

You will need: (This recipe will make approximately 20 poos)

- 2 cups / 300g plain flour
- 1 cup / 300g of salt
- 2 tablespoons of bicarbonate of soda
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil
- 1 cup / 8 fl oz of hot water
- 10 oxo cubes or non-staining brown poster paint or brown food colouring
- Mixing bowl
- Measuring jug
- Vinyl gloves (optional but recommended!)

For dietary evidence for the poos see below for suggestions for different periods of time

Method:

1. Mix 1 cup / 8 fl oz of hot water with either 10 oxo cubes or enough paint or food colouring to make a good poo colour
2. Place the flour, salt, bicarbonate of soda and vegetable oil in a large mixing bowl
3. Add your coloured liquid slowly to the bowl of ingredients and mix until you have a firm but flexible dough; if you need a darker colour add more of the colouring agent directly but be careful not to end up with runny poo!
4. Add different dietary evidence to the poo depending on what period of time you want the poo to come from. All of the ingredients suggested below are either available to buy in supermarkets or easy to collect by saving pips/seeds and thoroughly washing and drying them. NB: fish bones need to be boiled and cleaned particularly carefully to remove all flesh and the spinal cord.

For **Aztec** poo:

- * Dried pepper seeds
- * Maize kernels (pop-corn kernels)
- * Dried pumpkin seeds
- * Dried squash seeds
- * Pinto beans
- * Black turtle beans
- * Fish bones

For **Viking** poo:

- * Fish bones
- * Bread grains
- * Peas
- * Apple pips
- * Cherry stones
- * Small stones (to show use of quernstones to grind bread grains)

For **Tudor** poo:

- * Fish bones
- * Bread grains
- * Lentils
- * Apple pips
- * Peas
- * Small stones (to show use of quernstones to grind bread grains)

For **Roman** poo:

- * Melon seeds
- * Bread grains
- * Olive stones
- * Orange/lemon pips
- * Date stones
- * Small stones (to show use of quernstones to grind bread grains)

NB: You might like to add cooked spaghetti (or something similar) to the poos to introduce the idea of internal parasites such as tapeworms!

Turn over to find out how to use the poos!

You will need:

- Poos from different periods
- Wooden scrapers e.g. wooden coffee stirrers or cocktail sticks with the points cut off
- Paper plates or similar
- Plastic sheeting to cover the table/floor
- Rulers
- Pencils
- Organic remains recording sheet (see www.yac-uk.org/leaders.html#Resources)
- Vinyl gloves (optional)
- Microscope (optional)

Method:

1. Start by discussing what different people in the past might have eaten. How would their diets be different from ours today?
2. Ask “how do we know what people in the past ate?” This could lead into discussions about evidence from: bones found on excavations; evidence from scientific analysis of cooking pots/implements; pictorial evidence; written accounts; ethnographic evidence; evidence from farm tools/practices; evidence from shell middens or rubbish pits and...cesspits!
3. Give each young person or pair of young people a poo and ask them to measure the length, width and height of the poo
4. Excavate the poo carefully using the small sticks. Explain that they should group together any finds they make in separate piles on their paper plate; to help record their finds you could use the ‘organic remains recording sheet’ listed above
5. Ask the children to decide which period of time they think their fake poo has come from based on the evidence they’ve retrieved.

Useful Questions:

- Why and how would this evidence survive? Both in the ground and inside the person!
- What can this evidence tell us about people’s diets in the past? Healthy/unhealthy etc
- What other information can be gathered from this evidence? (E.g. trade of foods that weren’t grown in Britain at this time, evidence for poor health/disease)
- What evidence is missing from the poo? Why? This leads well into discussing the digestive system and also preservation of remains in the ground.
- Would rich people have different poo to poor people? Why? You could actually make different poos for different levels of wealth; e.g. adding cloves and peppercorns to the Tudor poo would indicate a wealthy diet.
- What can we tell about the health of people in the past from what they ate?

Follow up work:

- Look at the grains and seeds under a microscope to look for evidence of cooking or to identify what seeds are present
- Look into trade routes and how goods were preserved on these journeys
- Research common dietary related diseases and illnesses from the past
- Look at farming practices and/or how food was produced in the past; how is this different from today?