

About 1200-1300 Nuncheon developed as a midday "noon" cup or draught, also called "Luncheon" or "Lunch", a light midday meal.

You are spot on about the fascinating linguistic history of these words. The evolution of **nuncheon** into **lunch** is a classic example of how language and eating habits shift together over centuries.

The Evolution of the Midday Meal

- **Nuncheon (1300s):** Originally combined *noon* (midday) and *schench* (a drink). It literally meant a **noon-drink** or a quick draught of ale to tide workers over.
- **Luncheon (1580s):** This term appeared later, originally meaning a **thick piece or hunk** of food (like a lunch of bread or cheese).
- **The Merge (1600s–1700s):** Over time, the "noon-drink" (*nuncheon*) blended conceptually with the "hunk of food" (*luncheon*).
- **Lunch (1820s):** The word was formally shortened to "lunch." It was initially considered a **vulgar slang term** by the upper class before becoming mainstream.

Why the Meal Changed

Before the Industrial Revolution, the main meals were a light breakfast and a heavy **dinner eaten at midday**. As people moved into factories and offices, they could no longer go home for a massive midday dinner. The heavy meal shifted to the evening (becoming *supper* or *dinner*), and **lunch** was invented to fill the long gap in the middle of the workday.

Apparently in 1200-1300, the very first town clocks were seen, using clockwork, and based on a 24 hour "dies civilis" that started at midnight, not daybreak. In some ways using ninth hour for noon, was a compromise throughout Britain and Europe.

You have hit on one of the most transformative periods in human history for how we measure reality. The transition between **1200 and 1300** marks the exact moment humanity began shifting from "nature's time" (the sun and seasons) to "machine time" (the mechanical clock).

The transition was messy, and the shift of "noon" from 3:00 pm to 12:00 pm is the ultimate historical compromise.

The Chaos of "Seasonal" Hours

Before mechanical clocks, Europe relied on **unequal hours** dictated by the sun. The daylight period was always divided into 12 hours, regardless of the season.

- In **summer**, a single daylight hour could last **75 modern minutes**.
- In **winter**, a single daylight hour shrunk to just **45 modern minutes**.

The day was anchored by church bells marking the **canonical hours** for prayer. The first hour of daylight was *Prime* (approx. 6:00 am), the sixth hour was *Sext* (midday, approx. 12:00 pm), and the **ninth hour** was *Nones* (approx. 3:00 pm).

The Ultimate Compromise: Moving "Nones" to Midday

The word "**noon**" literally derives from the Latin *nona hora* (the ninth hour, or 3:00 pm). However, during the 1200s, this shifted by three full hours due to a mix of human hunger and economic pragmatism:

1. **The Hunger Factor:** Monks and laborers were required to fast on certain days until *Nones* (the 3:00 pm prayer) was recited. Eager to eat their midday meal, monasteries gradually began ringing the bells for *Nones* earlier and earlier.
2. **The Labor Factor:** Landowners and town councils realized that by declaring *Nones* (the official mid-day break) at the actual solar midpoint of the day, they could standardise the remaining half-day of work more reliably.

By 1300, the church bells for the **ninth hour** (*Nones*) were universally rung at the **sixth hour** (*Sext*). The name stuck, permanently redefining "**noon**" from 3:00 pm to 12:00 pm.

The Rise of the "Dies Civilis" (The Civil Day)

The weight-driven **mechanical clockwork** invented in the late 13th century utterly broke the old system. A mechanical gear cannot automatically grow or shrink its hours based on the seasons; it ticks at a constant, uniform rate.

To make these new town clocks functional, Europe had to adopt the Roman concept of the *dies civilis* (**the civil day**)—a fixed 24-hour cycle that reset precisely at **midnight** rather than sunrise.

This triggered a massive cultural clash:

- **The Town Clocks:** Chimed equal hours, ticking away relentlessly, demanding punctuality for business, markets, and shifts.
- **The Church Bells:** Continues to call for prayer, though now forced to align their flexible schedule with the rigid reality of the gears.

This era is exactly when people started using the phrase "**of the clock**" (**o'clock**) to clarify that they meant precise, mechanical time rather than approximate solar time.

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