



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search

<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>

aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

Hu Foods and Production Methods in *Qimin Yaoshu* (*Important Arts for the People's Welfare*)

Na WANG*

College of Humanities & Social Development, Northwest A&F University, Yangling 712100, China

Abstract *Qimin Yaoshu* (*Important Arts for the People's Welfare*) made a detailed record of the diet and its production methods in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River during the Wei Dynasty. Hu foods are important parts in the book. Hu foods recorded in *Important Arts for the People's Welfare* mainly include cheese products, cake products, and dish products. These contents not only reflect the exchange of diet culture between different nationalities in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River during this period, but also reflect the breadth and depth of ethnic exchanges and integration in this period.

Key words *Qimin Yaoshu* (*Important Arts for the People's Welfare*), Hu foods, Cooking technique, Production methods

1 Introduction

Under the long-term influence of natural, historical and cultural factors, the dietary customs of different regions often have distinct nationality and regional characteristics, and people have had a clear understanding of this issue for a long term. According to *The Classic of Rites: Royal Regulations* (*Liji: Wang Zhi*), the people of those five regions—the Middle states, and the Rong, Yi, (and other wild tribes round them) had all their several natures, which they could not be made to alter. The tribes on the east were called Yi. They had their hair unbound, and tattooed their bodies. Some of them ate their food without its being cooked. Those on the south were called Man. They tattooed their foreheads, and had their feet turned in towards each other. Some of them also ate their food without its being cooked. Those on the west were called Rong. They had their hair unbound, and wore skins. Some of them did not eat grain-food. Those on the north were called Di. They wore skins of animals and birds, and dwelt in caves. Some of them also did not eat grain-food. The people of the Middle states, and of those Man, Rong and Di, all had their dwellings, where they lived at ease; their flavors which they preferred; the clothes suitable for them; their proper implements for use; and their vessels which they prepared in abundance. In those five regions, the languages of the people were not mutually intelligible, and their likings and desires were different. It can be seen that as early as the beginning of the civilized society, the nomadic people living in the grassland have formed a diet that is clearly different from the Chinese nation in the mainland, and has gradually become an indispensable and important component of the national culture. In the process of historical development, with the contact and communication of different nationalities as the link, the food production methods and dietary practices of the nomadic people of the North have gradually entered the Central Plain areas^[1]. According to records of *History of the Eastern Han Dynasty – Wu Xing Zhi*, Em-

peror Ling of Western Han Dynasty were fond of clothes, curtains, beds, seats, and foods of Hu people, and then many aristocratic relatives in the capital started to compete for them. Especially in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties, due to the influence of ethnic migration and great integration, the traditional diets of the nomadic peoples in the northwest spread more widely in the Central Plain areas, and they were gradually absorbed by the people in Central Plain areas and became their common dishes and drinks. These are so called Hu foods, and it is a unique historical landscape in the history of Chinese dietary culture^[2].

Qimin Yaoshu (*Important Arts for the People's Welfare*) is the earliest ancient literature that made a record of Hu food and its production methods in the existing literature. It systematically preserves the style of Hu foods in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties, and provides precious data for the study of dietary culture in this period. Here, some of Hu foods and the production methods are simply introduced with the reference to *Important Arts for the People's Welfare*, in the hope of making a preliminary sorting of the general situation of Hu foods and their influence.

2 Cheese products

The nomadic people in the northern grasslands are well known for their eating meats and drinking milk, and cheese products are unique inventions of the northern grassland people. The *Sheep Raising* Chapter in *Important Arts for the People's Welfare* made a detailed summary of production technique of various cheese products, including cheese production methods, dry cheese production method, horse cheese fermentation method, and mixing cheese production method. It introduced main points of every step for each kind of cheese products.

2.1 Preparation process When the cattle is going to give birth to calves, feed the cattle with thin porridge. Then, three days after the cattle gives birth to calves, tie up the cattle head and shin, make it incline and swell, fall down to the ground, then beat its milk nuclear with hand to break the milk nuclear, finally, gently kick the breast with foot to obtain the milk. For goat milk,

most of the methods are the same, the difference is not kicking but just using hands to squeeze the milk nuclear.

2.2 Production process

2.2.1 Stroking the breasts. Five days after the cattle gives birth to calves and ten days after the sheep gives birth, when calves or lambs have enough milk to drink and can eat grass or drink water, it is able to get the milk. When stroking the breasts, it is required to leave one third of milk for calves or lambs.

2.2.2 Cheese making. In the end of March or the beginning of April till the August, cheese can be made. Wait till the evening, when cattle and sheep come back, keep the cattle and sheep apart from their calves and lambs. Early in the morning, separately drive them to different grassland till noon, then drive them back to stroke the breasts for milk. Later, make their calves and lambs gather together with them, and return in the evening. In this manner, milk is much, and the cattle and sheep will not become lean.

2.2.3 Milk frying. Pour the milk into the cauldron for frying with gentle fire, otherwise hot rapid fire may lead to burn at the bottom. Dry dung of the cattle and sheep collected in the first and second months of the lunar year is the best for frying milk because the dry dung is characterized as gentle fire. During the frying, frequently ladle up the milk with a wooden ladle to avoid spillover. At the same time, frequently completely stir at the bottom in a horizontal and vertical manner, but not in a circular manner. In this process, it should be noted that blowing is not allowed, otherwise, the milk may become thin. After four or five times of boiling, pour the milk into a pot, till it is cooled down, scrape the surface to obtain the cheese.

2.2.4 Keeping fermented milk at the constant temperature. Put the cooked milk into bags and filter. If the bottle is new one, directly use; if it is an old one, burn in the ash fire, otherwise, there will be moisture in the bottle and the milk will be broken and not form cheese. Besides, to ferment the milk, it should be carried out in the season when the temperature is warm and comfortable; too hot temperature may bring about vinegar taste, and too cold temperature will make it difficult to form cheese.

The above steps indicate that *Important Arts for the People's Welfare* gives a detailed introduction of the production methods and main technical points of cheese products. The steps are summary of long-term experience of northern grassland nations. In addition, dry cheese production method, horse cheese fermentation method, and mixing cheese production method are developed on the basis of general cheese production method. Cheese is made from the milk of cattle and sheep. It is only the most basic processing of the raw materials, while "crisp" and "dry cheese" products are processed with cheese as raw materials. In other words, after people have mastered the most basic food processing methods, deep processing with basic foods as raw materials will not only make people have a full understanding of food, but also will increase the types of foods^[3].

3 Cake products

In China, the cultivation of wheat first appeared in the northwestern part of ancient China. In *Book of Poetry: Sacrificial odes of Zhou: Si Wen*, there are following verses:

*"O accomplished Hou-ji,
Thou didst prove thyself the correlate of Heaven;
Thou didst give grain-food to our multitudes;
The immense gift of thy goodness.
Thou didst confer on us the wheat and the barley,
Which God appointed for the nourishment of all;
And without distinction of territory or boundary,
The rules of social duty were diffused throughout these great regions."*

In these, food refers to the wheat. The earliest remains of wheat cropping in China was found in the ancient tomb cemetery (about 3 800 years ago) on the Peacock River in Xinjiang, there were often wheat burials in the straw stalks on the head side of the tomb, ranging from more than a dozen to more than one hundred. It was initially identified as common wheat and cone wheat. According to ancient literature, wheat was indeed cultivated by ancient minorities in the northwestern region of China^[4]. According to *Volume 63 Collected Biographies of Dayuan in Records of the Grand Historian*, living in southwest of Xiongnu people, Dayuan people had aboriginal customs, did farming and cultivated rice and wheat. The *Biography of Zhao Chongguo in History of the Western Han Dynasty* also described that main crop of Qiang people was wheat. Thus, it can be inferred that the flour milling and cake making techniques were initially developed among the minorities in the northwest regions. The flour milling and cake making skills of people in Central Plain areas also learned from the minorities in the northwest regions. According to *Interpretation of Diet in Interpretation of Words*, cake was the merge of flour and water. China's cake products originated earlier. As early as in the period of Three Kingdoms, there were cake products. By Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties, cake products flourished, China's cake products developed into more than ten kinds, and the production methods were also very varied and colorful. However, most products exist in name, and their production methods have disappeared. The valuable point of *Important Arts for the People's Welfare* lies in the fact that it not only comprehensively made a record of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties and its previous cake products, but also included the cakes and foods of the Northwestern minorities during the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties. The ingredients and production of the cake were detailed and summarized, and these have become precious material for studying the ancient Chinese cake culture^[5].

3.1 Hu cake In *Interpretation of Diet in Interpretation of Words*, Hu cake is the combination of flour and water, made into cake shape, then sprinkled with sesame seeds. In Xiangsu Zazhang, Hu cake is named just because it is a common food of Hu people, it is like a sesame seed cake. The ancient griddle cake sprinkled with sesame seed is different from the present sesame seed cake. The ancient one is cake mixed with chopped meat, while the present sesame seed cake is purely cake baked with dough. In *Chapter 82 Methods for Making Cake in Important Arts for the People's Welfare*, Hu cake is made with dough and mutton as main ingredients, and scallion stalk, fermented soya bean, and salt as condiments, firstly cooked the condiments then put into the

dough mixed with mutton, made into cake shape, finally baked.

3.2 Marrow fat cake Marrow fat cake is in fact a sweet crispy cake. The *Sound and Meaning of the Tripitaka* stated that the marrow fat cake is originally food of Hu people, and later spread to the whole China. The ancient crispy cake is made from marrow fat, honey and flour. First, the flour is made into dough with about one centimeter thickness and about 20 cm diameter, then put into a Hu cake roaster. Because it is mixed with animal fat and honey, it is delicious and has a prolonged taste. In *Chapter 82 Methods for Making Cake in Important Arts for the People's Welfare*, the marrow fat cake is put into Hu cake roaster, indicating that it has certain relation with the Hu cake, it is a kind of Hu food. Evolved to the present, the crispy cake becomes the thousand layer crispy cake. It is moslem food, and a local delicate of northwestern minorities. By now, it is still very popular in the northwestern areas. The crispy cake made by the Hui people is the most well known.

3.3 Ring cake Ring cake is also called cold food (preserved in winter and spring for eating during Cold Food Festival). Ring cake is like scorpion, so it is also called scorpion cake. Such features make the ring cake can preserve for a long time. The method for making ring cake is as follows: use honey and water to mix the flour, or cook the jujube to take the juice; add the fat of goat or cattle (milk of goat or cattle is also excellent) to make the cake crispy. By the way, oil fried wheaten food is a traditional food that is still popular with many ethnic minority people. For example, when the Tujia people welcome the bride, the oil fried wheaten food is a main food; when the Hui people treat guests and send gifts and celebrate a festival, the oil fried wheaten food is also a main food. The oil fried wheaten food is thin and uniform, crispy and bright in color, beautiful in shape, very delicious^[6].

3.4 Hu meal In *Volume 103 Wu Xing Zhi - Fu Yao Tiao in History of the Eastern Han Dynasty*, Emperor Ling of Western Han Dynasty were fond of clothes, curtains, beds, seats, and foods of Hu people. Hu Konghou, Hu flute, Hu dance were favored by aristocrats in the capital. In various food of Hu people, there is the item of Hu meal. In three provinces of Hu people of *Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government*, wheat cake was made by northern people, the wheat was soft, mixed with meat, so also called meat cake. This meat cake is Hu meal. The production method of Hu meal was first shown in *Chapter 86 Methods for Making Cooked Meal in Important Arts for the People's Welfare*, cut the salted bottle gourd into slices, roast with the fat meat, roll some romaine lettuce into the cake, make cake into two rolls, cut each roll into three sections, so there are six sections, finally sprinkle some coriander, and place in the meal. From the above records, it can be seen that Hu meal is actually also a meat cake, like the present rolled thin pancake, the difference is just in making method. Such eating method is simple, it is convenient to take away, and it also preserves the nutritional value because it has meat, vegetable, and flour^[7].

4 Dish products

4.1 Hu soup In Western Han Dynasty, Zhang Qian went on a mission to the Western Regions. He brought back the dietary hab-

its of central Asia. Hu soup was just one of those. In Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties, Hu soup was very popular in the imperial court. *Chapter 76 Methods for Making Meat Soup in Important Arts for the People's Welfare* detailed the production method of Hu soup: two pieces of lamb ribs, 2 kg of mutton, 4 liter of water, cooked fully, cut the mutton into cubelets, added green scallion and coriander, and seasoned with Anxi pomegranate juice. If adding mutton, the soup will be tasty, adding green scallion and coriander, especially the Anxi pomegranate juice, the taste is unique. Anxi pomegranate was imported from Iran and had the style of Hu food.

4.2 Cooked deer head This dish is like the cooked goat head in Hui people. It is also like cooked pig head in Han people. It is the result of integration between minorities and Han people. The method for making the cooked deer head is as follows: take the deer head as raw material, purely boil to completely cooked, wash and cut into meat cubelets, use chopped pork to make soup, add callion stalk, fine ginger slices, dried orange peel, and dried pepper, and add bitters, salt, and fermented soya bean according to personal taste. The description is very detailed, showing the carefulness of the author.

4.3 Sheep intestine soup This dish is like the soup made of sheep intestines. *Chapter 76 Methods for Making Meat Soup in Important Arts for the People's Welfare* detailed the method of making the sheep intestine soup: take 5 liter of sheep blood, wash the blood stain (blood fiber), chop, cut 2 liter of lamb kidney fat into slices, cut the ginger, add dried orange peel, pepper powder, and fermented soya bean, and rice and flour, mix ingredients together, change the water to cook the soup. When it has no blood seeping, it is deemed to be fully cooked, cut into about 3 cm cubelets, assisted with bitters and sauce. Besides, *Important Arts for the People's Welfare* also recorded another method for making sausage: wash the sheep intestines, chop some mutton, cut green scallion, add salt and fermented soya bean, ginger, and pepper powder. The two methods are basically similar, the difference is the former is added with flour and rice and the latter is added with mutton, the former is easy to cook and the latter is roasting, like the roasted sausage.

4.4 Sheep viscera soup This soup is made of sheep viscera, specifically it is psalterium. The method is as follows: mix the sheep psalterium and rice, put some scallion stalks, boiled about half cooked, cut 500 g of fat duck, 500 g of mutton, 250 g of pork to make meat soup, add honey to produce sweet taste, then put the nearly cooked psalterium to continue cooking. This soup takes the sheep psalterium as raw material, assisted with rice, fat duck, mutton and pork, seasoned with honey. The taste is the result of combination of different nationalities. This soup combines the taste of southern areas and northern areas, and has the dietary style of Han people.

4.5 Sheep hoop soup Take the sheep hoof as the raw material, add mutton to make soup. The method of making the sheep hoof soup is as follows: prepare 7 pieces of sheep hoof, 7.5 kg of mutton, add 1.5 kg of green scallion, 5 liter of fermented soya bean, and one liter of rice, and add ginger and dried orange peel.

4.6 Sheep intestine soup Sheep intestine is a moslem food. The method of making the sheep intestine soup is as follows: use two pieces of intestines, add 3 kg of water, 3 kg of gourd leaves, 2 liter of onions, 3 liter of garlic, 3 liter of flour, and some fermented soya bean, ginger, and dried orange peel. This soup takes the sheep intestine as main raw material, added with different condiments according to personal taste. This soup is common in Hui people, it is typical dish of Hui people. In cold winter, drinking a bowl of this soup will make you warm, so it is a best soup for resisting cold. The condiments such as onions, ginger and garlic can remove the fat of the soup, and the addition of flour is the transformation of Han people to the original soup of minorities.

4.7 Sheep lung soup This soup takes the sheep lung as the material, added with mutton soup. The method of making this soup is as follows: use one piece of sheep lung, boil to fully cooked, cut into slices, and cook together with polished round-grained rice and ginger.

4.8 Hu roasted meat Roasting is a kind of baking of packed meat. It does not use cooking tools. It is very popular in minorities. The most primitive method is using clay to pack the meat, and putting the packed meat into sheep tripe. The method of making Hu roasted meat is as follows: use one-year old sheep mutton, cut the meat into slices, add fermented soya bean, salt, scallion stalk, ginger, and pepper, and turn out the sheep tripe, put the slices into the tripe, sew up when it is nearly full, dig a pit and burn the pit wall to red state, cool down the ash, then put the sheep tripe into the pit, cover with ashes, then burn the fuel above the tripe. About half hour later, it will be cooked, and the taste is very delicious, may be more delicious than cooking and baked one.

The above descriptions reflect that the Hu foods have unique characteristics. In the cooking method, it is mainly cooking, roasting, and frying, such as cooking the deer head, frying cake, and roasting the intestines. Such cooking method is the result of lack of proper cooking tools in ancient times, or just a kind of primitive cooking method generated from the time of no pottery tools^[9]. In the food making shape, it is mainly ring shape, such as Hu cake, oil fried wheaten food, and Hu meal. Such shape of food is easy to take. This is connected, to a certain extent, with the life style of many minorities living where there is water and grass. In the food production, it features durable and non-perishable, such as sausage and cakes. In summary, the production methods and shape of Hu food indirectly reflect the habits and life style of minorities^[10]. In addition, the unique cooking method and unique characteristics of Hu food are favored by the people in central plain areas. It is no wonder that Emperor Ling of Western Han Dynasty also liked Hu food very much.

5 Conclusions

In conclusion, in Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties,

with the exchange and integration of Hu people, Hu food brought more colorful contents to Chinese dietary culture. Besides, cheese products, cake products, and dishes of Hu food and their production methods were described in detail in *Important Arts for the People's Welfare*, fully reflecting the great influence of Hu food on the dietary culture of central plain areas. In addition to increasing the types of central plain foods, Hu food also changed their respective dietary habits. In the production methods of many dishes of minorities, the combination of production methods of central plain areas greatly changed the original taste and style, such as adding rice and flour in many kinds of foods, and adding ginger, dried orange peel to remove sheep or fish smell, for example, sheep intestine soup^[11]. By comparison, the diets of Han people also changed greatly in Hu people, such as ring cake in Xianbei people in Northern Wei Dynasty. However, such changes are not simply copy, they are the absorption of outside dietary culture combined with its own dietary characteristics, the transformation is more suitable for its own people. Such absorption and transformation greatly influence the dietary habits of Wei, Jin, and late dynasties, and develop the original style, and finally form the Chinese dietary cultural system which is inclusive of dietary style of many minorities^[12].

References

- [1] LI GP. Contribution of nation to development of Chinese science and technology from *Important Arts for the People's Welfare*[J]. *Researches in Chinese Economic History*, 2003, 18(4):19–23. (in Chinese).
- [2] LIANG JM. Draft history of agricultural science and technology in China [M]. Beijing: China Agriculture Press, 1989. (in Chinese).
- [3] ZHAO JM. The cake culture in Qi Min Yao Shu [J]. *Culinary Science Journal of Yangzhou University*, 2003, 20(1):44–46. (in Chinese).
- [4] WANG RX. On baking complete sheep for Qiang people [J]. *Chinese Classics & Culture*, 1995, 4(1):92–98. (in Chinese).
- [5] ZHAO L. On the great contribution of Qi Min Yao Shu to Chinese food culture [J]. *Chinese Cuisine*, 1991, 12(3):14–24. (in Chinese).
- [6] WANG B. The aristocracy and food culture of Jin and Southern-Northern Dynasties [J]. *Business Culture*, 1996, 3(3):55–56. (in Chinese).
- [7] FAN ZM. A research on the characteristics of food and drink culture in ancient Northern China [J]. *Agricultural Archaeology*, 2004, 24(1):205–208. (in Chinese).
- [8] DU L. Study on "the spread of food from east to west" from Han Dynasty to Yuan and Ming Dynasties [J]. *Culinary Science Journal of Yangzhou University*, 2011, 28(3):6–9. (in Chinese).
- [9] WEI YW. On the food culture of Han Dynasty from *Shi Ming · Shi Yin Shi* [J]. *Hunan Social Sciences*, 2006, 19(3):181–183. (in Chinese).
- [10] ZHAO JM. *Qi Min Yao Shu* and Chinese food culture [J]. *Agricultural History of China*, 1992, 12(1):44–46. (in Chinese).
- [11] ZHANG Y. Study on pre-Qin diet culture in the past twenty years [J]. *Journal of Mudanjiang Teachers College (Philosophy Social Sciences Edition)*, 2009, 35(5):128–130. (in Chinese).
- [12] ZHOU HC. Historical retrospect of the study on China food culture [J]. *Cuisine Journal of Yangzhou University*, 2018, 35(1):14–18. (in Chinese).