

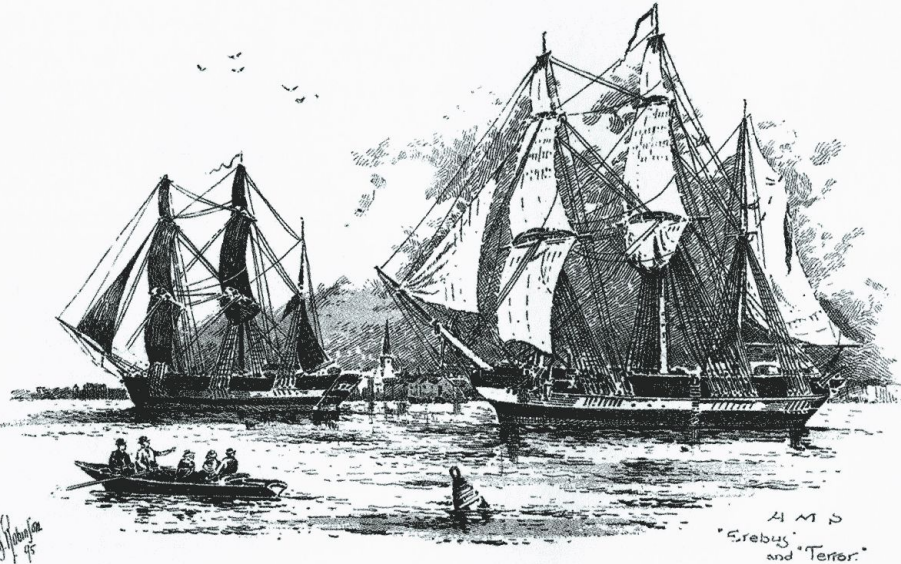
For Glory and Good Puddings: Food and Drink of the Franklin Expedition

by Ren Jackson



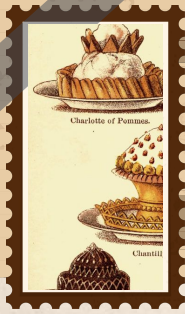
The Year is 1845...

You're a newly promoted English officer with minimal Arctic experience, selecting officers and crew for a grand adventure to find the Northwest Passage. As you work, it becomes increasingly clear that this endeavour is going to require an enormous amount of food to feed 129 men for at least a few years. But how much food do you need? Where is it all coming from? And will it be enough to last until you can resupply once you make it through the Northwest Passage?





Rations



Dietary Needs

Sailors

Sailors are prescribed a set volume and weight of rations each day.

Typical winter rations might be

- A pound of Biscuit
- A Pound of Meat
- A Pint of Chocolate (Hot)
- 1/4 Pint of Lemonade
- 1/4 Pint of Rum¹

This makes provisioning easier, but doesn't make for an very interesting or diversified diet.

It definitely won't be sufficient if anything should go wrong.

Officers

Officers are responsible for provisioning themselves. They'll have their own, private liquor and food stores, filled with fresher (or at least better preserved) food than the crew will consume. If the stewards do their jobs right, the officers of Erebus and Terror will have better cuts of meat, eggs, cream, coffee, and fresh vegetables while those supplies last.²

Just make sure everyone's provisions get on the right ship and you're good to go!



Now Just How Much Food Is Being Provisioned?

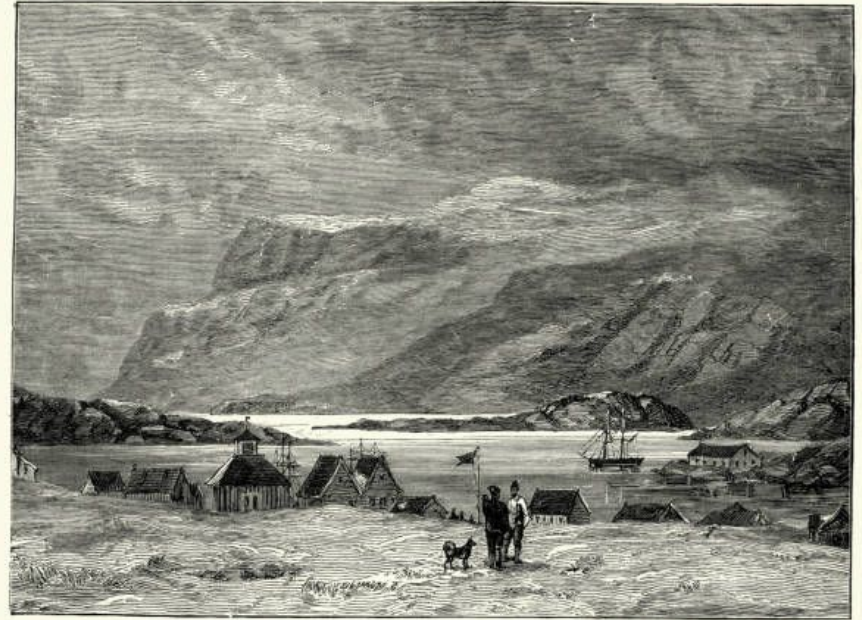


Food	HMS Erebus	HMS Terror	Total ³
Biscuits	18355 lb	18132 lb	36487 lb
Flour	69888 lb	66768 lb	136656 lb
Beef and Pork	32736 lb	31488 lb	64224 lb
Canned Meats	16066 lb	17223 lb	33289 lb
Lemon Juice	4750 lb	4550 lb	9300 lb
Chocolate	4822 lb	4628 lb	9450 lb
Spirits	1896 gal	1788 gal	3684 gal

* you'll also have to pack literal tons of sugar, canned vegetables, wine for the sick, raisins, peas, tea, vinegar, pot barley, oats, marinades, cranberries, mustard, pepper, and equivalent soup concentrate

There's MORE??

- Of course there's more! We haven't even discussed all the livestock that needs to be loaded on board yet!
- You'll resupply at Disko Bay and later on the West Coast of the Americas and Hawaii when you've made it through the passage
- You're going to the Arctic, so you won't be able to chow down on penguins while you're wintering in the ice like the Ross expedition. You might be able to shoot some seals or ice bears for meat though! Won't that be fun?



GODHAVN, DISCO ISLAND. (After Markham.)



2



Sourcing Your Provisions

So Where is All This Food Coming From?

Victualling Yards

The Royal Navy has its own Victualling Yards in multiple locations, where the enormous amounts of food and drink needed to supply the Royal Navy are produced and stored⁴

Private Contractors

The Navy also contracts with various companies in order to supply their ships. There's an enterprising man with a shiny new contract with the Navy to supply you with your tinned food, so that's taken care of!⁵

Trusted Merchants

As stated earlier, the officers will be responsible for their own provisions. They'll choose trusted, well known merchants to supply them with goods that also bolster their luxury and status on board⁶

Victualling Yards

The Victualling Yards in Plymouth and Gosport are practically brand new! Commissioned in 1824 and completed over the course of the next four years, the Plymouth based Yard contains a mill and bakery capable of producing 270,000 lbs of flour and 50 tons of bread a week, a slaughterhouse processing 100 animals a day, warehouses, a cooperage, and a brewhouse. Sure, the Royal Navy discontinued the beer ration on its ships over a decade ago, but what else are the men in the Royal Naval Hospital supposed to drink?⁷



A Great New Private Contractor!

His name is Stephen Goldner and he's got a new canning technique he's eager to use to provision the Royal Navy

- Sure, he got his contract just a few months ago and his supplies are completely untested on the sea, but boy are his products cheap!
- Yes, his factory is all the way in Moldavia, yes he pays his workers incredibly low wages, yes he is breaking down tallow and hides in the same locations as the meat, but that's how he's able to offer such low, low prices!⁸



Quality beef! Just look at that marbling!



3



Preservation



How is this Food Staying Safe on this years-long voyage?



Biscuits

Starting with some good news! Your ship's biscuits, or hardtack, will keep for a decade or seven. The crew doesn't mind the weevils, they're used to it⁹

Lime Juice

It's preserved in a tin! Sure, there are still some cases of scurvy, especially in the Mercantile Marines, but these cans of lime should absolutely last until you make it to Hawaii¹²

Meat

Salted beef and pork will be preserved in casks in a mixture of water and brine. The quality of the meat will continue to deteriorate throughout the expedition.¹⁰

Tins

Nothing to worry about here! Those tins will last for *decades* and there will be no long standing controversy surrounding them for the next 200 years

Flour

Flour is stored in barrels and will keep its quality for about a year. Longer than that, though, and it will start to smell rancid, and that smell will translate directly into the taste of your breads, cakes, and pies¹¹

Chocolate

More good news! That chocolate will keep, and keep, and keep

Actually, A Brief Note on Those Tins



If we could look into the future, say, 1852, we would discover a number of Goldner's tins sitting in the Victualling Yard are contaminated. An estimated 137,000lbs (5%) of cans will be found defective. Further investigation will reveal a number of abuses, shipping irregularities, gifts, disgruntled workers, and other "unusual" business practices in Stephen Goldner's orbit. He will vanish from history soon after failing to appear before the House of Commons in regards to the investigation. ¹³

This contamination, combined with doubts about the soldering techniques used to seal the cans shut, might cause future historians a great deal of headaches and controversies.

Your tins are probably fine though. They're saving the Navy a ton of money, and hey, even if some are contaminated, what's 5% in the grand scheme of things?



4




Cooking



The Dichotomies of a Ship's Cook

- Without them, any naval action is doomed, and yet cooks are often the most hated man on board any ship¹⁴
- The Navy might run on its stomach, but there are no certifications or tests of competency for the man running the kitchen, and no guarantee the man supposed to be powering your crew has any culinary (or sanitary) skill¹⁵
- Cooking on board, subject to endless shifting of the winds and waves, is a grueling, thankless task (especially if the cook is not very good at it)
- You don't have to worry about that though! You're an officer! The stewards are mostly responsible for your food



A circular vintage illustration showing various food items. At the top, it says "Anna's Plum Pudding" and shows a platter with fruit. Below that, it says "Ices" and shows a basket of fruit. At the bottom, it shows a large, textured loaf of bread or cake.

What Do We Know About These Cooks?

HMS Erebus

Richard Wall: He's 45 years old and served as the cook on board Erebus during Sir James Clark Ross' Antarctic Expedition, and earlier with his uncle, Sir John Ross, on the 1829 Arctic expedition.¹⁶

A small rectangular illustration of a leafy branch, possibly a laurel wreath, enclosed in a decorative border.

HMS Terror

John Diggle: At 36 years old, John Diggle previously served on Erebus during Ross' Antarctic Expedition. At some point during that voyage he was promoted to quartermaster. Not sure what happened that he's signed on as a cook here, but that's a pretty unusual demotion, so it's best not to ask.¹⁷

What's the Kitchen Setup?



Stove

Erebus and Terror will have a setup similar to this one, which will be on the HMS Warrior by 1860. It'll be a Fraser Stove Model, and will be hooked into the ship's heating system¹⁸

Water Taps

These will provide water for all that boiling the ship's cooks will have to do¹⁹



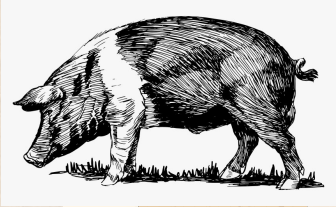
Pots

With such a long expedition ahead, the cooks will need strong, durable cookware made of cast iron and copper

Ovens

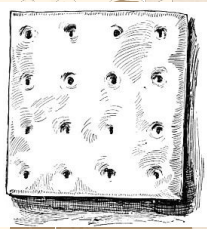
Small ovens for baking bread, cakes, and pies for the officers²⁰

Recipe Time!



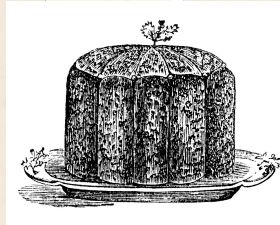
Salt Pork

Boil the salt pork in a pot.
Serve.



Ship's Biscuit

No need to worry about cooking this!
It was cooked back at the Victualling
Yards from a batter of nothing but
flour, water, and salt and dried on top
of the ovens for a few weeks.²¹



Plum Duff

The fanciest dish the cook can make,
usually for Christmas and other
special occasions. Soak dried fruits
overnight to soften. Combine suet,
brown sugar, and eggs, beat to
combine. Add brandy. Separately,
combine flour with available spices.
Combine with brandy mixture and stir
in dried fruits.²²

Boil in muslin fabric for five hours.

Once the cook runs out of eggs, he's
going to have to get more creative
with his binding agents, but he might
just add more brandy and hope no
one notices the unusual texture.

What if Something Does go Wrong?

Your cooks, who have been working hard providing breakfast and dinner to the crew every single day for the last several years will start providing meals that steadily decline in nutrition and flavor. The endless boiled meat will make the men angry and restless, you might end up in an area where hunting is notoriously poor, so say goodbye to fresh meat and vegetables, and those tins everyone was so excited about might prove to be not so great after all. (Or not, it's a huge point of controversy.) The tea and chocolate will be fine, and that will keep morale up (maybe), but if you're stuck for a few years and are obliged to ration what you have, the situation in the kitchen will continue to deteriorate. Those tins of lime juice that are supposed to keep away scurvy will probably not be doing that, as their containers leach away their antiscorbutic properties.²³ Pray you don't have to do much sledging a few years in, because the caloric content of the rations available will be woefully insufficient for the work expected of the crew.²⁴ The men might even want to eat the cook instead!

But this expedition is well supplied and equipped. I wouldn't worry about it.



Pictured: Not you!



IT WILL BE FINE

(Probably)

So don't worry about your ship's provisions, officer! Good luck getting that crew together, and we'll see you when you return from finally charting that elusive Northwest Passage!

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