



The two most powerful forces in the history of Holland are wind and water. For over a thousand years, the people living in this part of the world have had an amazing ability to take



advantage of these two forces. Perhaps the most obvious example is the windmill.

The Dutch used windmills to turn the pumps that drew the water off the land, over

the dikes, and back to the sea. Much of Holland's actual land surface was created by windpower moving water. The farmland that evolved from this system formed the basis for Holland's extensive agriculture and dairy industries. It was also windpower that moved the Dutch ships across the surface of the seas during the 1600's and made Holland the most powerful trading nation of the time, and the absolute center of commerce and culture.

During the early 1600's there was an extraordinary expansion in worldwide trade. In Europe just about everybody who had a boat wanted to push off for some distant port in the hope of buying something there and bringing it back home and selling it for big bucks. For the Dutch, it created a giant worldwide trading empire -- and back home in Holland, an enormous amount of money. A lot of that money was used to commission works of art. Art that the Dutch appreciated in terms of aesthetics, but that they also considered to be a great commercial investment -- and boy, were they right.

Holland's golden age of the 1600's was the time of Rembrandt -- not a bad investment -- and Van

Dyke, Franz Hals and Vermeer. These works can give us a detailed picture of what Dutch life was like at the time, especially when it comes to food. The Dutch masters have left us a picture of the period's menu: cheese, fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, fish, beer. The same foods and drinks that make up the traditional meals of today's Dutch family. Very often the way a food was shown was meant to tell a story.

The Merry Family by Jan Steen looks like a great Sunday afternoon lunch with the kids -- but when you look at it closely you see that the children are following the



bad habits of their parents: drinking, smoking, overeating. The painting is actually a warning against weak morals, a seventeenth-century cry for improved family values. The Dutch love of art has continued, and so has their ability to produce some of the world's finest painters.

Vincent Van Gogh was born in Holland in 1853 and died in 1890. Almost all of his paintings were made during the 1880's, and though he was able to sell only a few of his works during his lifetime, his paintings have become some of the most valuable. In 1990 a Van Gogh sold for more than eighty million dollars. In the center of Amsterdam is the Van Gogh Museum, built to make his works available to the public. Over one hundred Van Gogh works are on continual exhibition.

Food has always been an important subject for Dutch painters and Van Gogh was no exception. He also presented people eating and drinking in cafes and one of his favorite works was The Potato Eaters. Louis VanTilborgh is the curator of the museum's Van Gogh collection.

LOUIS VAN TILBORGH
VAN GOGH MUSEUM
CURATOR

Van Gogh tried to do something with the light which is very difficult. The Potato Eaters is an important painting because it's actually the first mature painting that Van Gogh really made. Before that time, that means from 1880 until '80...'85... he made more or less studies. He didn't make pictures which he thought were good enough for the market... for the art market. He was just learning the trade more or less, and with The Potato Eaters he first thought that he could launch his career artistically and commercially. He thought that he could send it to an exhibition in Paris and could present himself with that picture to art dealers. It doesn't have any of the bright colors that so many of us expect in a Van Gogh.

He always liked to exaggerate. He did that in France and he also did that in Holland. In Holland at that time, gay colors were not in fashion but dark colors were, and he exaggerated those colors. If you would compare his pictures to the pictures of his colleagues at the time, his pictures are much darker even more black. Look very carefully at the hands in this picture the way it is constructed it's very cramped. The people are sitting there, they're not looking at each other. For instance, the lady on the right has to pour coffee. Someone has to take a fork and take in the potato. It's all very clear, very defined but as a total it's not sensible at all because there is talk at a table. They interact and they don't do that in that picture. I think he was aware of the fact that he did not succeed in that, because he never made a picture like this any more. Five people around the table was too difficult for him.



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FOODS OF THE HOLLAND

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The fact that they were using potatoes to make an entire meal is an interesting reminder of how important the potato was to the European peasant farmer. During the seventeen and eighteen hundreds it was very often the only food they had, and because of its high nutritional content, was actually enough to keep them alive. For Van Gogh, the peasant and the potato were examples of a purer and simpler lifestyle, but in the case of the potato that's only true if you leave off the sour cream.

VINCENT IN CHOCOLATE

About an hour's drive into the Dutch countryside from Amsterdam is the small village of Zundert. And this is the building that put Zundert on the map. Zundert is where Vincent Van Gogh grew up and did his early work. They even have a small museum dedicated to him.

The museum has a small collection of things that relate to the period when Van Gogh lived in Zundert, as well as his other years in Holland. Van Gogh made a number of drawings that showed the landscape and the people of the village. He was fascinated by the life of the peasant farmers who



worked the land, and there are many drawings that show them at work in the fields and in their homes.

Certainly a fitting tribute, but the sweetest tribute of all is just down the street at the Luijckx Chocolate Factory. Almost every morning you will find the shiny steel tank-truck outside the building, a tank-truck filled with twenty thousand gallons of the finest chocolate. Chocolate that goes into the building to be molded. The free-flowing chocolate is poured into molds moving along a track. They're shaken to take out any air bubbles, then flipped so the form has only a thin coating. It's turned again and weighed to make sure it holds the proper amount. The chocolate cools and hardens to become little cups but the Luijckx system can form just about anything. A substantial part of their business comes from producing special designs, things for Christmas, Easter, McChocolates, and the local specialty -- a reproduction of Vincent Van Gogh's self-portrait in chocolate.

This is great stuff. It nourishes the mind and the body at the same time and it does it either in milk or semi-sweet chocolate. How few works of art can make that claim?

SAY CHEESE

Holland's mild climate, high quality marshy soil, and regular rainfall promote the year-round growth of excellent grass, which in turn



produces excellent cattle. Cattle that have been used to produce milk for at least four thousand years and cheese for a least a thousand. The country's natural waterways play a big part in the development of the cheese business. Almost every farmer had a waterway touching some point on his land. When his cheese was made, he would load it onto a barge and sail off to market.

It could have been a small town just down the canal from his farm or he could join up with a major river like the Rhine and end up selling his cheese in France or Germany. Because the Dutch sailors were such good navigators, they were able to develop a coastal

trade and end up selling their cheeses as far south as Portugal and Spain. At one point in time, cheese became so valuable that it was used as a form of money -- but it was very difficult to keep any small change in your pocket.

Over the years the technology of cheese making has changed some, but the story is pretty much the same. Today Holland is the world's largest exporter of cheese. It ships out many millions of pounds of cheese each year. So if you want to get an accurate picture of the history of the Dutch, just say cheese.



The Denboer family farm has been here in Holland for at least three hundred years. The land was reclaimed from the sea and a giant dike stands behind the farmhouse, just in case the sea ever tries to get back in. The Denboers raise their own cows and use the milk to produce cheese in the most traditional of Dutch farmhouse methods. The milk goes into a large tub. An enzyme from the lining of a calf's stomach, called rennet, is added to the milk. The rennet causes the milk solids, called the curd, to separate from the liquid, called the whey. The milk solids are taken out and placed into a form. Pressure is added to squeeze out additional liquid and give the cheese its shape. At that point the cheese is submerged into a brine bath, really just salted water but it adds flavor to the cheese, when the cheese comes out of the bath it sits on the shelf to mature for two weeks. At that point the cheese is ready to go to market.

Cheese is just an ancient method for preserving the valuable nutrients in milk. All of the calcium and protein that's in the milk is now in the cheese but it's in there in a concentrated form. It takes about ten pounds of milk to make one pound of cheese, and in moderation, cheese is an excellent source of nutrients.

It's pronounced "houda" in Dutch and Gouda in English. It's the name of the most famous cheese produced in Holland, and it's also the name of the town where the cheese was originally developed.

Starting in the 1200s, if you lived in a Dutch town,

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Some time during the 1100s, a group of herring fishermen settled here along the Amstel River. That community eventually became



the city of Amsterdam. So I think it's only fair to say that from the very beginning, the story of Amsterdam has been the story of something good to eat.

But the real golden age of Amsterdam was the 1600s. Amsterdam was Europe's center for business as well as its cultural capital. It all started in 1595 when a Dutch trading ship landed in what was then called the East Indies, now Indonesia: Bali, Java, Borneo, Sumatra; lands which produced some of the world's most valuable spices.

Those were the places that Columbus had been looking for, and when the Dutch got there they took control of the spice trade to Europe that made many Dutchman wealthy beyond their wildest dreams. Actually, those dreams weren't very wild at all, because even then the Dutch were very structured and not showy. Much of the wealth from that spice trade was used to build homes along the canals of Amsterdam.

you wanted that town to have weighing rights; that is, the right to weigh the cheeses made by the local farmers and put the town's official seal of approval on those cheeses. It was the equivalent of today having a major league football franchise. Big deal stuff.

And as soon as your town got weighing rights, it got a weigh house in which the activity was conducted, like building your own stadium. Gouda got theirs in 1668. It's right across the street from the city hall, which just serves to point out the importance of the cheese business to the town fathers. Most of the cheese exported from Holland is named after the towns from which it comes. Edam:



skimmed milk, mild flavors, smooth texture, easy to spot because it usually comes in a red ball. Masdam: it's Holland's answer to Swiss cheese with a mild, nutty flavor. And of course Gouda: starts mild and creamy but becomes more robust the longer it's aged.

So check the cheese to make sure it has the town seal on it. That's the only way to be sure it's "Gouda" enough.



Amsterdam was actually put together by connecting ninety islands with about five hundred bridges --- most citizens get around on bicycles. The

town has only seven hundred and fifty thousand people but a million bikes. You could, if you want to, get from place to place just as well by boat.

Thomas Schmidt is the executive assistant manager of Amsterdam's Amstel Hotel. He borrowed one of the hotel's boats so we could take a tour of the city... a tour with two objectives: first, to see the traditional sights, and second, to stop along the way and eat the traditional foods.

THOMAS SCHMIDT
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT MANAGER
THE AMSTEL HOTEL

And here you have a very typical bridge which is still operating. If a boat passes through here, there are two bridge guards who will open up the bridge to



you; every time you pass a bridge and he takes a bicycle and drives along the channel, opens the bridge and then he goes to the next. Bicycles go along with the boats. But most of the time the bicycle is faster than the boat, so that's no problem.

Here we're going into the typical Dutch channel. What you see on the right hand side, left hand side, houseboats. People live on them. It is actually a very nice place to live. You see the people create their own garden and terrace and they're trying to feel at home here.



And there's another thing you probably have noticed on the houses lining the canal. There is a hook hanging on each house. This is meant to bring up the corniches, and if you move from one to the other house, you bring it up from the outside, through the window. The stairs are so narrow in these houses that you can't bring a bed or a

piano upstairs, and even today they use that hook on the top of the house to bring their furniture in when they move.

You also see different type of the decorations. Some are more of the very heavy decorated and they have some more simple as well. People showed their richness on the outside of the house by building a gable which is more decorated or less decorated, and there's not much space in the small houses to show your decoration of your richness so the gable was a nice place to do that. The ornateness of the crown.

One of the great pleasures of a canal tour of

Amsterdam is that you can tie up, go ashore and see what's cooking in the streets.

Each city around the world has its own customary street foods, and eating them as you move around the town has become almost a ritual for the citizens. In Amsterdam there are a group of very traditional street foods. Maybe it's because Amsterdam was originally founded some seven hundred years ago by herring fisherman or maybe it's just because the Dutch love herring. I don't know, but I do know that Amsterdam has dozens of small street stands where people eat herring. The fish is very fresh, lightly salted, cleaned and served on a paper plate with some chopped onion. The herring is held in the air above your head and eaten bite by bite. There are also street vendors for french fried potatoes, freshly cut and deep fried right in front of you. They're served with mayonnaise, a peanut sauce or ketchup. The third classic street food of Amsterdam is the waffle. They're freshly made by vendors who set up their stoves in the town's open markets. They're thin and crisp. Two

waffles are put together like a sandwich and the filling; it's made up of a maple-based sugar syrup. And licorice, an anise-flavored candy that they make both sweet and salty. So those are the street foods of Amsterdam: licorice, herring, french fries and little waffles. What an unbeatable meal.



As you move through the streets of Amsterdam you will see at regular intervals the "Brown Cafes." There are five hundred of them in the downtown area.

The Brown Cafe is to Amsterdam very much what the pub is to London: a neighborhood gathering spot, an extension of the living room, a place to come in and have a beer or a coffee, to read a book or a newspaper.

They're called Brown Cafes because the wood used in their construction is always dark because the lighting level is kept low, and because the walls which have been stained with smoke and nicotine are never washed or painted.

This is probably the most famous of the brown cafes. It's Cafe Hoppe and it first opened for business in 1670. The Brown Cafes are an essential part of each of Amsterdam's neighborhoods and very often attract a particular clientele. One might be the place for writers to meet, another frequented by painters. They're a real reflection of the neighborhood and a great place to get to know the people of the city.



DUTCH TREATS

The city plan of Amsterdam is based on three canals that form three semi-circles, one inside the other. Together they are described as the Canal Girdle. The outside canal in English is called the Prince's Canal. In the middle is the Emperor's Canal, and on the inside, the Gentleman's Canal. It's interesting that the most elegant and ambitious of the three is the Gentleman's Canal, not those named with royal titles.

It's a reminder that for centuries the people of Amsterdam have loved the small businessman, the individual entrepreneur, and like most people, the owner of a small business tries to keep his taxes as low as he honestly can -- or at least to get the most for his money.

During the 1700's the people here paid their homeowner's tax based on the width of the front of their house. But those same houses go up and they go back, and as they go back they get wider. A pie-shaped house with the thinnest part facing the street helped to cut down on your taxes and let you keep a bigger slice of your own economic pie. The Trippenhuis, was built in 1662. It's like a Venetian palace. Across the street is the narrowest house in Amsterdam. The story goes that the Tripp family coachman was expressing his wish for a home on the canal, even if it was only as wide as the door of his master's house. Mr. Tripp



overheard him and built him just that: a house as wide as the Tripp door. The extraordinary architecture of Amsterdam is one of its greatest joys. The government has designated some seven thousand buildings in the old center as historically significant. The character of these streets tells the history of the city for almost eight centuries. The people of Amsterdam have done a pretty good job of preserving their heritage. Holding onto the old buildings was essential.

And they've built museums for just about everything Dutch that you can think of. They're also doing a good job of holding onto their gastronomic heritage. There are chefs all over this town who are researching old recipes, reproducing them and making the gastronomic past part of the present.

DePoort Restaurant, at the center of the town's oldest area, started as a beer brewery in 1592. It was the place where Heineken was first made. Today the restaurant offers some of the most traditional home foods of Holland: Dutch pea soup,



a meal in itself with pieces of pork and slices of sausage; herring in various forms; and Hotspot, which is a combination of mashed potatoes, sauteed onions and carrots —

made me go out and get a pair of wooden shoes, a wonderful Dutch dish. And giant pancakes served with apples or preserves. These are the real Dutch treats.

BEER HERE

One of the most popular tourist attractions in Amsterdam is the old Heineken Brewery. The original facility was called the Haystack Brewery and it started its production in 1572. In 1863 it was taken over by Gerhart Heineken, who at the ripe old age of twenty-two decided he could make a better beer. Today the original plant is a museum devoted to the history of beer. They have an interesting



Holland

collection of art and artifacts that tells the history of beer making. It starts with material from ancient Mesopotamia and takes you right



through some of the major European painters. They also have an extensive collection of beer drinking vessels, including this unusual number: Her Royal Majesty holds a bowl above her head from which you drink an aquavit or vodka. Then she flips over and her base fills with beer.

The main reason that beer has been so popular in so many parts of the world for so many centuries is because very often beer was the only safe thing for someone to drink. The open water found in lakes and rivers was highly polluted, and though no one actually understood the concept of bacteria at the time, they knew from experience that drinking water was dangerous. Experience also taught them that drinking beer was safe, and the reason is quite simple; when you make beer, the water that's in it is brought to a boil. The boiling water kills the bacteria. So people concluded that drinking water could kill you. Drinking beer in moderation was quite safe.

There are ancient stone carvings that go back over six thousand years and clearly show people making beer. The ancient Egyptians even put beer into the tombs of their kings so they could have a drink in the afterlife; talk about a six pack to go.

Here at the Heineken Brewery in Holland, you can see the process pretty much the way it's been going on for the past two thousand years. It all starts with a grain called barley that people have been eating since prehistoric times. Because barley grows well in soil, even if that soil has some salt in it and because it has a very shallow root system, it was one of the earliest crops planted by the Dutch when they reclaimed their land from the sea. Brewers start the beer making process by taking the barley and mixing it with water. The process that results is called germination, kind of wakes up the sugar in

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the barley. They let that go on for a week and then they stop the process by toasting the barley.

The germinated and toasted grain is called malt. The malt is transferred into a big copper kettle mixed with water and heated. The starch in the malt changes to sugar.

Hops, which are the leaves of a vine, are added to give flavor and help preserve the beer. The solids are filtered out and the remaining liquid is



called wort. The wort is mixed with a special yeast that converts the sugar in the wort to alcohol and you have young beer. The young beer rests in a storage tank for four to six weeks, at which time it's old enough to have its own bottle.