

Reconstructing Food Preparation Strategies through Use-Alteration Analysis of 1st-Century CE Cookware Assemblages from Pompeii.

This paper considers how the inhabitants of first-century CE Pompeii prepared their daily meals and what factors influenced their choice of cooking techniques. Through an examination of the frequencies of particular types of vessels (bronze and ceramic) and utensils used for food and drink preparation recovered from a series of previously excavated properties in and around Pompeii, I reassess what constituted the standard *batterie de cuisin*e within the Pompeian kitchen and how this could be modified according to the needs and preferences of the one stocking the shelves. I further offer a reconstruction of the various cooking methods employed and preferences exhibited by those who used these cookwares through an analysis of use alterations displayed by the objects. This involves the systematic examination and documentation of intentional and unintentional modifications – including sooting, scratching, denting, etc. – visible on the surface of each object. The properties selected for this study represent a range of property types, including modest and grand houses, commercial food establishments, and suburban villas, allowing us to discern how food preparation strategies differed between households, as well as residential and commercial properties. I interpret these differences as indicators of the socioeconomic priorities and individual tastes of those who prepared the meals within these different contexts.

This study, based on fieldwork carried out in August and September of 2019 in the storerooms on Pompeii, sheds light on an often overlooked aspect of Roman daily life through the examination of an historically neglected class of artifacts. It also provides a corrective to traditional typological artifact studies which privilege morphology over functional considerations. By focusing on the dynamics of object-user interaction and how vessels and utensils were actually manipulated within Roman kitchens, as evinced through use alterations, we can better appreciate not only the methods, but also in part the motives of the cooks who used such objects.