

# CARPE DIEM



Quintus Horatius Flaccus  
(8 Dec 65 BC - 27 Nov 08 BC)

**Compiled by**

**Campbell M Gold**

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## **Carpe Diem**

*"carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero"*

pluck the day, put no trust in the future

"*Carpe diem*" is commonly translated from the Latin as "seize the day".

However, many authorities vigorously assert that this is inaccurate, and "Carpe" actually translates as "pluck", with particular reference to the "plucking" of ripe fruit. Consequently, a more "accurate" translation is suggested as, "enjoy the day - pluck the day when it is ripe".

The longer version of the phrase, "*carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero*", thus translates as, "pluck the day, trusting as little as possible in the future".

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## **Origin**

The original source for the phrase is from the poet Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65 BC - 8 BC), and the phrase is first found in his "*Odes Book I, Ode XI*".

*Dum loquimur, fugerit invida  
Aetas: carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero*

While we are talking, envious time is fleeing: pluck the day, put no trust in the future

Many of Horace's odes use agricultural symbolism to encourage people to embrace the pleasures available in everyday life rather than, with self-denial, holding on to remote hopes and aspirations for the future - hence his famous aphorism, "Carpe Diem" - "pluck the day":

### Horace - Ode I - XI

TU NE QUAESIERIS--SCIRE NEFAS--QUEM MIHI, QUEM TIBI  
FINEM DI DEDERINT, LEUCONOË, NEC BABYLONIOS  
TEMPTARIS NUMEROS. UT MELIUS, QUICQUID ERIT, PATI!  
SEU PLURES HIEMES, SEU TRIBUIT IUPPITER ULTIMAM,  
QUAE NUNC OPPOSITIS DEBILITAT PUMICIBUS MARE  
TYRHENUM. SAPIAS, VINA LIQUES, ET SPATIO BREVI  
SPEM LONGAM RESECES. DUM LOQUIMUR, FUGERIT INVIDA  
AETAS: CARPE DIEM, QUAM MINIMUM CREDULA POSTERO.  
(*Horace - Ode I-XI*)

Ask not--we cannot know--what end the gods have set for  
you, for me; nor attempt the Babylonian reckonings  
Leuconoë. How much better to endure whatever comes,  
whether Jupiter grants us additional winters or whether this  
is our last, which now wears out the Tuscan Sea upon the  
barrier of the cliffs! Be wise, strain the wine; and since life is  
brief, prune back far-reaching hopes! Even while we speak,  
envious time has passed: pluck the day, putting as little trust  
as possible in tomorrow!

(*Translator Unknown*)

Here is an alternative translation by John Conington, M.A., 1892 - it is interesting to note that "carpe" is here translated by Conington as "seize":

Ask not ('tis forbidden knowledge), what our destined term of years,  
Mine and yours; nor scan the tables of your Babylonish seers.  
Better far to bear the future, my Leuconoe, like the past,  
Whether Jove has many winters yet to give, or this our last;  
THIS, that makes the Tyrrhene billows spend their strength against  
the shore.  
Strain your wine and prove your wisdom; life is short; should hope  
be more?  
In the moment of our talking, envious time has ebb'd away.  
Seize the present; trust to-morrow e'en as little as you may.  
(*Translator - John Conington, M.A., 1892*)

End

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