

"Whiskey" the turnspit dog, 19th century



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Turnspit dogs were in use until the middle of the 19th century as a tool to save cooks in large households from turning meat on a spit by hand. The dog would be placed in a small wheel connected to the spit and as the spit rotated, the dog would turn the meat.

In order not to overexert a dog with this hot and unpleasant work they were often kept in pairs and worked in shifts. It is believed that this is the origin of the proverb 'every dog has his day.'

'Whiskey' is the last surviving specimen of a turnspit dog, albeit stuffed. The breed appears to have become extinct with the mechanisation in the kitchen.

Source:

Cunliffe, J (1991) 'The Turnspit'. *Kennel Gazette*, pp. 20-22.