i.e. boards for cups, displayed the gold and silver demonstrating his wealth. *Andirons* or firedogs were used to support the logs on the hearth and were later incorporated into the wall fireplaces, and became a useful way to support a roasting spit. These spits were at first operated by human *turnspits*. Later, various mechanical means were developed, including clockwork devices and treadwheels turned by dogs.



Dog acting as turnspit in an Inn in Newcastle Emlyn
Aquatint by Thomas Rowlandson 1797

The advent of the chimney

Soon after the Norman conquest, the fireplace moved to the wall although the central fireplace continued right up until the fourteenth century. Moving the fireplace to an outside wall may have come about because of the impossibility of having a central fireplace in a building of more than one storey. This allowed the development of the flue to carry away the smoke