



At the time of Pope Gregory the Great in the 500s, the Lenten rule was to eat only one meal a day in the evening, abstaining from meat, eggs, wine, oil, cheese, and milk. Which leaves what exactly to eat? Paper? Yum.

Bread! They survived by making small breads of water flour and salt. Tasteless, but filling, and it got them through. But it was the physical, practical reminder that they were still in the season of Lent, and it was a time of prayer. And so they began shaping these little breads in the form of prayer. Rolling them out and then folding one end over the other as a person would do with their arms over their chest in a gesture of worship and prayer. And so the breads became not only physical reminders but visual reminders calling them to prayer. They called them “little arms.” Today, our word, “pretzel”, comes from the German translation of the Latin “little arms.” In many places in the world, people continue to make pretzels during Lent as a reminder of their call to prayer.

