

Did Fast Food Originate in Pompeii? New Remains Indicate It Might Have

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This Saturday the discovery of an **old fast food street stall in Pompeii was revealed**. The **thermopoly**, buried nearly 2,000 years ago by the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius, was a fast food establishment where food and beverages were served. Its counter, found in an exceptional state of conservation, still shows the original decoration and even food scraps.

The establishment was partially discovered in 2019, but has been shown to the public until now. On its walls are **bright frescoes** that include the image of a Nereid riding a seahorse, drawings of animals (which were probably part of the menu), and an illustration that, according to the researchers, could be the brand of the store.

The Thermopolium of #RegioV , a bar in #Pompeii , complete with an image of a Nereid riding a sea-horse, had previously been partially excavated in 2019. It now emerges in its entirety, with rich decorative still life frescoes, food residues, animal bones & victims of the eruption.
pic.twitter.com/0Eqh2sbAmm

– Pompeii Sites (@pompeii_sites) December 26, 2020

The **terracotta jars** where they placed ingredients and food, **kitchen utensils, animal bones and food remains** are preserved.

Traces of **pork, fish, duck, goat, snails and veal** were found, as well as ground beans and wine. All this gives clues about the gastronomic habits of the ancient inhabitants of Pompeii.

These stalls were very popular in Roman cities and used to serve hot food to the lower classes of the city. As archaeologists explain, they could account for the origins of "take away food" and *fast food* . In Pompeii alone, more than eighty thermopolies have been discovered, but this is the first to be fully shown.

"In addition to being a testimony of daily life in Pompeii, the possibilities of analyzing this thermopoly are exceptional, since for the first time a complete set has been unearthed" , explained **Massimo Osanna, general director of the Pompeii Archaeological Park**, in a statement.

The top of the bar is filled with recessed containers that could hold wine or food. They were covered with a lid to protect the product. In one of them, beans were found that were used to bleach wine. pic.twitter.com/AlA0sfYyE0

– *Fernando Lillo Redonet (@LilloRedonet) December 26, 2020*

In the same room, behind the counter, **human bones** were found, including those of a man in his 50s, near a child's crib, as well as amphorae, a cistern and a fountain.

"The thermopoly gives the impression of having been hastily closed and abandoned by its owners, although it is possible that someone, perhaps the older man, stayed and died during the first stage of the eruption, when the loft collapsed ," explained Osanna in an interview with the local agency Ansa.

Another skeleton found could be that of a thief or some hungry fugitive, *"surprised by the burning vapors holding in one hand the lid of the container that he had just opened,"* he added.

In addition, it is likely that this particular position was a

very popular one, since it is at the crossroads of the streets of Bodas de Plata and Los Balcones, a very busy area in its time.

Thermopolia (a word from the Greek *thermopōlion* , which means 'hot food to sell') were very common in the Roman world. Jennifer Viegas, a Rome expert at the University at Buffalo, described them as a cross between "*Burger King, a British pub and a Spanish tapas bar,*" in a 2019 ABC News article.

The "Thermopolia" (the compound word comes from the Greek 'thermopōlion', which means hot food to sell) were very common in the Roman world, and only in Pompeii there were about 80. pic.twitter.com/1Lm2PuSf6l

– Telam Agency (@AgenciaTelam) December 26, 2020

Pompeii, located about 23 km southeast of Naples in Italy, was buried in AD 79 after the surprising volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The thick layer of ash helped preserve the city and the remains of its inhabitants as they were at the time, making the site an exceptional source of archaeological information. So far, archaeologists have only managed to unearth a third of the site's 44 hectares.

The **archaeological zone of Pompeii** is the second most visited place in Italy, after the Roman Colosseum, with almost four million visits in 2019. It is currently closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, but it is expected to reopen to the public for Easter 2021 .

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