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Abstracts

MARIA GIAGNACOVO, Consumi e abitudini alimentari di una famiglia mercantile del basso Medioevo. La tavola di Francesco Datini (1367-1374)

The past decades have been very productive for the development of medieval food history, thanks to the use of various kinds of sources: among them, business sources are a source with a great potential for studying food expenditure behaviour, eating habits and culinary culture of the late fourteenth century mercantile bourgeoisie.

In this essay, after detecting the limits and the potential of business sources – correspondence and accounting books –, we have analysed Francesco Datini's household expense books, in which expenses for all domestic necessities were recorded including foodstuffs: this makes it possible to perform a quantitative (i.e. food budget) and a qualitative (i.e. food on the merchant's table) analysis of a merchant household's consumption.

The household expense books are a privileged source not only for a detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis of the food consumption of the specific domestic microcosm of Francesco Datini and his extended family, but also for an investigation into the behaviour and the dietary habits shared by the merchant bourgeoisie in the late fourteenth century. Allowing for the differences generated by the particular productive and supply possibilities of the territory and market, as well as by individual gastronomic preferences, the dietary habits and behaviour of Datini and his household group are typical of the culinary culture of the time's merchant class.

Keywords:

Food history

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Middle Ages