

## What To Cook On A 2,500-Year-Old Boat, Part 1

By Elina Shatkin, Mon., Nov. 1 2010 @ 12:00PM

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When Danielle Eubank signed on as the expedition artist (a fabulous title I don't see often enough on resumés) for the *Phoenicia*, a facsimile of an ancient Phoenician vessel that would spend two-and-a-half-years sailing around Africa, she expected a lack of modern comforts. She did not expect her cooking skills would be so severely challenged.



Danielle Eubank

The Phoenicia sets sail.

Aggressive roaches, relentless mold, "defensive cooking" -- it's all part of life aboard a 2,500-year old boat.

Ever since Herodotus in his *Histories* recounted reports of Phoenician sailors circumnavigating Africa, historians have argued whether such a journey would have been possible in the 6th century B.C. Using the same kind of boat and navigational tools those ancient sailors had, the crew of the *Phoenicia* set out to prove it could be done. The ship, which returned to her home port in Syria just over a week ago, spent two-and-a-half-years completing her journey.



Danielle Eubank

The galley of the Phoenicia.

Eubank was aboard the *Phoenicia* for four separate stints: in the summer of 2008 in Syria to document the ship's construction and maiden voyage; in January 2010 for the trip from Mozambique to South Africa; later that same month in Richard's Bay, South Africa; and for the final leg, from Gibraltar to Carthage, Tunisia.

She and her present-day crewmates had the advantage of gas burners and a modern Dutch oven, but -- like the ancient Phoenicians -- they had to contend with many of the same food storage, preservation and preparation issues.

"It was not like a professional kitchen where it's spotless. It was very grody," Eubank says. Though they had an oven aboard the ship, Eubank never used it. "There were a lot of very brazen roaches, that walk around during the daytime. It was warm and dry, so they would crawl in there. Then when the oven would turn on, they would die and fall into the food. I think the Phoenicians would have had some of the same problems."



Danielle Eubank

The crew of the Phoenicia sits down to breakfast.

Each member of the 11-person crew -- it included three Indonesians, two Brits, a Swede, a Brazilian, a South African and Eubank, the American -- took turns doing the cooking.

There are two watches with five people on each watch. During the day, you're on for a four-hour watch then off for four hours. At night, watches last six hours. One person from each watch -- it rotates -- is relieved of general crew duties to take over the Mother Watch, which includes all the cooking and dishwashing.

The dishes are washed in salt water in a process that is every bit as tedious as it sounds. "You have two plastic buckets, and you sort of crouch down," Eubank says. "You get one tiny bucket attached to a rope. You put it over the side and bring up water. You fill the first bucket, add soap and wash the dishes with a sponge. Then you put the dishes in the second bucket. You get more water from over the side, put in a couple capfuls of Detol, a British disinfectant, then put the dishes outside or on top of the ship to dry. Your dishes taste a little bit salty and a little bit of Detol, bleachy."



Aziz

Danielle Eubank and her crewmembers aboard the Phoenicia prepare a meal.

### What's In The Pantry?

There was no pork aboard the *Phoenicia* because some of the crewmembers were Muslim. There were also no nuts, peas, or lentils because one person was very allergic. "The first couple days out of port we had fresh food, but we had no refrigeration whatsoever," Eubank says. Though they had received a fridge from the Boy Scouts in South Africa, the generator needed to run it took too much power, so they only used it for storage.



Danielle Eubank

A Dutch oven in the galley of the Phoenicia.

They had a bit of dried fish onboard, and the crew caught plenty of tuna and dorado. Other than that, they relied on staples like pasta and tins of tomatoes, but even that had to be eaten quickly.

"You have to bear in mind, tins of food or spices get rusty really quick. There was a very long voyage just before I joined, about 80 days, where there was no encounter with land. They started to run out of certain rations and had to eat this ancient corned beef. From what I heard, it was kind of like warm Jell-O. Everyone on the ship said that was the worst thing. They couldn't eat it, even when they were starving."

Check back later for [part two of this story...](#)