Italian Cooking Vessels and Cuisine from Tel Anafa

ANDREA M. BERLIN
Urbana, Illinois

Italian cooking pans and lids, and a locally produced cooking stand designed to accommodate them, have been found in the late Hellenistic levels at Tel Anafa in the Hula Valley. These imported cooking vessels and lids, the earliest attested examples in the eastern Mediterranean, provide rare evidence of pre-Imperial commercial exchange between southern Italy and the Levant. Their acquisition indicates culinary innovation on the part of the site’s inhabitants, to which the cooking stand is a practical, if unique, local response.

Excavations at Tel Anafa have uncovered evidence of occupation from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, the Iron Age, and the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. The most substantial remains date from these latter phases, beginning with the site’s reoccupation in the last quarter of the second century B.C.E. The new inhabitants constructed a single, large building with a central courtyard, surrounded by rooms set off by corridors, in the north-eastern quadrant of the acropolis. The courtyard building underwent two remodelling phases and was ultimately abandoned c. 80–75 B.C.E.

The cooking vessels and lids come from floors and fills associated with the final phase of this short late Hellenistic occupation, fixing their chronological range between c. 100 and 80 B.C.E. Most were found in a corridor on the eastern side of the building, within a larger ceramic deposit composed mostly of restorable vessels. Intermixed with the vessels were some bronze nails, suggesting that they had

---


2 For a plan, see ibid., p. 273, Fig. 1.

3 The abandonment date is based on the lack of coins and stamped amphora handles later than c. 80/75 B.C.E. There is no objective evidence for re-occupation until the reign of Herod Philip, in the early first century C.E. These dates derive from studies by Sharon Herbert (stratigraphy), Y. Meshorer (coins), Virginia Grace (stamped amphora handles), Katherine Slane (fine ware) and J. Dobbins (lamps).
been stored in a cupboard, which fell during the abandonment phase and eventually disintegrated, leaving behind only the nails and the broken, but restorable, pottery.

The cooking vessels may be identified morphologically as pans. Their average diameter is 32 cm. They have no handles, and have flat bottoms and short, gently curved walls which terminate in a rounded rim (Fig. 1). There is a narrow groove along the interior of the rim to receive a lid. The fabric is bright orange-red, micaceous and sandy, with both small and fine white and rounded black inclusions. The upper third of the wall has fired smoky grey, perhaps because the vessels were stacked one inside the other in the kiln. Fragments of approximately 24 such pans have been found at Tel Anafa.

![Fig. 1. The rounded rim of a cooking vessel from Tel Anafa.](image)

This type of pan, called *orlo bifido* from the distinctive bifurcated rim, is well known from early Roman sites throughout Italy and Europe. Analyses of both fabric and distribution have placed the manufacturing source in or near Pompeii. The fabric is very close to the first two described by Peacock in a seminal study on cookware fabrics; both have black inclusions which are identified as volcanic, and are considered to come from the area around the Bay of Naples. *Orlo bifido* pans have been found in the greatest number at Pompeii, with over 150 examples from the excavations in


Regio VI alone. Further support for their origin comes from a shipwreck near Var, France, from the hold of which 341 *orlo bifido* pans were excavated; the vessel's loading point is thought to have been southern Latium.

Manufacture and export of *orlo bifido* pans apparently began at the same time; so far the earliest attested come from the Roman colony of Pollentia (Mallorca), where they appear in the lowest levels of the Calle Porticada, built soon after the colony was founded in 123/122 B.C.E. By the first quarter of the first century B.C.E., *orlo bifido* pans were very common at Cosa and Gabii, and were still in use at Pompeii as well. The Anafa finds are therefore among the very earliest anywhere, and are the only examples known from the Levant.

The imported lids found at Anafa are of the type known as 'Pompeian red ware' (Fig. 2). Fragments of approximately 24 lids have been found. All have a shallow domed profile, with a thick, gently bulging wall and slightly thickened rounded rim. They range in diameter between 31 and 35 cm., and so would precisely fit the pans described above. Two fabrics are represented. The majority are a deep orange-red, micaceous, with some large black and many small white and black inclusions. A broad band around the exterior edge has fired steel grey.

---

7 Tchernia et al. (above, n. 4), p. 64.
8 M. Vegas: *Ceramica Comun Romana del Mediterraneo Occidentale* (Universidad de Barcelona Publicaciones Eventuales 22), 1973, table facing p. 6.
9 For Cosa, see S. Dyson: *Cosa, The Utilitarian Pottery*, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 33 (1976); single fragments were found in the Capitoleum fill (CF 6, p. 19 and Fig. 1) and the Forum Gate (FG 4, p. 39 and Fig. 7), both of which date from the early second century B.C.E.; these fragments are considered by the author to be out-of-context strays. The type appears in quantity in the final occupation of sector VD (VD 5–7, Fig. 18), dated to soon after 72/71 B.C.E. by a hoard of 2,004 silver denarii of that year (p. 67), and in the pottery dump (PD 9–13, Fig. 29), dated to between 100 and 25 B.C.E. (p. 87). For Gabii, see M. Vegas: *Römische Keramik von Gabii (Latium)*, *Bonner Jahrbücher* 168 (1968), p. 14; all examples come from levels which were not closed until the early first century B.C.E. For Pompeii, see A. Bruckner: *Zu der Keramik aus der Casa del Fauno*, in B. Andreae and H. Kyrieleis (eds.): *Neue Forschungen in Pompeji*, Recklinghausen, 1975, Fig. 205:2, 3, 5; the vessels were found in the late Republican levels of the House of the Faun, in conjunction with sigillata of the first quarter of the first century B.C.E. (p. 207).
Fig. 2. An imported lid from Tel Anafa, of the type known as ‘Pompeian red ware’.

This is very close to the fabric of the orlo bifido pans, and most closely resembles Peacock’s fabric 1, the source of which is probably Pompeii itself.\(^{11}\) Two of the Anafa lids are a pale yellowish-brown fabric, micaceous and more finely levigated than the other lids, with an outer edge fired light beige. This most closely resembles Peacock’s fabric 3, the origin of which is postulated to be Britain.\(^{12}\) Such a source seems unlikely for the Anafa finds, and these two vessels must be considered of unknown origin.

Pompeian red ware lids have previously been found only in conjunction with wide, shallow platters of the same name, whose insides are covered in a heavy, deep red slip. Westward export of the platters and lids is attested by the late second century B.C.E. to the site of Pollentia, although production began at least a century earlier in Etruria.\(^{13}\) Pompeian red ware platters and lids had an especially comprehensive distribution from the later first century B.C.E. to the first century C.E. throughout the legionary camps of the western Roman provinces; they are one of the few types of early Roman pottery found at Neuss, Oberaden, Haltern, Vetera, Mainz, Rodigen, Friedberg, Lorenzberg and Augsburg-Oberhausen.\(^{14}\) They

\(^{11}\) Peacock (above, n. 5), pp. 149–153. The most recent study of this fabric class and of the ware’s history, petrology and chronology is J.T. Pena: Internal Red-Slip Cookware (Pompeian Red Ware) from Cetamura del Chianti, Italy: Mineralogical Composition and Provenience, \textit{AJA} 94 (1990), pp. 647–661; for this fabric class, see pp. 652–655.

\(^{12}\) Peacock (above, n. 5), p. 154.

\(^{13}\) For the ware’s early production and distribution, see Pena (above, n. 11). On the finds at Pollentia, see Vegas (above, n. 8), p. 47.

\(^{14}\) Vegas and Bruckner (above, n. 4), p. 50.
are thus clearly associated with military occupations, and may well have been specifically requisitioned and supplied. Contracts for army supplies are attested as early as 215 B.C.E., and inscriptions refer to negotiatores cretarii (ceramic vendors), sub-contractors who were responsible specifically for ceramic supplies.\textsuperscript{15} By the later first century C.E., Italic imports of Pompeian red ware were replaced by locally manufactured imitations.\textsuperscript{16} Loeschcke theorized that the platters were designed to cook the flat cakes of bread which were a part of the soldier's ration; the distinctive thick interior slip would have provided a non-adherent surface. Such vessels have in fact been found containing bread at Pompeii.\textsuperscript{17}

It is no coincidence that both the earliest and most abundant finds of Pompeian red ware platters and lids occur in the West, as it was there that Roman commercial and military activity was concentrated in late Republican and early Imperial times.\textsuperscript{18} These vessel types occur less frequently and much later in the eastern Mediterranean; before the finds at Anafa, examples had not previously been attested before the late first century B.C.E. or early first century C.E. Platters (and occasional lids) have been reported from Corinth, Tschandarli, Paphos, Antioch, Caesarea, Dor, Samaria, Jerusalem, Petra and Berenice.\textsuperscript{19} The small quantity of eastern finds


\textsuperscript{16} For Gaul, see S.J. DeLaet and H. Thoen: Études sur la céramique de la nécropole gallo-romaine de Blicquy (Hainaut), IV, La céramique à enduit rouge-pompeien, Helinium 9 (1969), pp. 28–38. For Britain, see Peacock (above, n. 5).

\textsuperscript{17} Goudineau (above, n. 10), p. 162.


makes them unlikely to have been military requisitions, although it is of interest to note that Roman soldiers lived at most of the sites at which they have been found.

Within the corridor assemblage, along with most of the *orlo bifido* pans and Pompeian red ware lids, there was a unique cooking stand (Figs. 3, 4). The stand is in
the form of a circular platter, perforated by 18 holes, supported on three low, curved legs, with a single horizontal loop handle. It is made of a coarsely-tempered pink fabric, identical to that of many vessels found at Tel Anafa. This fabric, called spatter-painted ware, is probably local to the Hula Valley, although not necessarily to Tel Anafa specifically.\textsuperscript{20} The stand was obviously designed to support a flat-bottomed vessel over a fire. Within the site’s late Hellenistic assemblage the only vessels which would have required such a support are the imported \textit{orlo bifido} pans. It must have been the acquisition of these vessels that motivated the invention and manufacture of the flat cooking stand.

The \textit{orlo bifido} pans and Pompeian red ware lids represent only 1\% of the late Hellenistic cooking assemblage from Tel Anafa. Globular cooking pots comprise 73\% of the assemblage, and wide-mouthed, round-bellied casseroles make up the remainder. The numbers are significant. Specific types of cooking vessels are characteristic of certain regions of the Mediterranean; variations in form surely reflect aspects of those regions’ cuisines. The type and number of cooking vessels found at a site may indicate not only the inhabitants’ dining practices, but their cultural heritage and traditions.\textsuperscript{21}

The closed globular cooking pot is the shape most popular for cooking throughout the eastern Mediterranean. In the southern Levant, this form has a long history; from the early sixth century B.C.E. through the first century C.E., cooking pots are the most common, and often the only, form of cooking vessel found at sites.\textsuperscript{22} The narrow-mouthed cooking pot is well suited for making soups, legumes, or other dishes which require slow cooking without significant water loss. The prevalence of cooking pots at Tel Anafa is not surprising, and probably reflects the inhabitants’ dependence on such dishes for the greater part of their diet.

The quantity of casseroles within the assemblage reveals another aspect of the inhabitants’ cuisine. Casseroles, which are vessels with a wide mouth and body and a rounded bottom, are designed for boiling or stewing meat, fish or large vegetables, such as cabbage. Greek comic texts, in particular, are rife with references to such

\textsuperscript{20} For a complete discussion of spatter-painted ware, see Berlin (above, n. 1), pp. 38–40. The ware was originally identified by Weinberg (above, n. 1, 1971), p. 104.

\textsuperscript{21} See Andrea Berlin: Pots and People: The Tel Anafa Common Wares, \textit{AJA} 94 (1990), pp. 333–334; \textit{idem} (above, n. 1), pp. 49–50, 67–69, 77–79. Connections between cooking wares and the populations that used them have been noted for a few sites in the West. See Dyson (above, n. 9), pp. 171–173, for Cosa; G. Webster: \textit{Boudica, The British Revolt against Rome, A.D. 60}, London, 1978, p. 42, on new kitchen vessels at Skeleton Green in Britain; Greene (above, n. 15), p. 164, on the appearance of new coarseware vessel forms and Roman culinary habits.

culinary procedures. This is significant, since casseroles in fact occur in quantity only at sites with Greek populations. While few site reports give vessel counts, the regular publication of casseroles from sites in Greece and the Aegean indicates that they were a standard component of kitchen assemblages by the fifth century B.C.E. Numerous examples have been published from Athens, Corinth, Olympia, Ithaka, Chios, Delos, Knossos and Rhodes. In the southern Levant they are found only at sites that were open to Greek influence; examples (not numerous) have been published from Akko, Caesarea, Samaria, Jerusalem and Ashdod. Casseroles comprise 26% of Tel Anafa's late Hellenistic assemblage, a quantity unmatched at contemporary sites within the Hasmonaean realm, and, indeed, typical only of Greek sites. It would appear that Anafa's inhabitants frequently dined on Greek-style stews, which in turn suggests that they were culturally, if not ethnically, Greek.

Noteworthy in this context is the parallel distribution at eastern Mediterranean sites of casseroles and the well-known Hellenistic braziers with interior lug supports. Since these cooking braziers were designed specifically to support a round-bottomed vessel over a fire, their occurrence together with casseroles seems eminently reasonable. The braziers continue an earlier style of Greek cooking supports for round-bottomed vessels, known as lasanai. Whereas both braziers and casseroles are found at most Hellenistic Levantine sites, neither lasanai nor casseroles are attested outside the Aegean in pre-Hellenistic times. This disparity may be connected with the upsurge of Greek settlement in the Levant after the conquests of Alexander the Great.

Cooking pots and casseroles comprise 99% of Tel Anafa's late Hellenistic kitchen ware. These numbers reflect a population familiar with and dependent upon Levantine

23 On the Greek kitchen in general, and boiling and stewing in particular, see B. Sparkes: The Greek Kitchen, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 82 (1962), pp. 129–131. From Old Comedy, see, for example, Aristophanes, *Wasps* 239, 280, 511; *idem, Knights* 769–770; *idem, Ecclesiazusae* 1092; *idem, Frogs* 553. From Middle Comedy, see the following texts (collected in J.M. Edmonds: *The Fragments of Attic Comedy*, II, Leiden, 1959): Anaxandrides, fragments 6, 33, 41; Eubulus, fragments 7, 9, 15, 44, 47, 89, 93, 139; Ephippus, fragments 3, 18A–19, 22; Antiphanes, fragments 52, 132, 183, 222, 273; Anaxilas, fragment 19; Mnesimachus, fragment 4; Alexis, fragments 17, 24, 124, 186, 187, 188, 261, 286; Dionysius, fragment 3; Sotades, fragment 1; and Axionicus, fragment 4.

24 L. Talcott (Attic Black-Glazed Stamped Ware and other Pottery from a Fifth Century Well, *Hesperia* 4 [1935], p. 495) comments on the widespread popularity of casseroles throughout the Aegean. For site references, see Berlin (above, n. 1), p. 90, n. 1.

25 For specific references, see Berlin (above, n. 1), pp. 68, 91, n. 3.


and Greek cuisines. The orlo bifido pans and Pompeian red ware lids comprise the remaining 1% of the assemblage. How do they fit into this context? What culture and cuisine do they represent?

Whereas cooking pots are indigenous to the eastern Mediterranean, and casseroles are associated with Greek sites, the origin of the pan is in Italy and the type occurs in quantity solely in the West. Pans comprise over 50% of the cooking vessels in the late Republican levels at Pompeii, Cosa, Gabii and Pollentia, while they are virtually unknown in the eastern Mediterranean during the same period. Italian pans should not be confused with somewhat similar vessels — broad, very low-walled, flat-bottomed forms, generally with a single long, tubular handle — found throughout the eastern Mediterranean. These vessels are not actually containers, but merely a form of cooking platter with a handle. Examples of these cooking platters have been published from Athens, Corinth, Delos, Labraunda, Tarsus; Tell Keisan, Samaria, Tirat Yehuda (in Palestine); and Pella (in Jordan).29

Because of the design of the Italic pan, with its broad, shallow body, straight walls and flat bottom, food baked in it would have taken on a defined form, unlike the more liquified soups and stews made in cooking pots or casseroles. Such dishes might include savoury or sweet pies, or quiches. The Roman taste for such preparations is reflected in the first-century C.E. Latin cooking manual of Apicius, where pans are specifically called for in 53 recipes, and in the quantity of pans found at western Roman sites.30 The most popular type of dish described by Apicius is the patina,

---

28 For Pompeii, see Trere (above, n. 6), Pls. 87–90. For Cosa, see Dyson (above, n. 9), passim. For Gabii, see Vegas (above, n. 9), p. 14. For Pollentia, see Vegas (above, n. 8), table facing p. 6.
30 Apicius III.4.1, 3, 6, 7, 9.3; IV.2.1–37, 5.1, 4; VII.4.5, 5.5, 13.8, 15.6; VIII.6.2–3, 9, 8.1; IX.3.1, 8.3; X.1.4–5.
to which an entire chapter with 37 recipes is devoted.\textsuperscript{31} A *patina* is made by first laying some selection of chopped fish, vegetables or fruit in the pan, then pouring an egg mixture over the whole and baking it. Today this would be termed a quiche, a dish baked in a pan equivalent in shape to the ancient one. In the East, such dishes must have been little known, judging from the scarcity of appropriate vessels in which to prepare them. The few Italian pans found at late Hellenistic Tel Anafa suggest that foreign baked dishes were occasionally prepared.

The *orlo bifido* pans and Pompeian red ware lids found at Anafa were clearly acquired together: their point of origin is identical; the lids fit the pans precisely; and about 24 examples of each occur at the site. These vessels are significant in several respects. First, they are the earliest securely stratified and dated examples outside Italy, indicating that the types were exported already in late Republican times. Second, their occurrence adds to the small body of material reflecting commerce between Italy and the eastern Mediterranean, at a time when the bulk of Italic trade went west. Third, the appearance of the Pompeian red ware lids in conjunction with the *orlo bifido* pans shows that the lids were not manufactured solely for the distinctive platters that share their name, nor was their distribution confined to military sites.

Finally, these vessels stand out within Anafa's late Hellenistic assemblage as a clear indication of a new culinary mode. This small group could have been brought to the site by a single, well-travelled resident to recreate some new dish tasted abroad for which the locally available cooking vessels were not suitable. At home, a new device was needed to support the vessels while in use — hence the manufacture of the cooking stand. In such a way, a small taste of Italy came east to Tel Anafa in late Hellenistic times.

\textsuperscript{31} Apicius IV.2.1–37.