



Thursday 14 to Saturday 16 May 2026

Food & Feasting in Antiquity Writing Competition

Experience the Classics like never before

A collaboration between the Lit & Phil and the School of History, Classics & Archaeology at Newcastle University

ClassicsFest is back at the Lit & Phil for its third year. This time to celebrate food, wine, and home life in ancient Greece and Rome.

As part of the festival, we are inviting submissions for a new script inspired by Marcus Gavius Apicius' (AD 14-37) cookery book known to us today simply as *Apicius*.

Apicius (the man) was a wealthy merchant in ancient Rome, during the reign of Tiberius (AD 14 – 37). He was famous for two things:

- Travelling around the Mediterranean looking for the biggest prawns.
- Dying in style by poisoning his last banquet.

His cookbook, *De re coquinaria* ("The Art of Cooking"), was probably written in the 4th century and may have been used by skilled slaves. Some people even think Apicius may not have written it himself.

What we are looking for:

The aim of ClassicsFest is to breathe new life into the Classics, and we are looking to do exactly that with Apicius.

We seek applicants to submit a treatment for a new script that in some way involves making Apicius' recipes relevant for a modern audience. Our suggested format is a morning TV cookery show ('Cooking with Apicius') where a presenter tries to make some of Apicius' recipes – but applicants may wish to submit their own ideas.

The winning entry will be developed into a script of no more than 30 minutes in length and with no more than two actors required, which will then be performed as part of ClassicsFest 2026 at Alphabetti Theatre on Friday 15 and Saturday 16 May 2026.

Details of what to include in the treatment are listed below. Please note that we are not expecting use of actual food on stage, and we encourage all applicants to bring as much of their own style to the competition as possible.

The winning writer will receive a commission fee of £1,500 and will be offered the opportunity to attend script development sessions with director Ed Cole. They may also wish to be involved in rehearsals for the production.

Chef and historian Sally Grainger will be available to offer advice on historical details and her experience of experimenting with ancient recipes.

Who can apply:

- You must live, work or study in North East England.
- You must be over 18.
- You do not need to have been published or written for theatre before.
- You should be able to attend two post-show discussions during the festival.

How to apply:

- Send up to 2 pages of treatment. This will include a short description of your story, with references to mood, plot, and main ideas. You may wish to include pictures or other source material.
- Send up to 2 pages of sample dialogue.

Submission rules:

- Include a cover sheet (your name goes on the cover sheet, not the script).
- Format: Typed, point 12 font, 1.5 line spacing
- Deadline: Friday 13 February 2026, 6pm.
- Email: ClassicsFest@litandphil.org.uk (PDF only and separate Cover sheet) putting **ClassicsFest submission** in the title.
- Post: **ClassicsFest submission**, Lit & Phil, 23 Westgate Rd, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1SE.

Please contact us if you have access needs.

The Lit & Phil and Alphabetti Theatre will have non-exclusive use of the work. You, the writer, keep all rights.

Timeline

- Submissions open: Monday 22 December 2025
- Deadline: Friday 13 February 2026
- All applicants contacted no later than: Friday 6 March 2026
- Script development & rehearsals: March to April 2026
- Performance: Friday 15 & Saturday 16 May 2026

Judging Panel

- Ed Cole – Artistic Director, Alphabetti Theatre
- Cinzia Hardy – Director and Producer, ClassicsFest
- David Whetstone – Freelance Journalist

Decisions are final.

ClassicsFest has been made possible with funding from:

Newcastle Culture Investment Fund at Community Foundation North East, The David Family Foundation, The Leche Trust, the Institute of Classical Studies, the Roman Society and Classics for All North.

Keep up to date with ClassicsFest 2026 on [ClassicsFest 2026 | Food & Feasting in Antiquity](#)

You may find some of the following resources useful:

Roman Recipes for Modern Cooks, by Sally Grainger, Pub. Apartamento (2025). The Lit & Phil has a copy.

Cooking Apicius: Roman Recipes for Today, by Sally Grainger, Pub. Prospect Books (2006).

The Classical Cookbook: 49 authentic recipes, translated and adapted for the modern cook, by Andrew Dalby & Sally Grainger, Pub. The British Museum Press (1996).

Apicius Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome, edited and translated by Joseph Dommers Vehling, Pub. Dover Books (2009). E-book available free online <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/29728/29728-h/29728-h.htm>

Apicius: A critical edition with an introduction and an English translation of the Latin recipe text 'Apicius': by Christopher Grocock and Sally Grainger, Pub. Prospect Books (2006).