

Turning the Ancient Cook into an Artist

Δειπνοσοφισταί IX 403d – 406b

1 Ἐπὶ τούτοις λεγομένοις παρηρέχθη ἡ ῥοδουντία καλουμένη λοπάς· περὶ ἧς ἐξετραγώδησεν ὁ σοφὸς ἐκεῖνος μάγειρος, πρὶν καὶ ἐπιδείξει ὅ τι φέροι.

2 (...)

3 γυμνὴν ἐποίησεν Ἀθηναίαν Λαχάρης, οὐδὲν ἐνοχλοῦσαν· <σέ> δ' ἐνοχλοῦντα νῦν ἐγώ, ὁ Αἰμιλιανὸς ἔφη, εἰ μὴ δεῖξεις ὅ τι φέρεις.

4 καὶ ὃς μόλις ἔφη· ῥοδωνίαν καλῶ μὲν τὴν λοπάδα ταύτην ἐγώ, ἐσκεύασται δ' οὕτως,

5 ἵνα καὶ ἡδυσμα στεφανωτικὸν μὴ μόνον ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς λαβῶν σχῆς, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔνδον σεαυτοῦ καὶ πανδαίσιά τὸ σωματίον πᾶν ἐστίασης.

6 ῥόδα τὰ εὐοσμιότατα ἐν ἔγδει τρίγας ἐπέβαλον ἐγκεφάλους ὄρνιθων τε καὶ χοίρων ἐφθούς σφόδρα ἐξινιασθέντας καὶ τῶν φῶν τὰ χρυσᾶ, μεθ' ἃ ἔλαιον, γάρον, πέπερι, οἶνον. καὶ ταῦτα διατρίγας ἐπιμελῶς ἐνέβαλον εἰς λοπάδα κακινήν, ἀπαλὸν καὶ συνεχὲς διδοῦς τὸ πῦρ.

7 καὶ ἅμα λέγων ἀναπετάσας τὴν λοπάδα τοσαύτην εὐωδίαν παρέσχε τῷ συμποσίῳ, ὡς ἀληθὲς τινα τῶν παρόντων εἶπεῖν·

8 τοῦ καὶ ἴ κινυμένοιο Διὸς κατὰ χαλκοβατῆς δῶ ἔμπης ἔς γαῖαν τε καὶ οὐρανὸν ἵκετ' αὐτμή.

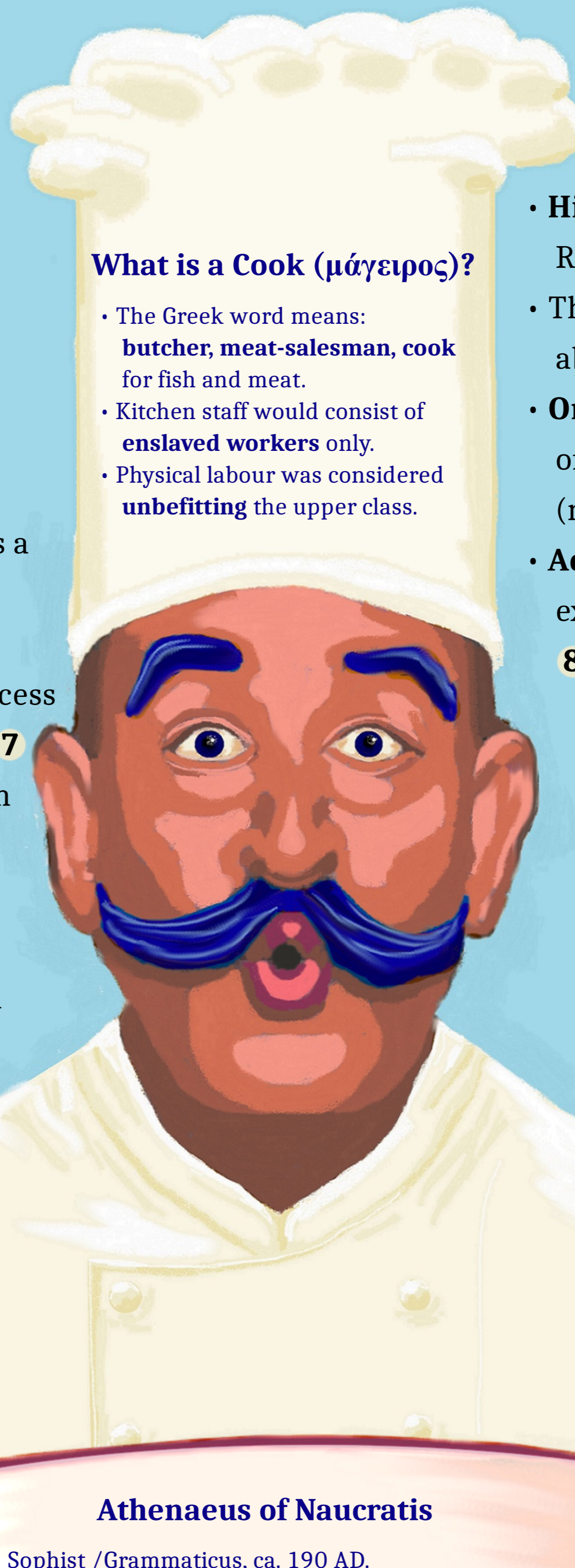
9 τοσαύτη διεχύθη ἀπὸ τῶν ῥόδων εὐωδία.

Showing off Knowledge

- The cook impresses with **quotes** of his literary predecessors. **1**
- He takes part in a **competition** across time. **2**
- Witty comments and **wordplay** accompany the display of the dish. **5**
- His **practical skills** (τέχνη) correspond to his knowledge. **7**
- Hence he is called σοφός (clever, wise) in the **frame narrative**. **1**

Luxurious Recipe

- The dish is distinguished as a **novelty** by having a yet unknown title. **1 4**
- Describing the cooking process is part of a **performance**. **7**
- Preparing the dish is shown as **expensive and time-consuming**. **6**
- It serves **no nutritional purpose**, but is meant as a sensory experience. **5**



Athenaeus of Naucratis

- Sophist /Grammaticus, ca. 190 AD.
- Best known for his Δειπνοσοφισταί – “**The learned banqueters**“.
- The frame narrative is a **dinner and symposium**.
- Imbedded are **countless quotes** from Greek literature.

Sophisticated Audience

- **Highly educated** members of the Roman upper class. **3**
- They **demand knowledge** about the presented dish. **3**
- **Only the explanation** and display of the dish satisfies them (not tasting it). **6 7**
- **Admiration and wonder** is expressed by a prestigious quote. **8**

The learned banqueters IX 403d – 406b

1 While he was still talking, the dish called Rhodountia was brought in. Our clever cook gave an impressive description of it, before showing us what he was serving.

2 (...)

3 “Lachares stripped Athena naked, and she did not give him any trouble; but now I will strip you, troublemaker,” said Aemilianus, “if you won’t show us what you are serving!”

4 And he finally said: “This dish I call Rhodonia; it has been prepared as follows,

5 for you to delight in the seasoning of garlands not only worn on your head, but also inside yourself, and you may entertain your whole body with a perfect feast.

6 I ground up the most fragrant roses in a mortar, then I threw in brains of birds and porkers, thoroughly boiled and with their fibres removed, also some egg-yolks; after that olive oil, garum, pepper, wine. Having these entirely ground up with care, I filled them in a fresh frying-pan, exposing (the dish) to a gentle, steady fire.”

7 Along with these words, as he openly displayed the dish, he offered such a sweet smell to the symposium, that one of those present truly said:

8 “Of what was stirred in the bronze-floored house of Zeus / the scent went into earth and heaven alike.”

9 So intense was the sweet smell streaming from the roses.

References

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