



## Pass the Vinegar

*(more from David's adventures in London ...)*

This week and next, we'll have another couple of episodes continuing the thread of the story of my year in London after dropping out of university. Living on my own as I did, what did I do for food during that year?

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As I described in one of the first episodes of these 'London' stories, the room I rented when I first arrived in London included a cooked breakfast every morning. I hadn't the slightest idea what to expect for this, but when I sat down at the table the first morning, I found out; it was to be a 'fryup'.

The owner of the house went out to work every morning, but before leaving, he prepared an 'English Breakfast' for the two of us. Back in Canada, breakfast at home had been a bowl of cereal, so this gigantic meal was quite a surprise for me. It was centered around a couple of rashers of bacon and a fried egg, and included hash browns, sausage, some fried tomato, a ladle of baked beans, and a couple of slices of toast, of course accompanied by a mug of tea. A drizzle of the wonderful HP sauce provided the finishing touch.

I could not possibly eat such a pile of food every morning now, but it was hot, and full of energy, and through most of that winter gave me a good solid start to each day.

All my other meals were taken outside, and of course, London being London, finding interesting food was never a problem, as long as I had at least a few coins in my pocket!

I never bothered much with a formal lunch; after the heavy breakfast I wasn't able to eat again quite so soon. I got in the habit of stopping in a tea shop for a bun and a cup of tea if I felt hungry during the day. So I was always ready for a good dinner come evening. I'm afraid though, that because I was young and very shy, I wasn't particularly adventurous with my dining experiences. I found a few 'favourite' places, and got in the habit of going back to them again and again ...

A family-run restaurant hidden away at the back side of Waterloo Station. Their 'Spaghetti Bolognese' was a mountain of pasta, with meat balls rolling off the plate onto the table ...

A pub on the main corner just outside Victoria Station. I have no idea what was inside their meat pies, and I suppose nobody dared ask, but what a wonderful crust and taste!

But best of all, under the arches near Charing Cross Station, just across the river from the plaza where I did my evening busking; a fish and chip shop. This was a very low-class area, and many of the shop's patrons were homeless men who slept in the local park and cadged money around the station. This place served gigantic slabs of fish, with a mountain of thick chips, all wrapped in sheets of newspaper, which soon became transparent with the oil. You dusted the pile with salt, poured on a stream of brown vinegar, and then ate while sitting on a bench in the park, madly blowing on each chip to cool it down enough to eat. It was cheap, it was delicious beyond belief, and once that pile was in your belly, the wind could blow as it would, you would feel nothing!

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So from bacon and eggs in the morning, through to a pile of fish and chips at night ... Not a diet I would consider at my current stage of life, but for that young man who spent his days walking and exploring that wonderful city, it did no harm. Pass the vinegar!

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