

Victorian Kitchen Loans Box



Blacking brush

The **kitchen range** was a Victorian **oven**, **boiler** and **hob** combined, which blasted out heat up to 18 hours a day. It was a great step forward from the open fire and were common in more well-to-do houses by the 1860s. Constant hot water, being able to bake and no more **soot** falling into meals was a great step forward! But there was no **temperature control** and cooks had to check the **brightness** of the fire instead.

Every morning **blacklead brushes** and liquid firegrate polish were used to **blacklead** the kitchen range and fires in rooms after the **ashes** (what was left over from burning **coal**) had been **cleaned** out. This stopped it from **rusting** and made it **shine**.

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Butter hands or pats

In the 19th century a lot of foods that today we buy in the supermarket were made by hand. On farms, **butter** was made from the cream from cow's milk. **Butter hands** or **pats** were made out of wood and used to shape butter into **blocks**, making butter ready for **sale** and **consumption**. The butter maker would hold one of these pats in **each hand** and work the butter into shape. **Butter pats** and **moulds** were washed in **salted water** to help prevent the butter from **sticking** to them.

These wooden pats are **thin**, **light** and **easy** to **hold**. The inside face is **serrated** to **grip** the butter and **squeeze** out any water. It was also used to make **patterns** on the finished butter.

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Donkey stone

Donkey stones are **scouring stones** which were originally used in the textile mills of Yorkshire and Manchester to provide a **non-slip surface** on **greasy stone staircases**. The stones were available in three colours; **cream, brown** and **white**.

Later proud housewives took to stoning their **front doorsteps**, which became a form of **decoration** and great competition between the women. The housewife might also treat her **stone door surround, window sill** and even "**her**" section of the **pavement in front of her house!** "**Doing the step**" was an ideal occasion for gossip between neighbours, as well as a source of rivalry. People would get their **stones** from the **rag totter**, in exchange for **old rags**.

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Tea caddy

Since the 18th century tea has been consumed in vast quantities in Britain. It was imported from **China** and **India**. In the Victorian period working class, middle class and upper class people drank tea. Tea consumption ranged from 1/2 pound (227g) to 1/4 pound (113g) per week per person.

Tea leaves were sold loose and stored in a tin. There were no tea bags. But there were problems with **adulteration** in the Victorian period with **unscrupulous** shopkeepers adding dust and other fine powders to bulk out tea.

Damp tea leaves were also used to clean out a kitchen range as **sprinkling** them over the fuel helped keep the dust down while the cleaning was in progress. Damp tea leaves were also **rinsed** and **scattered** on carpets to help collect dust when sweeping.

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Coffee grinder

Instant coffee was not available in shops until the **20th century**. Instead, in the Victorian period, coffee beans were **ground** in the **grinder** and **cheap** coffee mills made of **cast iron** were made in **large** numbers throughout the 19th century.

Coffee was a very popular beverage in the Victorian period. In 1840, the year Victoria married Prince Albert, Britain imported 28 million pounds of tea, but Britain imported more than twice as much coffee at 70 million pounds. By 1853, the trend had changed as the **plantations** in **India** started to supply Britain with serious quantities of tea, **surpassing** coffee imports for the first time.

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Selection of moulds

Tinplate and **pewter** moulds such as these provided a cheaper alternative to the **earthenware** ones, although, according to the popular Victorian cookery writer **Mrs Beeton**, earthenware moulds were **preferable** to those of **tin** or **pewter** for red jellies as the latter would spoil '**their colour and transparency.**'

Moulds like these could have been used for **jellies**. Jellies were popular desserts in Victorian times with a flavouring of honey, sugar, wine or fruit purée. But jellies were also used for **savoury** purposes and were made from **bonestock** and calves' feet.

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Grater

Graters were in use by the 17th century to provide **bread crumbs** which had many uses in **cooking**. By the 19th century it was common for graters to be provided with **several different** grating **textures**. This is another **utensil** that has hardly changed since the Victorian period.

A grater like this could have been bought at an **ironmonger**. This was a shop that was virtually a department store, selling a vast variety of metal goods. They could also undertake repairs in their shops. The rapid growth of the railways ensured the **swift** delivery of goods from the **factories** to the shops.

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Potato masher

This **potato masher** is made of a tree called the **sycamore**. The wood from this tree was used because it did not transfer the taste of foods. Potato mashers became **very popular** in the in the Victorian period following the adoption of potatoes as a **staple** of the **British diet**. Potatoes were often eaten with most meals so preparing them in a variety of ways would have been important.

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Biscuit cutter

Biscuits have a long history from the "thrice-baked bread" of the ship's biscuit (used on long sea voyages as they could last for a long time) down to the home-made biscuits, shaped by moulding or cutting.

A tool like the one above was used to cut pastry to shape. They are still used in today's kitchen for making scones and biscuits.

An oven was needed to cook biscuits and so if you didn't have a kitchen range then you could go to a **communal bakehouse** to get your biscuits, pies, bread and even one-pot meals cooked.

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Bottle

This bottle was made by **Hartley's Brewery** in **Ulverston**, where beer was made from **1754** and was described in the first edition of the good beer guide as, '**one of the best**'.

In the early 19th century most brewers operated out of sheds and yards attached to pubs and brew-houses. But the Victorian **talent** for innovation affected brewing too. By the end of the century it had become an **industry** and not a **craft** with **steam power** and **cooling systems** and regular sampling to ensure **uniformity** of the product.

Beer was a poor man's drink. Although it was easier to make a cup of tea at home, men in Victorian Britain sometimes liked to go to the pub for a drink for **companionship** and also to escape what were usually **overcrowded** homes.

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Candle holder

For most people in the 19th century a **candlestick** was as commonplace as the **kettles** and **pans** in the **kitchen**. They were always extremely **plain** and widely used in most homes. This one is made of **tinplate** which was a commonly used material.

It has a **grease pan** which is large enough to catch the **extra drips**, caused by a candle burning away rapidly, as it was carried through a **draught**.

In the Victorian period **gas lighting** was introduced to many houses but most people tried to limit it to places where it was hard to do without such as **hallways** (where there were draughts), **nurseries** (to prevent accidents with candles being knocked off tables) and **kitchens** (where good lighting was essential).

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Egg whisk

This one is made of **wire** and was used for whisking **eggs** quickly. As with many kitchen **implements**, most of the **utensils** in use from early times look very similar today. A tool like this could be in today's kitchen.

However, even this **mundane** object has gone through an **innovation**: electric whisks are probably more common than hand-operated whisks like this one from the Victorian period.

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Marmalade jar

Until fridges became generally available in the 20th century, most **fresh foods** would not last above a **few days** so **stoneware jars** were used to **preserve** and **store** food, such as **marmalade**, **salt** and **flour**.

Victorians liked their rooms to be **single-purpose** and their ideal was to use the kitchen for cookery only, with food storage, food preparation and dishwashing going in, respectively, the **storeroom** and **larder**, the **scullery** and the **pantry**. So jars of marmalade would have gone in the storeroom or larder, well away from the **kitchen range** (a Victorian oven, boiler and hob combined) which blasted out heat up to 18 hours a day.