

Model Showing Brewing, Baking, and Butchery **The British Museum**

From the tomb of Sebekhetepi at Beni Hasan, Egypt
Middle Kingdom, 2125-1795 BC



Food offerings were supposed to sustain the deceased throughout eternity, but in reality would cease not long after the burial. During the Middle Kingdom (about 2040-1750 BC) wealthy tomb owners often placed painted wooden models in their tombs to ensure that the offerings could be provided magically when necessary.

The models could show various aspects of the production of food, from the ploughing of the fields to the bringing of the bread to the tomb. Many showed some or all elements of the processing of the food, such as breadmaking.

This example shows some of the stages of the making of bread and beer, and of slaughtering cattle for food. A trussed ox is butchered by a man with a knife on the right. The processes of baking and brewing were closely related: grain is ground as the first part of both. Baking is represented on the left, with two types of oven, tended by servants. The elements of brewing represented here are the water carrier, the straining of the mash, and a beer jar. Between them, the figures on this model could provide all the sustenance that the tomb owner needed in the Afterlife.

H. Wilson, *Egyptian food and drink* (Aylesbury, Shire Publications, 1988)