

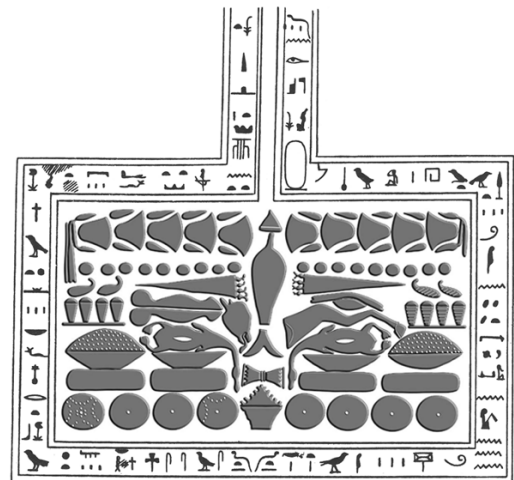
Supper for the Afterlife

The ancient Egyptians wanted their supper, not to mention breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks, just like you and your friends. But they also thought they would need to have good things to eat and drink after they were buried. The ancient Egyptians believed that they could use magic to provide themselves with these foods in the afterlife. One way they thought to obtain food was by placing an **offering table** in the chapel of their tombs.

There are two types of **offering tables**. One is a flat slab or shallow basin, usually made of stone or pottery, which is decorated with images of foodstuffs. The depictions of meat, breads, vegetables, a jar holding water or beer, and sometimes flowers, were thought to magically provide these necessities for the dead. It was even better if a living person who visited the tomb chapel poured water on the slab and said a prayer. The spout at the top of the slab drained the water off the table and onto the ground, where it soaked into the earth and magically transported the offerings down to the deceased in the tomb chamber below. The second type is in the form of a regular table, on which food was set.

The offering table of the Nubian King Nastasen (335–315 BC) shows foods popular among the ancient Nubians and Egyptians. At the bottom are round and oblong loaves of bread. Above these are four baskets contained geese or ducks and nuts or small fruits. The head, ribs and leg of a cow appear on either side of a tall jar. Higher up are two bundles of onions and four goose-necked cucumbers or squash. The entire selection is topped by bundles of lotus flowers.

The edge of the table is inscribed. On the left side is an offering formula wishing “every good thing” for the deceased, while the right side has an invocation to the goddess Nut.



Offering table of Nastasen, 335–315 BC
Nuri, Pyramid XV
Meroitic, Granite
1981.1.43 (E.H. and Suzanne Trezevant Little Fund)