

From Plume to Palate: A Feast for the Senses in Horace's *Satires* Book 2

1. The "slender diet" (*victus tenuis*, *S.* 2.2.53, 70; see also *ervum tenue*, 2.6.117)

- A. Hor. S. 2.2.116-22¹ (speech of rustic sage, Ofellus)
*'non ego' narrantem 'temere edi luce profesta
quidquam praeter **holus** fumosae cum pede pernae.
at mihi seu longum post tempus venerat **hospes**
sive operum vacuo gratus **conviva** per imbrem
vicinus, bene erat **non piscibus urbe petitis**, 120
sed pullo atque haedo; tum pensilis **uva** secundas
et **nux** ornabat mensas cum duplice **ficu**.'*

He said: "On an ordinary day I do not rashly eat anything except **vegetables** with a foot of smoked ham. And whether a guest has come after a long time, or a welcome neighboring **dinner companion** has come to me, freed from work because of the rain, it is **not acceptable to eat fish ordered from the city**, but rather chicken and goat. Then hanging **grapes** and **nuts** with a split **fig** decorate the dessert course."

- B. Hor. S. 2.6.63-4 (at Horace's Sabine farm)
*o quando **faba** Pythagorae cognata simulque
uncta satis pingui ponentur **holuscula** lardo?*

O when will my **beans**, relatives to Pythagoras, be served, along with my **little vegetables** sufficiently rubbed with rich lard?

2. Hor. S. 2.2.23-30

- A. *Vix tamen eripiam posito pavone velis quin
hoc potius quam gallina **tergere palatum**,
corruptus vanis rerum, quia venerat auro 25
rara avis et picta pandat spectacula cauda,
tamquam ad rem attineat quidquam. **num visceris ista
quam laudas pluma? cocto num adest honor idem?**
carne tamen quamvis distat nihil, hanc magis illa?
imparibus formis deceptum te patet. 30*

Nevertheless, if a peacock were served, I would scarcely doubt your desire to **brush your palate** with this rather than a chicken. You have been **corrupted by vanities** since this rare bird has come at the price of gold and creates a spectacle with its colorful tail – as if this fact mattered at all. **Surely you don't eat those very feathers that you praise?** When cooked, is its beauty still present? Although there is no difference in the flesh, you still prefer the peacock to the chicken? It is clear you have been deceived by their unequal appearance.

3. The senses at the satiric table

- A. Hor. S. 2.2.35 (sight)
*ducit te **species**, **video** ... 35*

I see it's the **visual appeal** that draws you in ...

¹ Text of *Satires* 2 from Muecke 1993. All translations are my own.

B. Hor. S. 2.2.19-20 (smell)

... *non in caro nidore voluptas
summa, sed in te ipso est.* 20

the highest pleasure is not in a **pleasing smell**, but in you yourself.

4. Xen. Mem. 1.3.5

σίτω μὲν γὰρ τοσοῦτω ἐχρήτο, ὅσον ἠδέως ἦσθιε· καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦτο οὕτω παρεσκευσμένος ἦει, ὥστε **τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν τοῦ σίτου ὄψον αὐτῷ εἶναι.**

For he ate as much food as he could eat with pleasure; and he was so prepared for eating that he considered **desire for food to be the best sauce.**

5. Hor. S. 2.2.1-4, 7

A. *Quae virtus et quanta, boni, sit vivere parvo ... discite.* 1-4

Learn, my good friends, what virtue and how great a virtue it is **to live within small means.**

B. ... *verum hic impransi mecum disquirite.* 7

... Rather here, **unlunched, join me in investigating.**

6. The motif *cibus interruptus*

A. Hor. S. 2.6.111-12

... *cum subito ingens
valvarum strepitus lectis excussit utrumque*

When suddenly a **loud crash** of the doors shook each mouse from his seat.

B. Hor. S. 2.8.93-5

... *quem nos sic fugimus ultri
ut nihil omnino gustaremus, velut illis
Canidia afflasset peior serpentibus Afris.*

We fled him [Nasidienus], getting revenge **by tasting nothing at all** as though Canidia, worse than African serpents, had breathed upon the food.

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