

**„Culinary heritage of the Cistercians in Central Europe“
„Kulinářské dědictví cisterciáků ve střední Evropě“**

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Content:

Cistercian monastic cuisine as a phenomenon	3
1. The economy of Cistercian monasteries in sources and literature	6
1.1. Cereals and mills	8
1.2. Fruit, vegetable and wine growing	9
1.3. Brewing	11
1.4. Pond management and fish farming	14
1.5. Livestock production	16
2. Cuisine and food in monasteries	17
2.1. Images of monastic meals in written sources	24
2.1.1. Examples from the archives	26
3. Cistercian monastery kitchen through the eyes of archaeology	29
3.1. Location and reconstruction of the monastery kitchen at Velehrad	30
3.2. Research of the Baroque sump in Plasy	31
4. Cistercian Heritage	32
Conclusion	35
List of memory institutions	36
List of literature	37
Online resources:	41

Cistercian monastic cuisine as a phenomenon

The Cistercian Order was founded in 1098 in Cîteaux, France, where the first monastery was founded in a remote area near Dijon. Under the leadership of Abbot Robert of Molesme, it was founded by a group of originally Benedictine monks who were dissatisfied with the existing way of life in the Benedictine monastery and longed to return to the Order of St. Benedict. They were determined to live to the letter according to the monastic precepts and to uphold them spiritually and materially. The official recognition of the Cistercian Order by Pope Calixtus II in 1119 was followed by rapid development. In the 1120s and 1130s, the monasteries of the new order flooded France and Cistercian ideals began to spread throughout Europe. Already around 1120, the first “grey monks” crossed the Alps and settled in Italy and Germany. In the 1140s the Cistercians made its way into Central Europe, where they gradually began to settle in Bohemia, Poland and Hungary. The expansion of the Order continued northwards into Scandinavia and also further east into what is now Latvia and Estonia, where Cistercian monasteries were founded in the early 13th century. The southern branch of Cistercian monasteries then passed through the Apennine Peninsula and the northern Balkans. The Cistercian order grew in strength for several decades and became a phenomenon uniting Europe.

The effective organisation of the Order was built on several pillars. A General Chapter met annually under the leadership of the Abbot General in Cîteaux, whose resolutions were binding on all the Convents. At the same time, regular inspections or visitations of the various monasteries were carried out on the basis of the filiation system, with the abbot of the mother monastery visiting the daughter monasteries. Unlike the original Benedictine monasteries, which were seen as separate units, the Cistercian monasteries were interconnected and the family was a kind of prototype of the organisational structure. The Cîteaux monastery was the mother of all the monasteries that gradually emerged on the basis of the filiation system. Thanks to a new perspective on the definition of the Order, which the Cistercians saw primarily as an Order in the legal sense, we can also speak of the phenomenon of Cistercian monastic cuisine and the Cistercian culinary heritage.

The Cistercian Order is undoubtedly a unifying element across European countries, our common European cultural heritage, whose unity and diverse nuances can be perceived and sought in various areas - in spiritual heritage and spirituality, in the care of the landscape and farming, in architecture and, last but not least, in cuisine. Cistercian cuisine is a phenomenon for which the motto ‘diversity in unity and unity in diversity’ certainly applies, since Cistercian food, menus and daily routines have their own clear rules given by the Order and other religious orders. At the same time, the theme is diverse in terms of the course of the Church year, feasts and fasts. It is also not insignificant to look at the diversity of monastic landscapes, the possibilities of monastic economy and regional customs, which certainly had an impact on the diet of the ‘grey monks’ in particular monasteries.

Cistercian monastic cuisine is a topic that offers much room for research. The Cistercian Order has received varying degrees of attention in the context of church history and monasticism in different countries. If we leave aside the monastic chronicles, which were often a collective work, we are still left searching for authors who wrote about the history of the Order or of individual convents among the Cistercian brothers, a similar situation prevailed among other religious orders. It was not until the nineteenth century, which enriched the subject with solid positivist research, especially at the level of the individual convent orders, that research outside the religious milieu moved more significantly. From the Austro-Hungarian milieu we can mention the works of Leopold Janauschek or Bernhard Wohlmann on the Cistercians. In the 19th century, there was a growing interest in the study of religious institutions in general, at the expense of religious spirituality and theology, and in the social function and economic importance of religious orders, with perhaps the greatest attention being drawn to the Cistercians and their role in Central European colonization.

English scholarship in particular has been fascinated by the Cistercian economic model, while German and French historiography has focused more on the organizational structure of the Cistercian order. However, research on monastic themes remained, apart from specific monographs, in the shadow of 'big history'. In the twentieth century, research on the history of monasteries throughout Europe underwent a series of transformations; scholars began to see the orders as a fixed point within medieval society, and the religious were seen as agents of progress and rationalization. Monastic scholarship was increasingly influenced by the secularization movement. Despite the declining social interest, however, the first half of the twentieth century produced a number of still valuable positivist-oriented works of monastic history. In the post-war years, especially in Western Europe, the field was again developing and scholarship began to break out of its own monastic world. The development of monastic studies in the second half of the 20th century is evidenced by the beginnings of its institutionalization. An important centre exists at the Friedrich-Meinecke Institute of the Freie Universität in Berlin, and an important series of *Studien zur Geschichte, Kunst und Kultur der Zisterzienser* is published here. There is also an active department at the Technische Universität Dresden, focusing more on medieval history of the Order.

The lively Cistercian academy in Heiligenkreuz is more closely linked to the church. In France, the Centre européen de recherche des communautés et ordres religieux was established at the University of St. Etienne as early as the 1980s. A number of monastic centres operate in Rome. From overseas, the Cistercian Institute at the University of Kalamazoo. In recent decades there have been a number of innovations in the field of research on the Cistercian Order, and some myths about the Order's history have been corrected, for example, about the Cistercians' clear colonial contribution. Monastic themes have incorporated more systematically into more general historical works, and lay monasticism has received greater social recognition. Cistercian convents are viewed from different perspectives, not only historical but also musicological and sociological. Attention is paid to the study of the everyday life of monasteries and micro-historical probes into the history of individual convents, among which further research into Cistercian culinary art will certainly find its place.

It is a very broad topic that can be explored across different disciplines - history and literature, archaeology, biology. We can examine the economic production of monastic estates in relation to the economic development of individual monasteries, we can compare the natural conditions of individual landscapes in relation to the cultivation of certain types of crops and animal production. An interesting area of research is certainly the actual functioning of the monastery kitchen and related facilities, the related functions of the monks, but also the specific recipes and dishes that were served to the monks and the rare visitors who came to the monastery. The research space also offers a glimpse of the specific appearance of the monastery kitchens and refectories, the surviving spaces and the cookware that were used in cooking and dining. Equally interesting is the overlap into the present day, not only through the functioning Cistercian monasteries, but also through the farming and products that in some areas are a legacy of the tradition of monks who left their convents long ago.

1. The economy of Cistercian monasteries in sources and literature

The Cistercians, more than other orders, managed the economy of their estates themselves. Their way of farming influenced the economy of the area, but also the character of the landscape. Some traces of the Cistercian monks' influence can still be traced today. In the Middle Ages and in the early modern period, the farmsteads were important pillars of the 'grey monks' economy, which, in addition to the main agricultural production and the monastery's food supply, also provided specialised industries such as fruit growing, viticulture, fishing and beekeeping. The administration of the farms was organised entirely according to the rules of the Order. At the head of the court was the magister curiae or hofmister, who was completely subordinate to the cellarer or celarius, the supreme administrator of the monastery's economy. It appears from the sources that the hofmistry was usually the convres, i.e. lay brothers. In addition to the outbuildings, the courtyards, whose internal furnishings were to correspond to those of the monasteries according to the regulations of the Order, were to have living quarters such as a dormitory, a heating room, a guest house and, last but not least, a kitchen with a refectory. The most important building in the farmyard was the granary, which had an economic function as a storehouse for grain from the whole estate and a distribution function as it was used to distribute grain for the estate. The granary was also used for the distribution of imported wine, and the extensive cellars, especially under the Baroque granaries, were often used to store wine barrels. The preserved basement of a several-storey Baroque granary from the second half of the 17th century is located, for example, directly on the grounds of the Žďár monastery. Surviving farmyards or their torsos can be found on former Cistercian estates all over Europe, an example of a significant survival of this type of architecture is the Plasy monastic landscape, which is characterised by a large number of still preserved Baroque farmyards.

The share of each agricultural sector was determined by the climate and the possibilities of each region. Agriculture is one of the areas where the diversity in Cistercian unity and tradition is evident. The monasteries that were founded in lower altitudes and favourable climatic conditions were able to develop more crop growing, fruit and orchard growing, vegetable growing and viticulture. Meadows in the flat areas were used for drying hay and breeding cattle, while sheep were bred in the higher altitudes and hilly terrain. Detailed evidence of agricultural crop and livestock production for the early modern period, especially for the 17th and 18th centuries, has been preserved in a number of archives of dissolved and still functioning Cistercian monasteries, which contain many records and official books. For the medieval period, we are more dependent on scraps of more general information that may be captured in medieval chronicles, burghers or charters.

Among the Cistercians, as with other orders, a number of myths and images of self-perception arose, which can still be found today not only in the decoration of monastery buildings or in old manuscripts and prints. In the early modern period, the Cistercians themselves created the myth of the self-sufficiency of medieval monasteries; according to their interpretation, the monks tried to grow, raise and produce everything they needed themselves, so that they would not be dependent on their surroundings. The reality of most monasteries, however, differed from this ideal; although the

monastery derived part of its income from its own farming by establishing farmyards, a substantial part came from the tribute from the villages they were given, founded or bought. Moreover, from the 14th century onwards, we can observe a shift from direct farming to the renting out of manors, mills and other economic operations in return for financial and material contributions. However, the farming on their own, the climate and the natural wealth of the monastic landscape were to some extent reflected in the regional recipes and culinary practices in all periods, and consequently in the diet of the Cistercian monks, which was of course largely determined by the Order of St Benedict and other religious orders. The following chapters will be devoted to particular sectors of the economy, which are important precisely in connection with the actual production and processing of food products by the individual Cistercian convents, and also in connection with what was cooked in the monastery kitchens and served in the monastery refectories.

The economic situation and the economy of some Cistercian convents is quite vividly depicted in a number of monographs based on the research of the relevant archives.¹

¹ See e.g. Rudolf HURT, *The History of the Cistercian Monastery at Velehrad I (II) 1205-1650 (1650-1784)*, Olomouc 1934 (1938); Ibid, *The History of Fishmongers in Moravia and Silesia*, Opava 1960; Metoděj ZEMEK - Antonín BARTŮŠEK, *History of Žďár nad Sázavou I (II) 1252-1617 (1618-1784)*, Havlíčkův Brod 1956 (1962); Werner RÖSENER, *Reichsabtei Salem. Verfassungs- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Zisterzienserklosters von der Grundung bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Sigmaringen 1974; Winfried TÖPPLER, *Das Kloster Neuzelle und die weltlichen und geistlichen Mächte 1268-1817* (Studien zur Geschichte, Kunst und Kultur der Zisterzienser, Band 14), Berlin 2003; Bernhard NAGEL, *Die Eigenarbeit der Zisterzienser. Vor der religiösen Askese zur wirtschaftlichen Effizienz*, Marnurg 2006; Rudolf GUBY, *Das Zisterzienserstift Wilhering in Oberösterreich*, Wien 1920; Gerhard WINNER, *Die Urkunden des Zisterzienserstiftes Lilienfeld 1111-1892*, Wien 1974; Wolfgang WIEMER, *Die Gärten der Abtei Ebrach*, Berlin 1999; Daniel DECKERS - Till EHRlich (Hrsg.), *Kloster Eberbach. Geschichte und Wein*, Wiesbaden 2015; Michael Schlitt (Hrsg.), *Die Zisterzienserinnenabtei Klosterstift St. Marienthal, Görlitz/Zittau* 2021; etc.

1.1. Cereals and mills

One of the basic pillars of the Cistercian economy was grain farming. The cultivation of grain and its subsequent processing in the monastery mills provided the basic raw material for baking bread, which was the staple of the diet of the medieval people and, of course, of the monks who received it every day. Pancakes and various sweet pastries were also baked, which were a delicacy for the monks. The pancakes were made of unleavened dough kneaded from coarsely ground flour, and dried pancakes made from oat or barley porridge were also eaten. Bread was baked leavened and used to be dark, and the dough was made of coarse flour, often with bran. White bread was used for religious purposes.

The fields, which were situated in the immediate vicinity of the farmsteads, were initially worked by lay brothers also known as converses. For the monks, who had a strict regime of prayers and spiritual readings in the monastery, working in the farm yard outside the monastery cloister was out of the question. Almost all types of grain were known from the early Middle Ages onwards, with millet, barley, wheat, rye and oats being the main crops grown in the fields. From the 12th century, buckwheat became widespread in central Europe. Medieval cereal grains were weaker than today's cultivated varieties, often subject to hail or heavy rain, and grain yields were lower. After the harvest, the crop was taken to the granary, from where it was distributed as needed. The grain had to be kept dry and carefully controlled to prevent mold. Once stored, it would last for several years in the granaries. Each year the harvest was different and in strong years reserves were built up for possible crop failures, which could mean famine. From the granaries, some of the grain was distributed to the monastery mills, some was used to make beer and some was used as seed. Thanks to the communication between the Cistercian monasteries, farming methods common in France and Germany at the time were transmitted to central Europe and further east in the Middle Ages.

The mills used to process grain needed a strong stream of water to function, just like sawmills or hammers. On monastic estates, therefore, all these operations were built on the main rivers, whose water was the driving force that turned the mill wheel. Monasteries could own more than one mill, and the flour produced was mainly used for their own consumption. Today, the monastic mills have fallen into disuse, but in some places the original mill buildings or mill wheels have been preserved. Today's monks, however, buy flour like others.

1.2. Fruit, vegetable and wine growing

As we have already mentioned, the diversity and profitability of the monastery economy depended on the climatic and natural conditions in which the convent was located. Many monasteries were founded in fertile lowland areas where fruit growing, orcharding and viticulture flourished. We also have to take into account that climatic conditions change in the long term, and Cistercian monks could afford to grow crops in some areas that would not ripen at the present time. One such example is the cultivation of figs in some central European areas, which is documented both by written sources and by analyses of organic remains from archaeological finds. The Cistercians were among the pioneers in fruit growing, they had a wealth of knowledge about orcharding and bred new varieties. The monasteries themselves had commercial vegetable and herb gardens. Fruits and vegetables were an essential part of the monks' diet.

A specific industry was viticulture and winemaking, linked to Cistercian monasteries since the Middle Ages. Wine was needed by the monks for liturgical purposes as a Communion wine, but it was also part of their diet, and is mentioned in the Rule of Benedict. Wine was also offered by monks to guests, served to the sick and was an important commodity. Whether wine thrived depended again on the landscape. Many monasteries are located in wine-growing areas with a tradition of several hundred years, for example Salem in Germany on the shores of Lake Constance or Velehrad in South Moravia. In some monasteries, however, the monks have tried to establish vineyards without success, and in others the harvest has only covered the basic religious needs of the monastery. In the history of many convents, there are periods when monks had vineyards outside their whole estate. The monks of Plasy owned part of the Petřín hill, as the vines thrived better near Prague. The monks of Žďár, on the other hand, held vineyards in Zaječí, South Moravia, many tens of kilometres from the monastery, which shows the importance of self-sufficiency in wine production for Cistercian monasteries.

Depiction of monks in the field during harvest



Source: Stift Zwettl

The Salem Monastery, located in the temperate climate of Lake Constance, is a place strongly associated with wine growing. Wine is considered to be an indigenous product of the monastery, and the history of the local winery dates back to the 12th century, when the first Cistercian monks in Cîteaux, France, were already engaged in viticulture. Salem Abbey acquired its first vineyards shortly after its foundation in 1134, and a few decades later the monks acquired more vineyards in prime locations on the shores of the lake and inland. Even before the introduction of the Beer Purity Law, the Margrave of Baden, Christopher I, issued the first wine law in 1495. The vineyards of the Salem monastery were planted in a hilly landscape created by glacial runoff. The soils here are particularly calcareous and usually have a high proportion of gravel and sand, which means that they warm up easily and can retain heat for a long time. The remarkable altitude makes the slopes one of the sunniest areas in Germany, which is a prerequisite for sweet grapes and good wine. After the harvest, the grapes are pressed in the monastery's facilities and matured into fine wines in the prelate cellar in Salem. The monastery's pressing plant is still open to visitors who can also taste the wine. The countryside around Salem is still dotted with vineyards and apple orchards. Historic press rooms and wine presses are also preserved in some other Cistercian monasteries, such as Eberbach in Germany. The former Cistercian abbey of Eberbach is one of the most impressive monuments of medieval architecture in Europe. The Grey Friars have cultivated the local vineyards for over 700 years and in the Middle Ages the monastery had a well-developed worldwide wine trade. The enormous yield of the monastery's vineyards is still evidenced by the twelve historic wine presses preserved in the refectory. In the Czech environment, the Velehrad Monastery, which lies at the heart of the wine-growing region in southern Moravia, is particularly associated with wine growing. Although the Cistercian order was abolished at Velehrad during the reign of Joseph II, the tradition of producing wine in the area continues and every year the Cistercian Seal, a parade of Communion and kosher wines, is held here.

A monk working in a vineyard, depicted on a tile in the Salem Monastery.



Source : <https://www.salem.de/wissenswert-amuesant/dossiers/weinanbau>

1.3. Brewing

Brewing beer has been an integral part of Cistercian monastic life since the Middle Ages, but the beginnings of the industry were modest. At first, the monks brewed beer primarily for their own use, and its preparation was lengthy and expensive, requiring hops and wheat or barley. As with other economic activities, the water supply was important. Over time, however, in some areas breweries came to occupy a leading position in the economy of Cistercian monasteries. Dark and light beer was brewed. The basis for light beer was wheat and the basis for dark beer was barley. In some areas, oat beer was also brewed. Evidence of the brewing of dark or red beer and light beer, which was called pale or white beer, comes, for example, from the Vyšší Brod monastery. Hops were, of course, an important raw material in the production of beer. Beer has been hopped in Central Europe since the arrival of the Slavs (approx. in 6th century AD). Hop gardens were established on Cistercian estates, mainly near the monastery courts. In the Middle Ages, other ingredients were also used to brew beer according to the possibilities of the individual regions and the customs of the individual brewer. For example, herbs, juniper, fennel, cloves, sage, cherry blossom, birch, pine or oak bark were added.

The process of brewing and maturing the beer was similar to today's process, with the only difference being the further processing. The area where the grain was stored and steeped in the brewery or malt house was called the threshing floor. It was then placed on a 'roller', where it began to germinate and water was evaporated from it. Next, it was moved to the so-called knotweed. The knothouse is a square tower structure where the malt was dried. Malting is the final stage in the production of malt; the green malt with a high water content is converted into a storable state and the aromatic and colouring substances are formed and preserved. In the Middle Ages, the sprouted grain was dried on grates made of willow or hazel wicker placed over a fireplace. The maltster had to take care that the malt did not mold or burn. The malt was then ground in the mill. The brewery and mill buildings are often found in close proximity on monastery grounds. After the milling, the actual brewing process could begin, with the malt first being repeatedly extracted in a hot tub and cooled in a large, shallow vessel.

The sweet extract - the malt - was thus separated from the residue, known as malt, which was used to feed the cattle. The separation of the malt from the grist was carried out using wicker mesh. The malt was then boiled with hops in a pan to produce wort, which was poured into large, shallow vats. After cooling, the semi-finished product was fermented in the vats in a cool room, cellar or, later, in a still. After fermentation, the beer was bottled in barrels.

In the Middle Ages and the early modern period, beer was different than today, it had different qualities. It was not filtered, the ground malt remained in it and it was therefore very thick. It was poured from casks and had to be stirred before pouring, it was cloudy and had a sediment at the bottom. In the Middle Ages, beer served not only as a drink but also as a base for soups, sauces, porridges and other dishes, and was therefore an integral part of the diet of society at that time. For example, the addition of crumbled bread made a thick bread beer soup. Beer was also a natural part of the diet, not only for Cistercian monks.²

As far as the operation and income of the monastery breweries are concerned, we are rather referred to early modern sources. Hops used to be grown on the monastic estates in their own hop gardens, wheat and barley were largely purchased in some monasteries, while elsewhere they were largely covered by their own grain production. Here again, we must bear in mind the location of the individual monasteries and the different possibilities for their crop production. However, any purchases of raw materials were offset by the sale of beer from the monastery breweries.

The brewer was in charge of brewing the beer, and every candidate for the brewer's job had to pass a test, the so-called probation. The candidate who brewed the best beer was accepted. The production of beer was checked by officials. The governor or his scribe and his oath-takers had to be present in the brewery every time the brew was poured. After the brewing, the scribe was obliged to write down the approval of the batch, have it signed by the procurator and then send it to the monastery. In this way, the prior of the monastery had an overview of all the batches of beer brewed in the monastery's breweries. Some of the beer was left to the monastery for its own consumption, while the greater part of the production was lagered in the villages and hamlets on the estate. As a rule, the villages themselves were responsible for the brewing of the beer; it was no longer the responsibility of the monastery officials.

In the Baroque period, income from brewing in some monasteries formed a significant part of the estate's income. For example, in the Žďár monastery on the border of Bohemia and Moravia, the income from two monastery breweries accounted for about a fifth of the total income of the monastery economy at the beginning of the 17th century, and in the second half of the 18th century for up to a third of the total income.

Some monasteries have preserved rooms or fragments of the original breweries and malshouses, for example, in the Žďár monastery there is a baroque malt drying room (a lying airy knot) and a pumping water tank for the brewery, but the premises of the former brewery have been reconstructed and hide a museum. In some places the brewing tradition has been revived, for example at Marienstatt Abbey the brewery was renovated and reopened in 2004 after a break of almost a century when the monks had to stop brewing in 1908 because it was uneconomical.

² Cf.: Iva VORLÍKOVÁ, *K historii pivovarnictví v Plasích*, in: *Bohemiae occidentalis historica: odborný časopis pro české dějiny s emphasisem na západní Čechy a s overlappingem to border regions, especially to Bavaria*, 2008, 47-65; Miloslav LOPAUR - Silvie JAGOŠOVÁ - Stanislav MIKULE - Jana FUKSOVÁ, *Žďárský uličník II/1*, Havlíčkův Brod, 2017, p. 236-251.

At Marienstatt Abbey, however, the tradition of brewing beer dates back to before 1457, when a brew kettle was evidently found in the inventory of the Gehlert monastery yard. In the sources of the Marienstatt monastery, we also learn from 1493 that the monastery's servants were given beer during Lent, and in 1578 we find a reference to beer being served to the monks in addition to wine. In some monasteries, the brewing tradition even remained unbroken. For example, Aldersbach in Lower Bavaria, originally founded by Augustinian canons but belonging to the Cistercian Order since 1146. The monastery still brews beer today, and the brewery is documented in a charter from Count Albert von Hals from 1268, making it one of the oldest breweries in the world, celebrating 750 years of existence in 2018.

Baroque drying room, a remnant of the monastery brewery in Žďár nad Sázavou.



Source: Žďár Castle

1.4. Pond management and fish farming

Fish farming and fish breeding is firmly linked to the Cistercian Order. Already in the first statutes of the order it was emphasised that the monks should make a living by manual labour, agriculture and animal husbandry, which included fish farming. Hand in hand with the drainage of the marshy areas around the monasteries they founded, the 'grey monks' gained a reputation as masters of water engineering and fish farming. The monks were already building new water bodies in the Middle Ages, and it can be said that the Cistercians were able to retain much more water in the landscape than modern man. Indeed, the establishment of ponds in many monastic landscapes is linked to the early functioning of the monastery. For example, the monastery of Žďár was founded in 1252 and as early as 1263 the monastery chronicle describes the establishment of a pond near the monastery gate. Subsequently, during the 13th to 16th centuries, a large cascade of ponds formed between the source of the Sázava River and the Žďár monastery, which was the heart of the monastery landscape. Similar pond systems can be found on other Cistercian estates, while the establishment of ponds on church estates on a larger scale generally appears more frequently from the mid-14th century onwards. Fish kept by Cistercian monks was a regular part of their diet, but also a sought-after commercial item. The history of the German monastery of Waldsassen shows how important fishing was to the monks, and the founding charter cites the abundance of fish in the Wondreb as the reason for moving the original monastery site closer to the river. Again, some monastic landscapes are more suitable for fish farming. In addition to the already mentioned monasteries of Žďár and Waldsassen, we can mention the Austrian Zwettl or the South Bohemian Vyšší Brod. The Vyšší Brod monastery was already given the Monastery Forest area, where a number of Šumava streams made it possible to establish ponds. On many former Cistercian estates, the tradition of fish farming has been preserved to the present day.

An integral part of the monastery's economy were the fish tanks, tanks with flowing oxygenated water, into which fish were put shortly before consumption or sale. In most monasteries these were covered fish tanks, smaller houses with water tanks that were fed with water. In some places, uncovered fish tanks, a regular grouping of several outdoor tanks, have also survived. The unique Baroque monastic open-air fishponds have been preserved in the Žďár monastery and are still functional, fed by water from the Convent Pond.

Breeding ponds in the Waldsassen monastic landscape



Source: <https://cisterscapes.eu/klosterstaetten/waldsassen/>

1.5. Livestock production

Along with crop production, animal production was an important part of the monastery economy, although especially in the Middle Ages the diet of the monks was mostly vegetarian. Only the sick were given meat or strong broth to fortify themselves, and meat dishes might appear in the monastery on a table set for a rare visitor. Over time, however, this practice changed somewhat, as we shall discuss in the following chapters.

The traditional part of the Cistercian farm was the breeding of geese, chickens and other poultry. The breeding brought feathers, eggs, but also meat for the sick. Over time, poultry meat also found its way into the monks' diet.

Sheep and cattle breeding was the basic element of livestock production. An important prerequisite for keeping domestic animals was not only sufficient grazing in the summer, but also a supply of fodder for the winter months. Sheep farming was largely part of the economy of the Cistercian monasteries, which were established at higher altitudes and had plenty of suitable pasture. Sheep farming was a lucrative industry from the Middle Ages onwards, with sheep providing the monasteries with a source of wool and milk from which to produce dairy products such as cheese. In the 16th century, there were four sheep per head of cattle. Sheep farming expanded greatly in the 18th century.

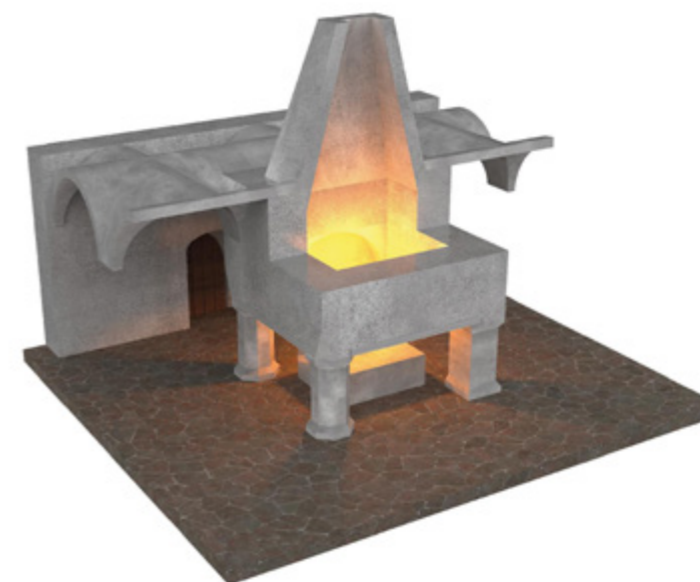
Cattle were also kept in the monastery stables and pastures. The cattle, unless their meat was needed for guests or the sick, were usually sold and were a source of considerable income for the monastery treasury. The monastery accounts used to keep separate counts of oxen, calves and milk cows. Freshly milked milk was warm and had to be cooled to prevent spoilage. This was done in the monastery's dairy, a building containing a large container in which the milk was cooled and then stored.

On this occasion, we must not forget about hunting. Besides the need for timber, the forests were also important to the monastery for hunting game. In the monastery's Baroque farm accounts, there is evidence of the number of hares, roe deer, deer, wild game and partridges hunted. At that time, venison could already appear on the table of the monks on certain occasions. In the Middle Ages, the wording of Benedict's Rule was strictly observed and game could be prepared in the abbey kitchen, for example, when entertaining a distinguished visitor.

2. Cuisine and food in monasteries

The architectural layout of Cistercian monasteries was based on the traditional layout of Benedictine abbeys. Famous medieval drawing of an ideal model of a monastery was made in St. Gallen, Switzerland, as early as the beginning of the 9th century. The core of the complex was a church with its own cloister, which adjoined the convent church on the south side. The monastery consisted of the convent buildings with a regular central cloister courtyard and a well. The courtyard was surrounded by a cloister which served as a connecting gallery between the various wings of the convent. The Cistercian rules remembered the division of the monastery into a part for the monks and a part for the lay brothers or convent. This division is also reflected in the position of the monastery kitchen and refectories. The monastery kitchen and the monks' dining room (refectory) were among the most important places in monastic life and had a fixed place in the monastery complex just off the cloister. The kitchen where the monks cooked was located in the south wing of the convent, adjacent to the two refectories – on one side it was adjacent to the monks' refectory and on the other side to the Convents' dining room. For practical reasons, the rooms were not connected to each other by doors, but only by windows to minimize the spread of smoke, smells and noise. The monastery kitchen was entered from the ambulatory, and in the Middle Ages its main equipment was a centrally located open fireplace with a chimney to remove smoke and other fumes.³

Model of a medieval monastery kitchen (reconstruction by R.Vrla, M. Cejpová)



Source: Petr Hudec/Velehrad Monastery

³ In the former Cistercian monastery Velehrad an exhibition on the monastery kitchen was realized (Petr Hudec, Radka Ranočková), within which a successful spatial reconstruction of the kitchen was created (R. Vrla, M. Cejpová). The most recent work on kitchens in the Middle Ages and early modern period is by Miroslava Cejpová, who defended her dissertation on this topic this year. In her dissertation, she deals in detail with the location of kitchens in castles, fortresses, farmsteads and rural estates, as well as religious buildings. It also deals with the construction of wooden and brick kitchens and their appearance in different environments. One of the chapters is also devoted to kitchen equipment such as cooking platforms, hearths and ovens, tables, niches and serving windows, and attention is also paid to waste management. See Miroslava CEJPOVÁ, *Kitchens in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*, dissertation, CTU 2023 (<https://dspace.cvut.cz/handle/10467/108607>).

In Cistercian monasteries, the refectory building adjoined perpendicularly to the south wing of the ambite and because of its size it protruded significantly from the ground plan of the convent. In the refectory there were usually long tables along the long walls of the building, with the abbot's table at the head.⁴ In monasteries there was a summer refectory and also a winter refectory, which was smaller for easier heating. The importance of the refectory in the operation of the monastery is also indicated by the order's decree that it was one of the five compulsory rooms specified for the possible relocation of the convent to a new monastery.⁵

An important person for the kitchen operation was the celerarius, who was in charge of the economic running of the monastery, taking care of purchases and storage of supplies, especially food.⁶ Medieval monasteries did not have cooks or cooks, the food was prepared by the monks themselves. The monks also cleaned the kitchen and refectory and did everything related to dining. Benedict's Rule discusses these duties in Chapter 35: *"Let the brethren serve one another, and let no one be excused from the kitchen service except by reason of sickness or occupation in some important work. For this service brings increase of reward and of charity. But let helpers be provided for the weak ones, that they may not be distressed by this work; and indeed let everyone have help, as required by the size of the community or the circumstances of the locality. If the community is a large one, the cellarer shall be excused from the kitchen service; and so also those whose occupations are of greater utility, as we said above. Let the rest serve one another in charity. The one who is ending his week of service shall do the cleaning on Saturday. He shall wash the towels with which the brethren wipe their hands and feet; and this server who is ending his week, aided by the one who is about to begin, shall wash the feet of all the brethren. He shall return the utensils of his office to the cellarer clean and in good condition, and the cellarer in turn shall consign them to the incoming server, in order that he may know what he gives out and what he receives back. On feast days, however, they wait until the end."*

The distribution of services and tasks for the individual brothers took place at the chapter, for which the monks met every day in the chapter hall. In the cloister of the Austrian Zwettl, a board can still be seen at the entrance to the Chapter Hall, where the names of the brothers to whom the task was assigned were assigned to each necessary activity, including work in the kitchen. In some monastic sources, the position of refectory keeper also appears, for example for the German

4 Preserved refectories e.g. in monasteries: in Royaumont, France, there is a monks' refectory with a parlatorium from the first half of the 13th century. In Central Europe, we can see refectories at the monasteries of Schönau and Maulbronn, the summer refectory at Bebenhausen, the renovated refectory of the monastery of Eberbach, the summer refectory of Salem, etc. A parallel can be found in the Benedictine monasteries, of course, and a Baroque refectory with a parlatorium and metal railings can be seen in the Broumov monastery.

5 Terry N. KINDER, *Die Welt der Zisterzienser*, Würzburg 1997, pp. 310-315.

6 In Benedict's Rule, Chapter 31 is devoted to the cellarer of the monastery, and besides the list of things for which he is responsible, it is interesting to see a list of qualities: *As cellarer of the monastery let there be chosen from the community one who is wise, of mature character, sober, not a great eater, not haughty, not excitable, not offensive, not slow, not wasteful, but a God-fearing man who may be like a father to the whole community. Let him have charge of everything. He shall do nothing without the Abbot's orders, but keep to his instructions... .. Let him take the greatest care of the sick, of children, of guests and of the poor, knowing without doubt that he will have to render an account for all these on the Day of Judgment. Let him regard all the utensils of the monastery and its whole property as if they were the sacred vessels of the altar. Let him not think that he may neglect anything. He should be neither a miser nor a prodigal and squanderer of the monastery's substance, but should do all things with measure and in accordance with the Abbot's instructions.* Online e.g. www.klastervyssibrod.cz/d/01/struct/Rehole-Benediktova.pdf.

Waldsassen it is documented as far back as 1358, and the sources state that the duties of the then refectory keeper, Brother Mathias, included providing napkins, spoons, bread and wine or cider on the tables and collecting leftovers after meals.⁷

Replicas of medieval ceramic vessels



Photo: Kateřina Těšnohlídková (Old Pots/Historical Pottery)

It was cooked in various vessels – pots, cauldrons or pans on legs (kuthan), which were mostly made of ceramics. Food was served twice a day in spring and summer, but from September onwards the daily rhythm changed to winter and the monks had food only once a day. The monks would get up in the dead of night, but no food awaited them when they woke up; breakfast did not exist in the monastery. During the summer season, monks ate lunch after sext and dinner after vespers, and in the winter season they ate mostly after nones. It depended on the time of year at which they sat down by the table.⁸ The situation was completely different before Easter with the advent of the great forty-day fast.⁹ The monks did not receive their food until after vespers, just before bedtime,

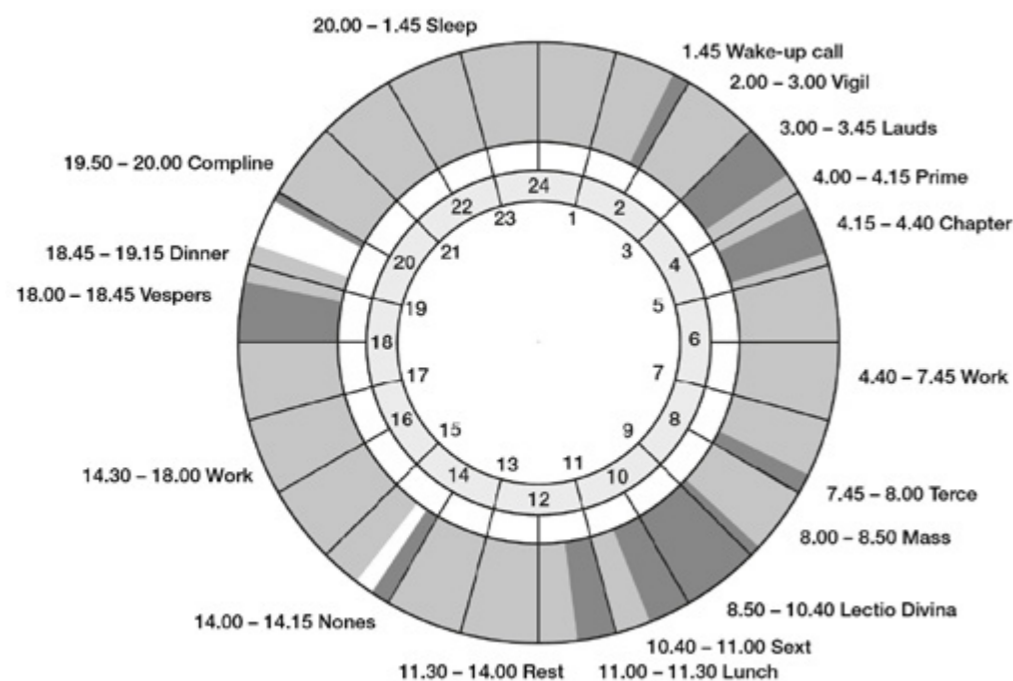
7 Christian MALZER, *Von Krapfen, Brezen und gesalzenem Fisch - Einblick in die Speisegewohnheiten in der Zisterzienserabtei Waldsassen im späten Mittelalter*, in: Verhandlungen des Historischen Vereins für Oberpfalz und Regensburg, Bd. 155, 2015, pp. 29-51.

8 The forty-first paragraph of Benedict's Rule is devoted to the mealtime: *From holy Easter until Pentecost let the brethren take dinner at the sixth hour and supper in the evening. From Pentecost throughout the summer, unless the monks have work in the fields or the excessive heat of summer oppresses them, let them fast on Wednesdays and Fridays until the ninth hour; on the other days let them dine at the sixth hour. This dinner at the sixth hour shall be the daily schedule if they have work in the fields or the heat of summer is extreme; the Abbot's foresight shall decide on this. Thus it is that he should adapt and arrange everything in such a way that souls may be saved and that the brethren may do their work without just cause for murmuring. From the Ides of September until the beginning of Lent let them always take their dinner at the ninth hour. In Lent until Easter let them dine in the evening. But this evening hour shall be so determined that they will not need the light of a lamp while eating, but everything will be accomplished while it is still daylight. Indeed at all seasons let the hour, whether for supper or for dinner, be so arranged that everything will be done by daylight.*

9 From a religious point of view, the Christian fasting regulations have been the subject of a number of studies at various stages of history: Peter GERLITZ, *Das Fasten im religionsgeschichtlichen Vergleich. (Eine phänomenologisch-systematische Untersuchung der hauptsächlichlichen Fastenpraktiken unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Hoch- und Weltregionen)*, Erlangen 1954; Herbert HOFFMANN, *Eine Fasten-Velum der Zeit um 1500, aehrscheinlich aus dem Zisterzienserinnenkloster Heiligenkreuztal*, in: 41-46; Gertrude SARTORY, *In der Arena der Askese. Fasten im frühen Christentum*, in: *Speisen, Schlemmen, Fasten. Eine Kulturgeschichte des Essens*, Frankfurt am Mein, 1995, pp. 71-82; Caroline Walker BYNUM, *Holy Feast with Holy Fasting - The Religious Meaning of Food for Medieval Women*, Prague 2017; Ludmila TARCALOVÁ, *Jídelníček našich předků*. In.

and the diet was, especially in the Middle Ages, very modest. The dietary regulations were very strict in the Middle Ages in general, allowing only modest portions of simple food. Since monks were not allowed to eat meat, except fish and poultry, the monastery kitchen usually prepared various cereal porridges, vegetables, baked bread, pancakes and sweet flour dishes, and served dairy products. Each monk was to be given a pound (about ¼ kg) of bread to eat each day, regardless of whether it was eaten once or twice. If there was both lunch and dinner, the bread was divided into two portions, the larger being eaten at noon and the smaller in the evening.

Daily schedule of Cistercian monks



Source: Kateřina Charvátová: History of the Cistercian Order in Bohemia 1142-1420, Foundation of the 12th Century

The sweet pastries, perhaps various sweet breads and cookies, were a treat for the monks. On holidays they were given special portions of fish, eggs or fruit. The quantity of food is also the subject of a separate and rather lengthy paragraph in the Rule: „*We think it sufficient for the daily dinner, whether at the sixth or the ninth hour, that every table have two cooked dishes, on account of individual infirmities, so that he who for some reason cannot eat of the one may make his meal of the other. Therefore let two cooked dishes suffice for all the brethren; and if any fruit or fresh vegetables are available, let a third dish be added. Let a good pound weight of bread suffice for the day, whether there be only one meal or both dinner and supper. If they are to have supper, the cellarer shall reserve a third of that pound, to be given them at supper. But if it happens that the work was heavier, it shall lie within the Abbot's discretion and power, should it be expedient, to add something to the fare. Above all things, however, over-indulgence must be avoided and a monk must never be overtaken by indigestion; for there is nothing so opposed to the Christian character as over-indulgence. ... Young boys shall not receive the same amount of food as their elders, but less; and frugality shall be observed in all circumstances. Except the sick who are very weak, let all abstain entirely from eating the flesh of four-footed animals.*“

Water and wine served as drinks for the Cistercian monks. There is no consensus in the scientific community about the quantity of wine, which is defined by the Order as one hemina a day. Directly in the Rule of Benedict the following is stated: *“Everyone has his own gift from God, one in this way and another in that.” It is therefore with some misgiving that we regulate the measure of other men's sustenance. Nevertheless, keeping in view the needs of weaker brethren, we believe that a hemina of wine a day is sufficient for each. But those to whom God gives the strength to abstain should know that they will receive a special reward.*

If the circumstances of the place, or the work, or the heat of summer require a greater measure, the Superior shall use his judgment in the matter, taking care always that there be no occasion for surfeit or drunkenness. We read, it is true, that wine is by no means a drink for monks; but since the monks of our day cannot be persuaded of this, let us at least agree to drink sparingly and not to satiety, because “wine makes even the wise fall away.” But where the circumstances of the place are such that not even the measure prescribed above can be supplied, but much less or none at all, let those who live there bless God and not murmur. Above all things do we give this admonition, that they abstain from murmuring.” In the Bohemian environment, where the conditions for growing wine were not very suitable, beer replaced wine and became the second most common drink next to water. As early as the Middle Ages, there are reports of breweries that supplied monastic refectories well.

In the modern era, monasteries loosened these original regulations and monks no longer commonly ate meat (see the following paragraphs for specific examples). However, even today's monasteries observe a fast from meat outside of Sundays and holidays, so the diet can be compared to a vegetarian diet most days.

The monks were summoned to the refectory by ringing the bell, and they came together in procession. Each monk stood behind his chair and sat at the table at the instruction of the abbot or prior. The few brothers who were on duty served the others. Talking was absolutely forbidden during the meal, complete silence was maintained in the refectory, and the monks listened to the devotional reading of a fellow-confrere, the lector. Even in this activity the brothers took turns, according to who was on duty. An elevated place similar to the pulpit, called the lectorium, was reserved for the reader, from where he read selected passages from religious books, so that not only the body but also the soul might be nourished during the communion of the meals. In the monastery of Vyšší Brod, for example, it was popular to read the tracts of Saint Bernard, which are rich in mystical passages and lessons on religious life. The reader in question ate after the end of the meal. In the Rule of St. Benedict, in paragraph 38, which is devoted to the weekly service of the lector, it is stated, among other things, *“The brother who is reader for the week shall take a little refreshment before he begins to read, on account of the Holy Communion and lest perhaps the fast be hard for him to bear. He shall take his meal afterwards with the kitchen and table servers of the week. The brethren are not to read or chant in order, but only those who edify their hearers.”* The meal began with remembering the poor and ended with hiding leftovers for the poor. The table was harvested in the presence of the Convention. The cook gathered first the knives and then the corbels, covered the rest of the bread, and after the instruction of the Prior and a prayer, went in pairs to the church

to the singing of the “Miserere.” The young monks went first, the Prior in the middle and the older brothers behind him.

From the South Bohemian monastery Vyšší Brod we have evidence of the so-called pitaunces.¹⁰ Pitaunce was a precisely defined allowance, which we have in the Vyšší Brod convent specified for individual church feasts. During the year, the monks received a certain allowance sixteen times a year. For example, on the feast of St. Benedict, the convent received figs, pastries and wine. On the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, pike, eggs, almonds, pastries and wine twice. In Lent, the brothers in the convent received a herring. Beer was drunk from the monastery’s own brewery, which is mentioned in the Vyšší Brod monastery as early as 1380. Four times a year, in February, April, June around the feast of John the Baptist and in September, a minuet was performed for all the monks in the monastery. It meant a healing bloodletting through a vein, which was carried out in the heating room. Three days were set aside for the minuce. On the first day, in addition to ordinary bread, the monks were given half a pound of white bread and mistum, which was wine and water, to refresh them. If someone was very weakened by the minuet, they were given extra bread in the refectory.

The monks’ kitchen used to be the main, but not the only one in the monastery. In some convents, there was also an abbot’s kitchen, which was used to cook for the abbot and his household, or for guests of the monastery. In the Rule of Benedict, chapter 56, special attention is paid to the abbot’s table: *‘Let the Abbot’s table always be with the guests and the pilgrims. But when there are no guests, let it be in his power to invite whom he will of the brethren. Yet one or two seniors must always be left with the brethren for the sake of discipline...’* Another kitchen functioned within the monastery hospital. In both of these kitchens, meat could already be prepared in the Middle Ages, unlike in the monastic kitchen. This was intended for rare guests, but also for the sick, who were allowed to eat meat or strong broths for fortification and were exempted from the strict dietary regulations of the Order for the duration of their illness. In the Rule of Benedict, in the 36th paragraph, which is dedicated to the sick brothers, it is written: *“For these sick brethren let there be assigned a special room and an attendant who is God-fearing, diligent and solicitous. Let the use of baths be afforded the sick as often as may be expedient; but to the healthy, and especially to the young, let them be granted more rarely. Moreover, let the use of meat be granted to the sick who are very weak, for the restoration of their strength; but when they are convalescent, let all abstain from meat as usual...”* The following 37th paragraph of the Rule also remembers the old and the boys in this respect, saying, *“Although human nature itself is drawn to special kindness towards these times of life, that is towards old men and children, still the authority of the Rule should also provide for them. Let their weakness be always taken into account, and let them by no means be held to the rigor of the Rule with regard to food. On the contrary, let a kind consideration be shown to them, and let them eat before the regular hours.”* Thus, we see that the strict rules regarding meals and other aspects of monastic life could be relaxed in certain justified cases for the good of the cause.

The monastery always remembered the poor. A little more was always cooked than the monks could eat, and the leftover food was brought daily to the monastery gate where the poor or travellers who would otherwise go hungry were waiting. Usually they were given bread, cabbage and beer, and on holidays a special meal was prepared for the poor. Of course, there were other facilities and functions associated with eating in monasteries, such as the granary manager, the kitchen manager and the cellarer, or the aforementioned refectory manager. The distribution of these specific functions certainly depended on the size and needs of the convent.

The contemporary monastery kitchens are decorated in a simple but modern way. As a rule, they do not lack a dishwasher, because washing plates after all the monks is unnecessarily tedious. The kitchens are also often the place where the lay employees of the monasteries work nowadays. Especially if there are few monks in the monastery, this is a significant help; the monks do not have to cook for themselves and spend a large part of the day in the kitchen, they can engage in other activities.

Contemporary view of the refectory at Zwettl Monastery



Source: Stift Zwettl

¹⁰ Link to an online accessible source in Latin: [Institute of Philosophy of the CAS \(cas.cz\)](https://www.instituteforphilosophy.com/cas/cas.cz/) (Fontes rerum Austriacarum, Urkundenbuch des Cistercienserstiftes B. Mariae V. zu Hohenfurt in Böhmen (Pangerl), pp. 226-227.

2.1. Images of monastic meals in written sources

The basic normative source which contains the original regulation concerning the diet in Cistercian monasteries is of course the already mentioned and widely quoted above decree of St. Benedict. The individual regulations may seem brief and abbreviated, but much can be gleaned from them. It will not have escaped the attention of the careful reader that, within the framework of an ascetic attitude and a certain austerity, the monastic regulations allow for a number of exceptions as regards food and drink, whether for elderly and sick monks or for possible allowances in connection with increased work, etc. Over the centuries, of course, the Order has been supplemented by other regulations approved by the General Chapter, responding to the needs and customs of the time.

Rich and numerous preserved sources, not only in the monastery archives, are accounts in which we can trace the raw materials that were bought for the kitchen, for example various types of spices. If we are lucky, we can trace the expenditure of the monastery kitchen, the development of the prices of these raw materials and their consumption in a certain period. In the monasteries' account books, on the other hand, we can see the income and revenue of the monastery's economy and we can get an idea of the agricultural and livestock production, the consumption of the convent and the surpluses.

In the archives of some monasteries, e.g. the male monastery Raitenhaslach or the female monastery Marienhausen, there are preserved cookbooks, kitchen orders or food lists with the corresponding recipes and order of dishes.¹¹ In this case, we can literally see into the plates of the monks or guests who visited the monasteries in a certain period. Unfortunately, for most Cistercian convents, archival material of this type, which allows us to find out details of the kitchens of Cistercian monks, has not survived. For the Bohemian environment we have sources of this type preserved in the Vyšší Brod monastery and they will be discussed below.

The catalogues of signs used by Cistercian monks when they needed to communicate without words may also be a specific source. Already in the 11th century, Benedictine monks compiled simple catalogues in which about 200 words were written down with a description of how to represent them. The catalogues were then copied by other monasteries, and dozens of them have been preserved throughout Europe. Two catalogues can be found in the archives of the still living Vyšší Brod monastery. This is a valuable source through which we can get a glimpse of everyday life behind the walls of Cistercian convents. The catalogues also contain signs for dishes, through some of which we can observe regional differences.

¹¹ See Edgar KRAUSEN, *Der Speisezettel der Zisterzienser von Raitenhaslach*, in: Oettinger Land 7, 1987, pp. 93-100; Eugen DUELL, *Reingauer Klosterküche um 1507. Die Haushaltordnung des Zisterzienserinnen-Klosters Marienhausen*, in: Jahrbuch des Rheingau Taunus-Kreises 51, 2000, pp. 103-106. Examples of the preservation of this type of source are also recorded for other religious settings, e.g. for the Benedictine abbey of Blaubeuren: Jürgen SYDOW, *Spätmittelalterliche Speiseordnungen aus dem Kloster Blaubeuren*, in: Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens und seiner Zweige 103, 1992, pp. 33-41.

Different catalogues show, for example, different types of fish that were probably eaten in a given monastery.¹²

Salt, which was of course used in the monastery kitchens, occupies a special place in the archival sources. However, it is not only recorded in the sources as a delicacy, but is usually mentioned as a trade item in connection with the so-called salt treasury. The Salt Treasury or *cassa salis* was created by the Salt Treaty, which was concluded between the Papal See and the Kingdom of Bohemia in 1630. In it, Emperor Ferdinand II undertook to grant the Pope and the Apostolic See a share of the salt tax of 15 kreutzers for each barrel of salt imported to Bohemia for the benefit of the Czech clergy. The salt treasury also provided funds for the Cistercian Order, for example for the operation of the Cistercian College Bernardinum, which operated in Prague between 1635 and 1783.

It is clear that in order to learn the details of the Cistercian cuisine and the monks' diet from different perspectives, we have to be careful and pay attention to different types of sources. In addition to written sources, archaeological finds are of course a rich source of information, which is the subject of a later chapter.

¹² See Radka LOMIČKOVÁ - RANOCHOVÁ, *Speaking Silently. Sign Language in Medieval Monasteries*, Prague 2016; Radka LOMIČKOVÁ - RANOCHOVÁ, *Sign Language of Cistercians and Benedictines in the Middle Ages*, autoreferát dissertation, Prague 2014.

2.1.1. Examples from the archives

In the following paragraphs, several specific sources are presented that provide us with insights into the cuisine and diet of the Cistercian monks. Examples are given of sources that relate directly to the operation of the monastic kitchen, as well as sources that are not primarily related to this topic, but which can shed light on a number of issues and point to interesting details of monastic life.

A very interesting and concrete source are the German written kitchen registers for the convent and for guests from 1755 preserved in the archives of the Vyšší Brod monastery. The kitchen register for the convent records day by day how many portions are served for lunch and dinner, and also indicates which monk is absent from the meal on each day, often with a note of his whereabouts. At the same time, it is briefly noted which courses were issued and in what quantities, so this is a source that beautifully captures the composition of the monks throughout the year, including holidays or Lent. The kitchen register for guests is similarly structured and also contains records of the meals issued. Several monks were usually invited to share a table with lay guests. Thus, in addition to the composition of the menu, we can trace from the source who visited the monastery, also thanks to the notes on the monks' stay, we can deal with their mobility.¹³

A unique insight into everyday life in an early modern Cistercian monastery is offered by the visitation protocol of the Žďár monastery, or *Charta charitatis*, from 1688.¹⁴ Compared to other, not very numerous surviving documents of this type, it is quite extensive, detailed and provides many concrete examples of the functioning of the monastic community. Information on the monastery kitchen and the monks' meals appears in several paragraphs, and it also seeps into paragraphs that do not deal directly with the subject. For example, a rather extensive passage is devoted to the function of the janitor, who is not supposed to be engaged in any other activity so that he can always be at the gate. In addition to his duties, the text mentions that food is not to be distributed in the courtyard behind the monastery gate, as there is a more suitable place for this activity. The twelfth paragraph of the visitation protocol, entitled "De Infirmario et infirmis", recalls the rules to be observed when a religious falls ill.

The sick monk is not to remain in his cell, but is to retire to the infirmario and always have a minister and confessor with him. The sick are to be given a more abundant diet and a sufficient

¹³ Cistercian Abbey Vyšší Brod, fund Cistercian Order Vyšší Brod, sign. HA 74, book No. 44 and No. 45. Here is an example of a record of meals issued to members of the convent on 1 January 1755: *„Mittwoch den 1. Jener ordinari 28 P. samt Baader, Schulmaister 30 Persohnen, Ohne Ehrw. P. Prior, P. Ladislaus, P. Mauritius, P. Raymundus, so heraussen gespeist, ohne P. Lambert so zu Oberhaydt, ohne P. Nicolaus so zu Masching, Verblieben: 24 Portiones. Rindfleisch 19 lb., Scmaltz 3 lb., Putter 1 ½ lb. Schwartzes Wildbradt 15 lb., Gäns Special 3 st., Sponfarckhl Spec. 3 st., Hagen Bradl 4 st. Sollath Confect. zuckerbacht, Mandl, Nüß, Öepfl. Wegen Neuen Jahr und Infulation 2. Special. Auf die Nacht ord. 28. P. Ohne P. Gerard, P. Mauritius so heraussen gespeist, ohne P. Nicolaus, P. Lambert, Verbl. 24 P. Wildbradt 17 lb., Junggäns und And. Anden Bradl 7 st.'*

¹⁴ It is a Latin copy, probably made for the needs of the province. SOA Litoměřice, Cistercians Osek, carton no. 22, signature 125. A III. 8, *Acta varia monasterii Zarensis* (compiled 1710), fol. 224-242. The original of the protocol was certainly in the monastery in Žďár. See Martina SCHUTOVÁ: *Žďár Monastery in the first years after its restoration (1676-1705)*, diploma thesis, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, 2015.

supply of medicines, and are to be frequently visited and consoled by their superiors. The infirmarium, however, is not to be used by the religious to meet, drink and feast. The thirteenth article on the dormitory and cells, "De Dormitorio et Cellis," is a summary of the rules of conduct in these areas. Among other things, we learn that if someone brings food and drink into a cell, he is to be on bread and water for a day and is to sit on the floor. Above the entrance to each cell, according to the custom of the Order, there is to be a window (*scrutinium*), which is forbidden to be covered from the inside, so that the superiors can check at any time what the brothers are doing in the cell. Finally, the fifteenth paragraph of "De Refectorio et Victu" deals directly with the refectory and the diet. The refectory is to be separated from the conversation room, and no one is to enter it outside of meal times. No one is to dare to rush to the table before being invited to do so by a sign. The next passage is devoted directly to meals. During the time when meat is permitted, two portions of cooked meat and one of roasted meat must suffice the brethren in addition to the usual breakfast (*prandium*). Unfortunately, we do not know the size of the portions. In the evening, on the contrary, one portion of cooked meat and two of roasted meat with vegetables or salad. On fast days, in addition to the usual breakfast, the religious are to be given two portions of fish and one portion of vegetables. Dinner is to be accompanied by a portion of fish or cheese or vegetables during the fast. One measure of drink should be sufficient for each meal; those who are thirstier may be given more with the permission of the superior. Each monk should be given only a sip of wine, which is scarce because the region in which the monastery is located is cold. No one is allowed to reserve wine for himself at the cellarer's or to buy it without the prior's permission. Finally, it is reminded that as soon as the new tiles are finished, a proper table should be set up in the refectory, where the brothers will be accompanied by spiritual readings during the common meal. On major feasts, lay officials or other outsiders may sit at the religious table. A special paragraph is dedicated to the superior of the kitchen and the cellario, "De Culinae Praefecto et Cellario". In the first place, the brothers who hold this office are instructed not to allow any men into the cellar except those whose help they need.

Furthermore, the kitchen keeper is to see that the bell is rung at a certain hour for the distribution of the servants' portions, whose portions are to be distributed outside the courtyard, where he is not to admit anyone. In the source, the courtyard is referred to as the 'atrium', and it is not entirely clear which monastic premises were meant by this. The keys to the storeroom and cellar are not to be given by the kitchen superior to any of the laity. He is to take charge of his own duties, since great damage usually results to the monastery from any confusion of keys. If he acts against this measure, he is to be removed at once, and someone more vigilant and careful is to be put in his place. At the order of the Prior - or in his absence the Father Subprior - he must not dare to give the brothers drink on the appointed days of rest, or he will be punished as disobedient in the Chapter.

If the superior of the kitchen holds meetings, breakfasts, banquets, drinking parties or games of cards in his bedroom, either with religious or with other individuals, as has been the case up to now, he is to be deprived of his office and sentenced to three days' imprisonment according to the monastic discipline. On the other hand, he is to devote himself thus far more carefully to fishing and other farm work, which fall within his competence. Furthermore, under penalty of being deprived of his office, he must not dare to carry arms or shoot with a bow. He is also to take the

oath of allegiance according to the custom of the Order. Another of the monks held the office of refectory keeper, according to article twenty-six the rectorarius is to keep the refectory and all utensils as clean as possible. Furthermore, he must not allow anyone to enter the refectory outside of meal times, nor must he talk or drink with anyone there. Nor may he give drink to novices or other religious outside the appointed time, or bring them drink or send them to their cells, or he will be punished according to the monastic discipline. He is not to refill the beer left on the table after the meal into the brothers' portions, but is to distribute it to the servants or the poor according to the orders of the prior.

Among the archives of the monastery in Žďár in the Moravian Provincial Archive in Brno we can also find a document on the determination of the life pension of the resigning abbot Benedikt Zaunmiller.¹⁵ The pension, which contains, besides other material security, also a precise list of food products, was approved and confirmed with his seal and signature by the Visitor Ondřej Troyer on 16 June 1690, following a proposal of the Žďár Convent. Thus, we have evidence of the monthly consumption of certain food products in the monastery environment at the end of the 17th century. Firstly, the outgoing abbot was to receive 1,000 gold pieces, and then 500 gold pieces each year, which were to be paid in half on two dates, St. Havel's Day and St. George's Day. The monastery also undertook to support a priest who would spend time with the abbot, as well as a butler, two servants, a cook and an assistant who would be at his disposal. Thirty barrels of wine and forty barrels of beer from the brewery in Radešín were then reserved for the abbot annually. As it would have been difficult to determine the annual ration of the various food products, spices, salt, etc., it was decided that eight meals would be supplied each day for lunch and dinner, in the same quantity and quality as the food in the convent. Twenty-four loaves of bread will be supplied by the convent each week. The Convent also undertakes to supply candles, linen, tablecloths and other necessities.

15 German original. MZA Brno, E 8, carton no. 2, signature 348. C 7, fol. 7. See Martina SCHUTOVÁ: *Žďár Monastery in the first years after its restoration (1676-1705)*, diploma thesis FF UK Praha, 2015.

3. Cistercian monastery kitchen through the eyes of archaeology

Inspiration for the medieval period of monasteries can be drawn primarily from Magdalena Beranová's work *Food and Drink in Prehistory and the Middle Ages*¹⁶, which is based on an interdisciplinary approach combining archaeological, historical, ethnographic, iconographic, archaeobotanical, palynological and osteological knowledge. Separate archaeological sources provide knowledge concerning monastic kitchens mainly for the medieval and early modern periods, and three basic groups of sources can be distinguished. Firstly, there are the relics of extinct monastic kitchens (e.g. Velehrad). Secondly, there are finds of kitchen waste, mainly from the objects of cesspools (e.g. Plasy). In this case, the vessels used for dining or cooking are analysed in the framework of archaeological excavations and their context in the everyday life of the convent is examined. Macroarchaeological, osteological, malacozoological or palynological material is examined and analysed by relevant specialists in collaboration with archaeologists. Published processed archaeological excavations with finding reports can also be a source of information, which in some cases can be revised and new findings can be attempted (e.g. Žďár nad Sázavou).

Specific examples of finds can be seen in museums or monasteries themselves, e.g. reconstructed drinking vessels, jugs, kettles, stoves. Their morphology, decoration and quality correspond to the period context and environment, some pieces may be specifically decorated.

In recent years, a number of stimulating archaeological excavations have been carried out in former Cistercian monasteries, some of them touching directly on the topic of monastic cuisine and diet, such as the excavating of the medieval kitchen at Velehrad mentioned below or the excavation of the Baroque prelatore sump at Plasy. Comparison of researches from the environment of monasteries of other orders may bring interesting findings. One of the most detailed treatments of a set of monastic vessels with traces of use is Barbara Slivkova's work on the everyday life of the Minorite monastery in Brno in the early modern period in the finds from the kitchen dump.¹⁷

16 In original Czech language name of the publication is „Jídlo a pití v pravěku a ve středověku“

17 Barbora SLIVKOVÁ, *Reflection of the everyday life of the Minorite monastery in Brno in the early modern period in finds from the kitchen rubbish dump*, Institute of Archaeology and Museology MU Brno, 2021. Available online: https://www.academia.edu/29505966/Magdalena_Beranov%C3%A1_J%C3%ADdlo_a_pit%C3%AD_v_prav%C4%9Bku_a_ve_st%C5%99edov%C4%9Bku_Food_and_drink_in_prehistoric_times_and_the_Middle_Ages.

3.1. Location and reconstruction of the monastery kitchen at Velehrad

It is generally extremely difficult for medieval archaeologists to find the remains of kitchens. The spaces have usually succumbed to younger alterations or were located in above-ground parts that have been demolished. Archaeologists from Archaia Olomouc¹⁸ made such an exceptional find in the former Cistercian abbey at Velehrad in February 2019. Velehrad was the oldest Cistercian monastery in Moravia, founded at the beginning of the 13th century, and the monks occupied the monastery until 1784, when the convent was abolished by Joseph II. Just a hundred years later, the monastery came under the scrutiny of uncritically-minded researchers, who began various excavations in the monastery complex in search of the tomb of St. Methodius. The tomb was not found, but during the first half of the 20th century a large part of the convent with the old church facade was excavated, as well as other buildings. In recent decades, archaeological excavations have resumed and a kitchen has been discovered on the expected site within the medieval quadrangle. The find was surprising in terms of the state of preservation, which is exceptional in the Central European area. The situation dates back to the 13th and 14th century and can be compared with the surviving kitchens from the Cistercian monasteries of St. Maria de Alcobaca in Portugal and Poblet in Catalonia. The find is presented intact in the monastery in Velehrad, the square base around the perimeter of the large hearth with three stone bases is exposed, the fourth one is not preserved. On the footings were beams that carried the body of the chimney, which carried the smoke away from the hearth. The archaeologists' work at Velehrad continued with further tasks to verify the existence and length of the original refectory adjacent to the discovered kitchen. During the excavations, the entrance to the hearth was also found under the calefactorium or heating room, which was the only heated place in the monasteries apart from the kitchen until the modern era.¹⁹

Unearthed archaeological situation of the medieval monastery kitchen, Velehrad.



Source: Petr Hudec/Velehrad Monastery

18 Online report on Archaia's website: https://www.archaiabrno.org/home_cs/?acc=zapisnicek&blog_id=902.

19 The medieval Cistercian kitchen can be seen as part of the tour „Calling Stones - from the life of the monks“ (<http://www.velehradinfo.cz/muzejni-expozice/>).

3.2. Research of the Baroque sump in Plasy

Research of the Baroque toilet pit in the prelature of the monastery in Plasy. Archaeological research of this kind brings a lot of information if the right methods are chosen. In cesspools, which are also occasionally used for waste disposal, an environment of constant humidity without access to air is created when they are backfilled. This preserves organic material finds and a wide range of natural materials that would normally decompose. Among the diverse range of finds were, for example, poppy seeds, plant remains, small fish bones, a cooked egg yolk, a number of animal bones, as well as glass and pottery. Kitchen pottery, i.e. vessels used to prepare food, is represented by three types of finds: pots, baking dishes and a lid with two holes to vent excess steam. The finds are dominated by light-coloured pots with one handle made on a potter's wheel and fired in the oxidising environment of the kiln. The pots are most often yellow glazed on the inside and their use in the kitchen is evidenced by numerous traces of glazing on the outside of the vessels. In addition to kitchen pottery, the finds include tableware, which shows the quality of the potter's craft. These are fragmentarily preserved and sculptured glazed jugs or faience products. From the fragments, archaeologists have managed to reconstruct three incomplete vessels: a bowl-shaped tray on a low leg, a heart-shaped bowl and a cup, which refers to the growing popularity of drinking coffee and tea. An interesting find is the neck of an earthenware bottle with a tin thread, which represents an older type of bottle from the 17th and 18th centuries in which medicinal mineral waters were imported. The sump also contained a number of glass artefacts, including fragments of drinking vessels, goblets and cups, as well as jugs, bottles and decanters.²⁰

20 The results of the research are presented on the website of the National Heritage Institute in a multi-part series: <https://www.npu.cz/cs/uop-plzen/cim-se-zabyvame/archeologie/archeologicke-vyzkumy/plasy-jimka/jimka-1-dil>; <https://www.npu.cz/cs/uop-plzen/cim-se-zabyvame/archeologie/archeologicke-vyzkumy/plasy-jimka/jimka-2-dil>; <https://www.npu.cz/cs/uop-plzen/cim-se-zabyvame/archeologie/archeologicke-vyzkumy/plasy-jimka/jimka-6-dil>.

4. Cistercian Heritage

The tradition of monastic economy and culinary art is still alive today, and in some areas its continuity is stronger and more noticeable. The legacy of the Grey Friars is not confined to living monasteries, but persists or is being rediscovered in lands from which the Cistercians left decades or even hundreds of years ago. “The discovery of the Cistercian heritage“ in this final paragraph does not mean research in the archives, searching for old recipes and evidence of life beyond the walls of the monasteries. We see it comprehensively, as a contribution to our lives and our daily lives, as a good practice that has worked for centuries and that continues to inspire us.

In this short study, it is far from possible to refer to all the activities that are alive in individual monasteries or monastic landscapes, so we will give at least a few examples from the varied mosaic of places where we can encounter the Cistercian culinary heritage.

We start in Vyšší Brod in South Bohemia, the only functioning Cistercian monastery in Bohemia. The monks take care of 20 hectares of ponds, they also manage forest and agricultural land, and the proceeds from the farm go towards the gradual repair of the monastery buildings. In recent years, the order has expanded its orchards, which mainly grow apples. The Cistercians produce several hundred litres of cider each year and also make their own marmalades, a popular speciality being gooseberry marmalade, of which there are only a few jars a year. Since 2005, the monks have been selling their products in their own shop. In 2019, the brothers have also returned to keeping bees and look after more than two dozen colonies. According to archival sources, the monastery was beekeeping as early as the 18th century, and the 1st half of the 20th century tradition of beekeeping is well known.²¹

For over 875 years, the Cistercian monks in Zwettl, Austria, have lived and worked according to Benedict’s order. Visitors to this monastery can also buy regional products, such as traditional poppy seed cakes. In addition, the monastery’s fishmonger’s shop is open every Saturday morning outside the summer break, offering fresh fish from the local ponds.

Among the functioning monasteries, there is the German abbey of Marienstatt, where the brewing tradition is still alive. Visitors can taste dark, bottom-fermented and naturally cloudy country beer from the monastery’s brewery. The beer gets its characteristic dark colour from a special malt blend that gives it an unmistakable malty taste. With an original strength of 12.7-13 % and an alcohol content of around 5.5 %, it is slightly ‘fuller’ than the usual pilsner-type beer. Marienstatt beer is always served completely fresh, and the small brewery dispenses with any domestic purification, stabilisation or pasteurisation. Guests thus receive a natural product that is slightly clouded by yeast. All the valuable ingredients such as proteins, vitamins and minerals are preserved in the beer.

The Cistercian tradition is also continued in the former Cistercian abbey of Eberbach. The monastery grounds belonged to the state of Hesse until 1998. With the foundation of the Ebrach Monastery Foundation in 1998, it became an independent legal entity. The mission of the foundation is to make the monastery grounds accessible and preserve them through moderate use and sustainable management. The foundation is primarily involved in wine and gastronomy. It is home to the ‘Rheingau Wine Convent’, a wine fraternity which is dedicated to spreading wine knowledge and organises wine tastings in the monastery cellars. Festive wine tastings are also held in the Baroque refectory or in the secular college from the early 13th century. In spring and autumn, wine auctions are held at the Ebrach Abbey, a wine fair is held in April, a culinary festival with a cultural programme takes place in November, and the first Sunday in December is dedicated to the harvest festival of the Rhine winegrowers. Similar events are also held in the traditional wine-growing region of South Moravia, following the tradition of the Cistercians of Velehrad. Since 2007, Velehrad has hosted the Cistercian Seal exhibition of kosher wines.

For the culinary experience “Erlebnis Fisch im Land der 100 Teiche” you can travel to one of the oldest and largest pond landscapes in Europe in the Tirschenreuth area. Fish was an important part of the diet of the Cistercian monks, and it was the Cistercians at the Waldsassen monastery who left a distinctive imprint on the local landscape by building a network of ponds. Therefore, the autumn fish culinary experience traditionally starts in the monastery town of Waldsassen, and in addition to fish delicacies, visitors can also enjoy tours of the local ponds and farms and visit the activities of the Upper Palatinate Fish Museum in the MuseumsQuartier Tirschenreuth.

Mixed and kosher wine tasting - Cistercian Seal



Source: Petr Hudec

²¹ A report on the management of the Vyšší Brod monastery and an interview with the local prior: <https://ekolist.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/zpravy/cisterciaci-z-vyssiho-brodu-obnovili-chov-vcel>.

Also in autumn, the Žďár Chateau, a former Cistercian monastery, hosts an event for the general public - Countryside Day. Its aim is to present the forest and pond farming of the Kinský family, which tries to follow the gentle and sustainable farming of the Cistercian monks who cultivated and farmed the land for more than five hundred years, from the mid-13th century to the end of the 18th century. The event usually includes tastings of fish specialities and regional products.

Today, the original monastic practices and skills go far beyond the boundaries of monastic life. They have inspired a number of companies that link their products to the monastic tradition. In Čejkovice in South Moravia, for example, Sonnetor has been producing organic teas and organic spices for many years. The medieval monastery gardens became the model for their herbal paradise, the St. Hildegard Herb Garden. These were geometric and functional, connected by stone paths, full of herbs and medicinal plants, but also vegetables and commercial crops that were processed in the monastery kitchens. Herbs and medicinal plants were used for immediate healing and the production of medicines. In the garden you will find herbs that were also used by St. Hildegard, such as wormwood, sweet clover, lavender, motherwort, sage and others. In addition to its benefits, Sonnetor's garden also provides a space for relaxation and meditation, which can also be seen as inspired by the monastic environment. Likewise, the garden includes a self-serve drinking water source.²²

22 <https://www.kudyznudy.cz/aktivita/bylinkova-zahrada-sv-hildegardy-v-cejkovicich>

Conclusion

As this short study shows, the culinary heritage of the Cistercians is a very varied and extensive topic that can be approached from different angles. We can examine this topic purely historically. Of interest are the rules and regulations of monastic cuisine, which are described in normative sources, especially in the Rule of St Benedict. It is the regulations of the Order that are the common red thread that connects all the convents and monastic landscapes. Cistercian monasteries and estates, on the other hand, were and are scattered all over Europe, hence the variety and diversity that emerges from the specific sources and archaeological excavations of individual sites. It is only by gradually fitting these fragments, microhistorical probes, into a given framework that we can attempt to assemble a diverse and as complete a mosaic of the subject as possible. But if we look at the archives of individual monasteries, at the traces left by monks in individual landscapes, we can begin to paint a rather vivid picture of life behind the walls of individual religious houses. If we are lucky, we can literally look into the plates of the grey monks and their guests in a particular monastery.

Another and perhaps more interesting way to learn about the Cistercian culinary heritage and spread awareness of it among the general public is to revive it. Searching for living traditions, traditional products and best practices, trying out old recipes. In all these areas, there is great scope.

List of memory institutions

National Archives (NA) Prague

Archives of Czech monasteries dissolved under Joseph II.

Order of Cistercians Plasy

Order of Cistercians Zbraslav

Order of Cistercians Pohled

Moravian Provincial Archives (MZA) Brno

Fund E7 Cistercians Velehrad

Fund E8 Cistercians Žďár

Fund E9 Cisterciačky Staré Brno

Fund E10 Cisterciačky Tišnov

State Regional Archives (SOA) Litoměřice

Cistercians Fund Osek

Cistercian Monastery Vyšší Brod

Monastery Archives

Archaia Brno, z.ú.

Paris Lodron Universität Salzburg - Ernährungsgeschichte

Department of Archaeology and Museology Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University in Brno

Department of Czech History Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague

Stift Zwettl

Stift und Museum Salem

Heiligenkreuz: Europainstitut für cisterciensische Geschichte, Spiritualität, Kunst, und Liturgie

USA Kalamazoo: The Institute of Cistercian Studies

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