

Rationing in World War Two

by Stephen Wilson

Ever wondered how much food a person was entitled to during World War Two?

Rationing began on 8th January 1940 when bacon, butter and sugar were rationed. By 1942 many other foodstuffs, including meat, milk, cheese, eggs and cooking fat were also 'on the ration'.

This is a typical weekly food ration for an adult:

- **Bacon & Ham** 4 oz
- **Other meat** value of 1 shilling and 2 pence (equivalent to 2 chops)
- **Butter** 2 oz
- **Cheese** 2 oz
- **Margarine** 4 oz
- **Cooking fat** 4 oz
- **Milk** 3 pints
- **Sugar** 8 oz
- **Preserves** 1 lb every 2 months
- **Tea** 2 oz
- **Eggs** 1 fresh egg (plus allowance of dried egg)
- **Sweets** 12 oz every 4 weeks



Yes, I know what you are thinking...This doesn't look like much, right?

In fact, ordinary people survived on such rations, although those who produced their own food were able to have that little bit extra.

You might be wondering how this was even possible.

Rationing was a means of ensuring the fair distribution of food and commodities when they were scarce. It began after the start of WW2 with petrol and later included other goods such as butter, sugar and bacon. Eventually, most foods were covered by the rationing system with the exception of fruit and vegetables.

Ration books were given to everyone in Britain who then registered in a shop of their choice. When something was purchased the shopkeeper marked the purchase off in the customer's book. Special exceptions made allowing for some groups of people who required additional food like underground mine workers, members of the Women's Land Army and members of the Armed forces.