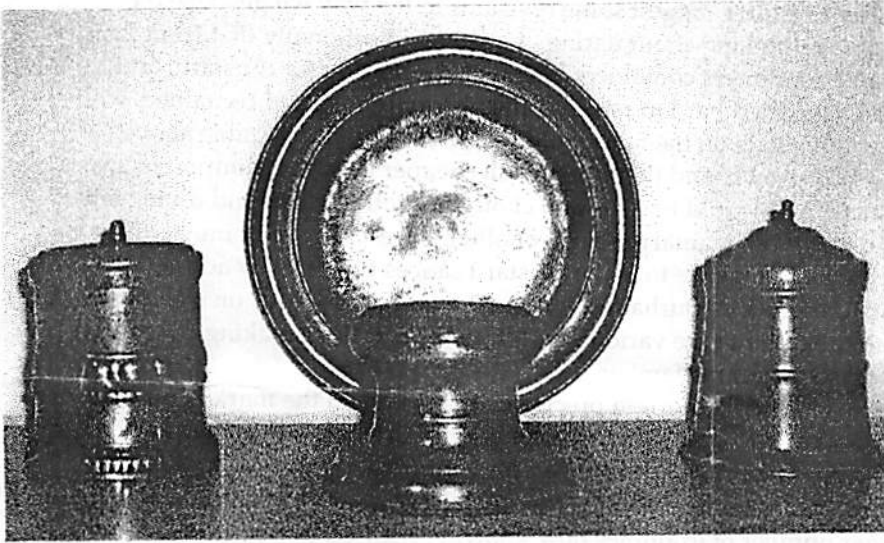


# CONDIMENT CONTAINERS IN THE 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY DINING ROOM - Carl Ricketts



## CONDIMENTS

Mustard: home grown in Durham & Tewkesbury.

Pepper: black from Jamaica & red from Cayenne

Sugar: between 1665 & 1700 sugar imports rose from 800 to 10000 tons a year.

3/4 lb saffron	2 1/2 lbs ginger
1 1/4 lbs clove	3 lbs cinnamon
1 1/4 lbs mace	5 lbs pepper
84 lbs mustard	

## CONTAINERS

### Bowls

Small circular sugar basins on a central foot with or without covers first appeared in silver c1690, and pewter examples are known from the mid C18<sup>th</sup> onwards.

### Boxes

Two-compartment small caskets with hinged or sliding lids are known in European pewter and English silver, which probably were used for spices or possibly sugar. Salt boxes are known in pewter, and are open containers with back plates to hang them from the wall. Possibly, the much smaller examples are nutmeg holders.

### Castors / Sifters

Sprinkler boxes in silver for sugar, pepper and other spices first appeared in the late C16<sup>th</sup>. The idea of combining castors for pepper or other spices with the salt was used in bell salts, and at least a part of such a condiment is known in pewter. The earliest castors were cylindrical on a corded or spreading rim foot, with bodies strengthened by one or more moulded ribs. The tops of the early castors were pierced quite coarsely suggesting not very finely ground contents. Matching sets of individual castors in silver were introduced in the mid C17<sup>th</sup>. By 1700, the relatively large sugar castor and its smaller pair of matching spice boxes - known as 'lighthouse' castors assumed a graceful shape. Under Huguenot influence the pear shape or baluster on a spreading stepped foot was rapidly adopted, and in silver by 1705 the straight-sided castor was out of fashion except for the small spice dredgers with ring handles, popularly known as kitchen peppers. Sometimes, one castor was not pierced or left blind, for dry mustard, which at the time was mixed with wine or water individually at the table. Smaller castors, singly or in pairs, and of vase form were known as muffineers from the habit of putting salt on hot buttered muffins.

### Cruets

Early in the C18<sup>th</sup> saw the introduction of silver ring-frames or cruet stands designed to hold a set of castors and pair of oil & vinegar bottles. One of the earliest of these, and from which the generic name 'Warwick cruet' derives from an example dated 1715 at Warwick Castle. These were followed in silver from about 1770 by boat-shaped stands, and a central handle replaced the earlier back-handle type. No pewter examples are known until the C19<sup>th</sup>.

Labels - in silver very small labels are known for sauce and condiment bottles from the later C18<sup>th</sup>.

### Mustard Pots

These are referred to in the 1677 records of the Worshipful Company, but it is not known what they looked like. In silver the first known pot for 'wet' mustard dates from 1724, a small covered baluster.

Olios (from the Latin: jars or pots)

Porringers

Salts

Sauce Boats

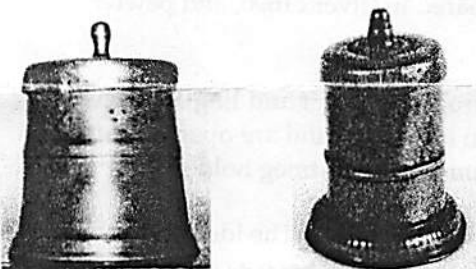
Saucers

**Added containers known as 'spice pots' - an update**

Examples have been identified since I listed 37 in my original article *JPS Spring 1997 pages 27-34*. Some of the newly identified are of previously unseen forms, and as a result, I suggest some revisions to the way we describe the various body types. In turn, this has led to some rethinking about dating. I postulated originally that from their form and size, it was my opinion these were table condiment containers intended specifically for mustard, and I remain convinced of this. Trish Hayward and I have tried hard to research the history of mustard containers with little success. However, I did find some comparative data on the household use of various spices (table above), which adds to my hypothesis. Mustard was locally grown, and therefore much cheaper than other imported spices. It had wide appeal as a flavouring and condiment, and would be a natural choice for both kitchen and dining table use. At a time when a typical household was using those annual amounts of other spices, the use of mustard is staggering. From at least Tudor times, it was common practice to make mustard sauces typically by adding vinegar and/or oil to the crushed seeds. In 1720, a Mrs Clements of Durham started making mustard flour on a commercial scale. The seed was ground in a mill, and then subjected to the various processes used in flour making. She met with instant success, and her 'Durham mustard' soon became famous. As so few have a maker's mark, it is not possible to state their origin precisely. However, all the marked ones are English, with examples known from London, York and Wigan. There is no evidence to suggest that they are European, although we know that pewter spice boxes were used widely on the continent. Wayne Hilt of Connecticut has what he believes may be an American example that is illustrated below, which I have not had the opportunity to examine. In reviewing the larger number of examples now known, I realised that some I had previously described generically as having 'tulip' shaped bodies, were actually more rounded than others. This leads me to suggest that they be categorised as 'bulbous'. Interestingly, Peter Spencer Davis thinks that some of these may be from Scotland as he has found two examples there. Ken Goldberg has a superb example of an early spice pot made by William Ford of Wigan (OP5605), with a body form not seen before - an inverted tapering drum.

**Cylindrical**

c1675-1720  
earliest have flat slip-on lids  
(12 known)



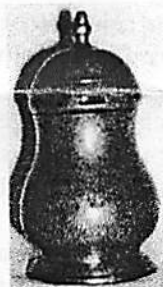
**Baluster**

c1720-1730  
slip-on lids  
(13 known)



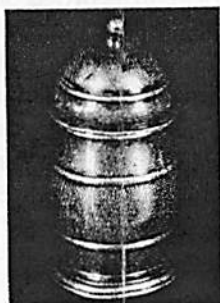
**Bulbous**

c1720-1730  
slip-on lids  
(9 known)



**Tulip**

c1730-1750  
mostly screw-on lids  
(30 known)



Wriggled pewter



Worcester porcelain



Silver cayenne castor

