

Hard-earned variety Diet in rural Rhineland

Until the 20th century, the diet in rural areas of the Rhineland was determined by the food that was grown locally. Food was rarely bought, with the exceptions of salt and 'colonial goods' such as coffee and tea. The diet was therefore often monotonous. Potatoes had been a staple food since the 19th century, as had cereal products and vegetables. Milk and eggs from the family's own animals were also used in many ways, while meat and fish were mainly served at festive meals. Apart from 'Rübenkraut', a syrup made from fruit, there were hardly any desserts available. Seasonal wild plants such as nettles and sorrel supplemented the diet and provided variety.

In times of crisis, food was stretched and creatively processed. Thus, the inconspicuous rutabagas gained importance in the winter of 1917/1918, when they became a staple food due to the effects of the war.