

3

**Vessel from Peru**

Room 24

The shape and design of this *Paccha*, a ritual Inca watering vessel, narrates the Andean agricultural cycle of maize growth. Its long ceramic body represents a *chaquitaqlla*, a foot plough used to sow. The maize embodies the harvest process, while the *urpu*, the beige vessel at the top, serves as a container for chicha, a ritual maize-fermented drink.



4

**Sculpture from Gandhara (present-day north-west Pakistan and parts of south-east Afghanistan)**

Room 33

This head represents Siddhartha (who is yet to become Buddha) when he underwent extreme fasting while doing meditation to discover the truth of life. He chose to give up food (*ahara*) as he wanted to achieve self-discipline.



5

**Porcelain wine cups from China**

Room 95

Set of twelve porcelain wine cups, each decorated with a seasonal plant or flower representing a month on the lunar calendar. These Qing Dynasty cups also have an inscription and a seal on their base. Drinks are often shared during celebrations and over conversations with family and friends.

**Object in focus****Food and drink around the world**

The Object in focus trail was developed by the 2022 International Training Programme fellows.

**Supported by**

The Aall Foundation  
Altajir Trust  
American Friends of the British Museum  
The Barakat Trust  
British Museum Friends  
British Museum Patrons  
Charles Wallace India Trust  
Charles Wallace Pakistan Trust  
The John S Cohen Foundation  
The de Laszlo Foundation  
The Edith Murphy Foundation  
Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation  
Supporters of the Lambert Fellowship  
Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust  
Philip and Irene Toll Gage Foundation  
Rangoonwala Foundation  
Sino-British Fellowship Trust  
The Thriplow Charitable Trust

Front cover: Painting from the tomb of Nebamun. Thebes, Egypt, 1350BC.

Vessel with representations of a digging stick and maize cob. Peru, 1500s.

**The British Museum**

Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3DG  
britishmuseum.org  
©The Trustees of the British Museum 12/2022



# The British Museum

**Food and drink around the world**

Explore the trail

**Exploring *Food and drink around the world* histories**

Over the centuries, food and drinks have been a fundamental part of our lives. Since the beginning, humans have explored their territory, learnt how to use natural resources, explored cooking techniques, and gathered to share and celebrate. Besides keeping us healthy, it reflects our histories and defines our cultural identity. Ingredients, flavours, smells, techniques, tools, and traditional celebrations are part of everyone's family memories.

Its relationship with ancestors has proximity to rituals practised by different cultures worldwide, uniting the theme with religion and beliefs.

This trail features 15 items that record everyday gastronomic practices, whether enjoyed by the living or offered to the dead. Explore more about the stories, imagine how cultures worldwide relate to them and discover the symbolism around food.



1

**Ladle from Indonesia**

Room 1

Food brings people together. Sharing, however, can be challenging. When a whole table needs to share different types of food, a ladle helps to pick up the food and distribute it evenly to everyone. This small ladle made of shell and horn represents a utensil that can be found in homes across Indonesia.



2

**Cooking ware from Nigeria**

Room 25

The coal pot is filled with charcoal and lit with a flame. Clay pots are placed on the central ridges of the coal pot. Its use preserves the nutrients and taste of the food. Charcoal adds a smoky flavour and irresistible taste to foods, which is why most Nigerian crave party food.



6

**Instrument from Iran**  
Room 43

Cafe culture has long been associated with music. In the 19th century, tar, a long-necked Iranian lute, was used as one of the main musical instruments in Middle East countries' cafes, where only men could visit for rest, enjoy free time, play chess, and listen to music.



7

**Bowl from India**  
Room 43

Magic bowls with Islamic verses of the Quran with the 99 names of God engraved on their inner surface are used to treat scared children and adults. When filled, the vessel transfers curative aspects to the liquid. By drinking it, they begin to feel better.



8

**Grinding stone from Syria**  
Room 51

Grinding-stone tools aim to reduce materials into particles or powder. Analysing residue from these stones provides insight into the relationships between people and plants. Skeletons of people who used these tools have signs of injuries, stress, and deformation.



9

**Painting from Egypt**  
Room 61

This polychrome tomb painting represents Nebamun, his wife and daughter, while he is standing in a boat catching fowl and fish. Ancient Egyptians excelled in preserving fish, drying, and salting. They passed down their techniques through the generations.



10

**Pomegranates from Egypt**  
Room 63

Food offerings such as pomegranates in a bowl were common in a funerary context in Egypt. They were essential for the magical evocation of food supplies needed for the afterlife. Societies like the Egyptians believed that earthly life was just one stage of a long journey.



15

**Sculpture from London**  
Room 93

This porcelain fish and chips by Japanese artist Hosono Hitomi reflects how food such as potatoes crossed territorial boundaries worldwide. On its surface, applied overglaze decoration narrates a story of the 21st-century image of London that every foreigner coming here carries.



11

**Flint sickle blade from Egypt**  
Room 64

Agricultural season in ancient Egypt was vital to the economy. They daily consumed food made from grain, such as bread. To cut the grain stalks, they used flint blades like this fitted into wooden handles. While harvesting, farmers chanted songs and shared stories.



12

**Conical jar from Egypt**  
Room 64

Egyptians used Nile silt pottery to make this cooking pot found in Naqada. Similar pots, filled with ashes taken from a funerary feast, were placed in graves to magically provide a home-cooked meal for the dead in the afterlife. This jar is older than the pyramids!



13

**Jar from Sudan**  
Room 65

Wheel-made jar from the Meroitic period with a long narrow neck and thick red polish used to contain drinks. Its neck is chipped at the rim, and its exterior is decorated with cream and brown paint and debased ankh symbols. To this day, similar jars are used all over Sudan.

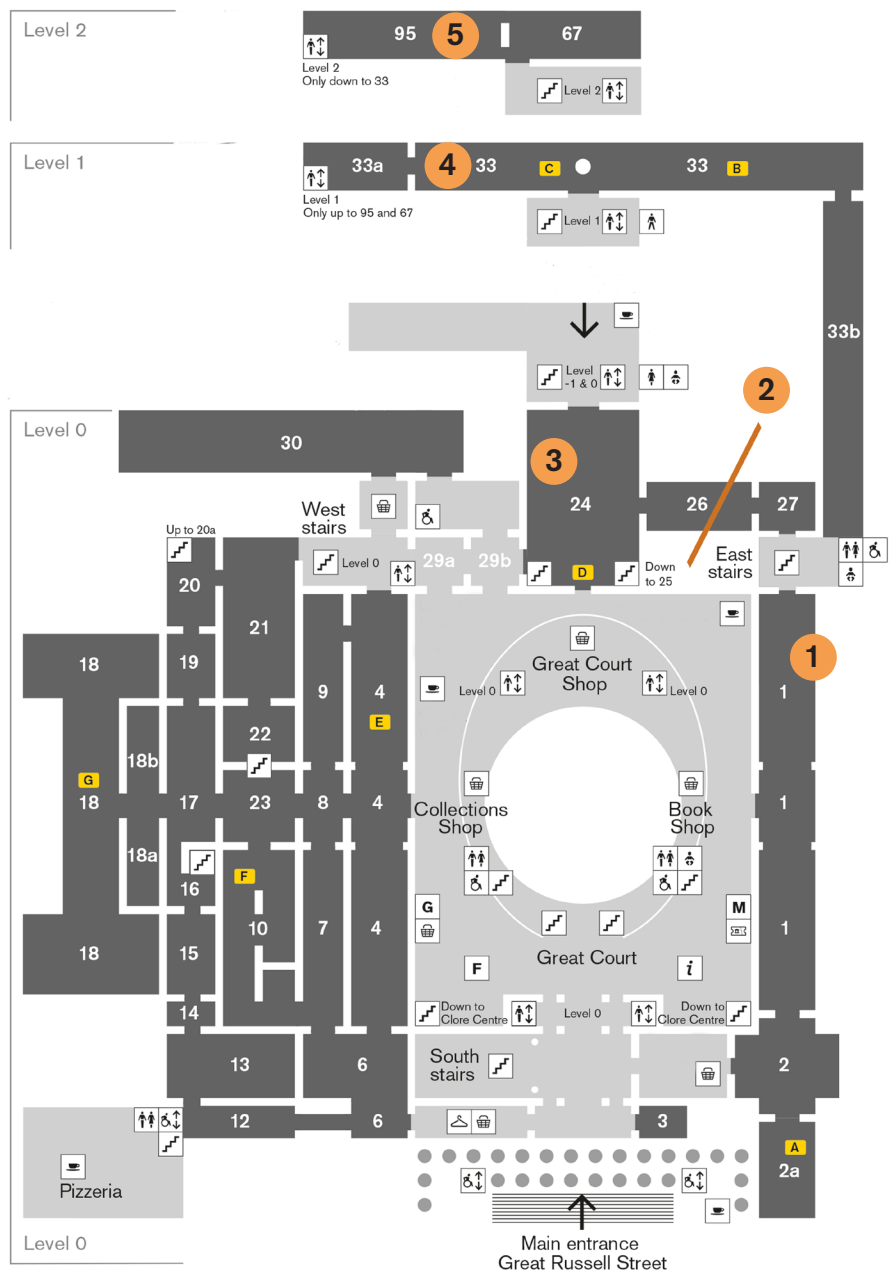


14

**Bottle from Sudan**  
Room 65

Ritual practices of the Kerma culture demonstrate the importance of food and drinks in the afterlife. It is typical to place in burials sacrificed young sheep, goats, and similar wheel-made bottles to contain drinks.

## Ground floor



## Upper floors

