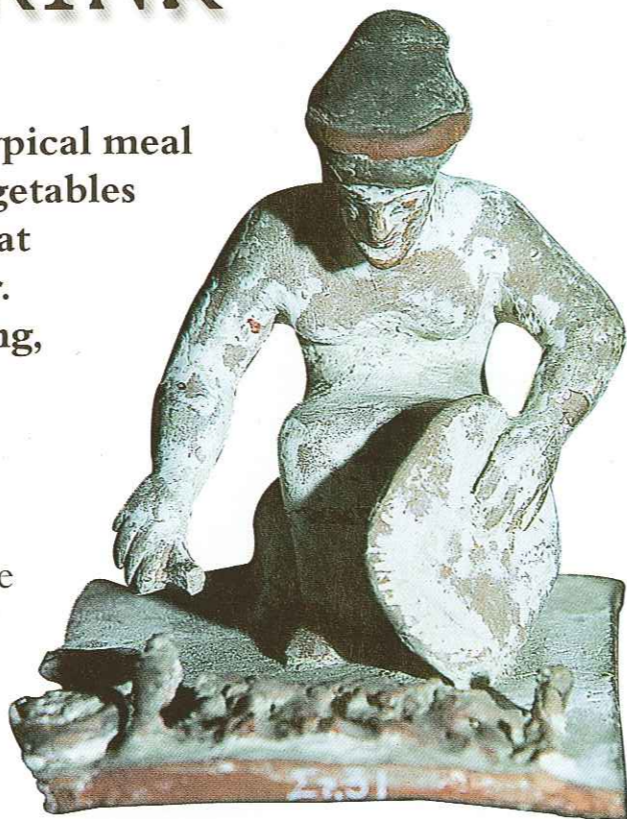


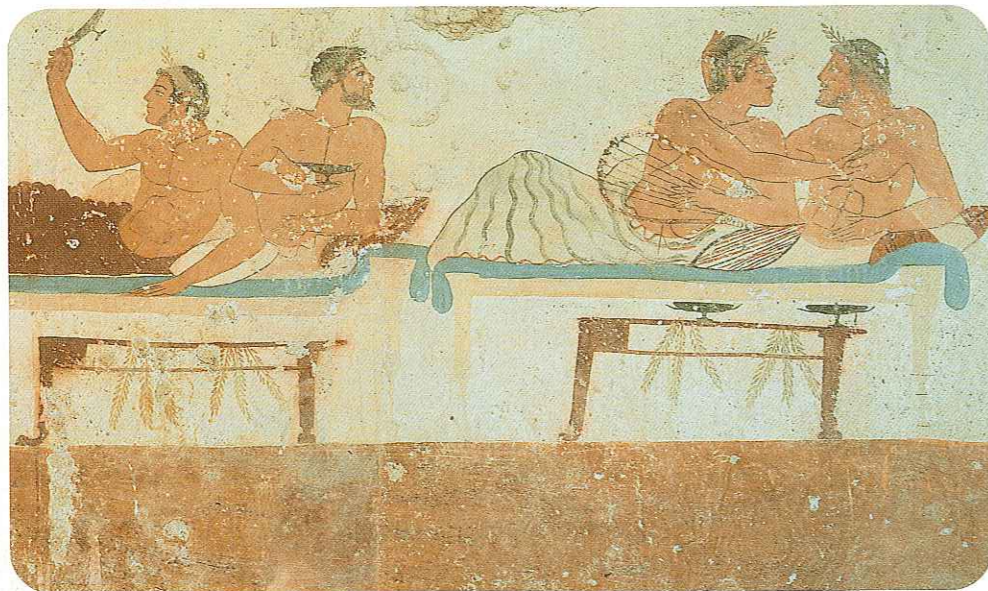
FOOD AND DRINK

Greek food was plain and simple. A typical meal might be bread, salt fish, fruit or vegetables and olive oil. The usual drink, even at breakfast time, was wine mixed with water. Some foreigners said Greek food was boring, but the Greeks despised fancy foods, such as rich sauces.

Meat was an expensive luxury. Many families looked forward to religious festival days because that was their only chance to eat it. Priests roasted animals that had been sacrificed to the gods over fires in front of temples and handed out slices of meat to worshippers. The Greeks also shared another favourite food – barley cakes sweetened with honey – with their gods. Sugar was unknown in ancient Greek times.



▲ *Preparing for a Greek feast. This terracotta statue shows a female servant grilling pieces of meat over an open fire.*



◀ *Men relaxing and drinking wine during a symposium (male dinner party). The Greeks always drank wine mixed with water.*



DID ALL GREEK FOOD TASTE GOOD?

The ancient Greeks ate foods that some people might not like today, such as goats' lungs (the air inside whistled as they were cooked), sea urchins (raw and still alive) and octopus (very tough and chewy). When food was scarce, in wartime or drought years, Greeks ate almost anything they could find, including iris roots, beechnuts, lupin seeds and grasshoppers.

The Greeks liked cheese but made it from sheep's milk, not cow's. They thought cow's milk was unhealthy. They also enjoyed soups made with lentils and chickpeas. But many Greek people would not eat beans. They believed one philosopher (called Pythagoras) who claimed that beans contained the souls of the dead.

Normally, Greeks ate sitting on low chairs. But on special occasions, such as men-only dinner parties, they ate lying down. Diners relaxed on long, low couches, which had room for two, side by side. This was so comfortable that they often dozed off between courses. Or maybe the wine was to blame?

▼ *The Greeks used pottery jars to store wine, grain and oil. When splashed outside with water, they kept the contents cool. Because they were made of clay, mice and rats could not chew their way inside. These massive jars, made on the Greek island of Crete, hold hundreds of litres each.*

