



Borough Market

What comes to mind when you think of shopping in London, England today? How does a traditional farmers market, like Borough Market, represent how Londoners might have shopped for food centuries ago? How about going back in history!



Borough Market, situated in modern day southeast London, owes its strategic location to the nearby London Bridge, which for centuries was the only bridge across the **River Thames**. Recent **excavations** suggest, in fact, that there has been a settlement here since the Romans created *Londonium* in the 1st century AD, as a remote outpost in their vast empire. There was the first bridge to cross the river here - a simple wooden structure, which allowed them to transport goods into the city from the south.

By the 13th century, access to the city was still limited as it was walled on three sides and bordered by the river to the south. What had begun as a small settlement in Roman times had grown to a thriving population of 80,000. London Bridge was still the only bridge spanning the Thames, making it a key access point to the city. Any traffic between London and the southeast had to pass through here. Trade flourished and the area became a thriving commercial centre. The first mention of a market on the site was made in 1279.



Borough Market began as a simple farmers' market – a place in London where farmers could bring their **harvest** to sell to the townspeople. There has been a market on this site ever since.

From its humble origins as a fruit and vegetable market, Borough Market has grown into a bustling, **gastronomic** food market in south east London where vendors from across England and Europe come to sell a wide range of food items. It has an international reputation for high-quality, specialty foods, which are brought in from France, Italy, Spain and Holland to be sold here each week. Indeed, it is now one of the largest open-air food markets in Europe, attracting food-lovers from all over the world who come here to shop for gourmet foods while visiting London.

Growers and food specialists from across England have joined with those of other European countries to create a selection of fresh foods that is unrivalled in London – from seafood, cheese, jam and olive oil, to breads and pastries, fresh pasta and even flowers. Some traditional European products might be familiar – like fresh Italian mozzarella cheese or Spanish Serrano ham. Others are more unusual – like *foie gras* from France, *spaetzle* from Germany or locally grown **Jerusalem artichokes** (which don't look like artichokes at all!)

Fresh local produce is stacked in colourful displays like a magnificent still-life painting. These displays change throughout the year as crops are



think about it:

What products might have been available to Londoners centuries ago that you would still find here today? What products available today would they likely not have seen?

Consider how Borough Market products are displayed and sold by studying some of the pictures. Compare this to those in your local supermarket.

What factors might have contributed to the longevity of Borough Market?



harvested in England and abroad. Fresh wild game – pheasants, ducks, rabbits and venison – hangs from the butcher's rack during hunting season. You'll find traditional produce items here like: apples, pears, peaches, potatoes, carrots and beans. But would you recognize a **quince**, **guava**, **lychee**, **salsify**, **endive**, zucchini flower, **fennel** or **kohlrabi**? They're all here – and so much more!

The market is only open Thursday to Saturday each week. Many of the vendors offer free samples so you can taste before you buy in case you're unsure. Get there early in the morning to avoid the huge crowds which arrive before noon! Lunch-time is the most popular time because you can enjoy delicious, freshly cooked foods as you browse the stalls for your purchases – from steaming vats of Thai curry and gooey mounds of potato and cheese **raclette** to fresh French oysters, grilled Spanish **chorizo** and crusty Italian deli sandwiches. The sights and smells of this market will tempt you like no other!

think about it:

Would you prefer to buy a bird from a butcher in Borough Market or from a regular supermarket? Why?

Compare and contrast the Borough Market to your supermarket. What are the similarities and the differences?

If you were to visit the Borough Market, what would you buy? Why?



Map/Website:
www.boroughmarket.org.uk