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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY MUSEUM

# FEAST FOR THE EYES

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## TIDBITS

After the eleventh-century, the date of the first known document describing the sight of someone using one, it took eight centuries before the fork became a utensil universally used in the west.

A picnic originally meant an indoor meal to which everyone contributed food: much like today's pot lucks, except it was common to pay a fee to attend a picnic. By the 1860s, the word "picnic" had changed its meaning from "everyone brings something" to "everyone eats outdoors."

Lunch as a substantial meal was not a part of everyday life until the nineteenth century.

The use of tablecloths dates back to the Roman Empire. In the late 19th century it became popular to remove the tablecloth before the last course of dinner—the desert—to show off the table itself. Flannel squares called "doilies" were used to prevent dishes from scratching the table: these doilies were the forerunners of today's placemats.

Meals were not always served on plates. Breads called "trenchers" were used to hold food. Medieval bread trenchers were sometimes placed on top of wooden and pewter bases; by the sixteenth century, these bases took the place of bread trenchers. During the 17th century (in Italy, the 16th century), these trenchers became circular, which is now the common shape for dinner plates in the west.

Alexander P. Anderson, an American biochemist, conducted a series of extremely dangerous experiments starting in 1902 to make "puffed rice." In 1902 workers refused to go near his workshop after a huge blast tore out the floor. Eventually he stuffed rice into an old Spanish-American War cannon, and Quaker Puffed Rice became a reality. It was introduced to the public at the World's Fair of 1904. At first, it was coated in caramel and sold like popcorn.

The word "pop" in soda pop refers to the popping of corks when the bottles are opened.

In 1886 the United States passed a law forbidding the use of any name that resembled the word "butter" when describing margarine. It was forbidden to add yellow color to margarine and in 1902 margarine was named a "harmful drug" and stores had to be licensed to sell it.

In 1890s, visits to soda fountains were considered frivolous and ice cream sodas were unsuitable for Sundays. Ice cream merchants therefore began to sell an ice cream concoction without soda, which they called a "Sunday." The name was changed to "sundae" to persuade consumers to eat it more than once a week.

U.S. president Zachary Taylor died in 1850. He supposedly developed peritonitis after eating too much strawberry ice cream at a 4th of July celebration.

French author Honore de Balzac, who died in 1850, would lock himself away during creative bursts, drinking coffee and eating only fruit and eggs. When he finally took a break, he was known to consume huge quantities of food. One report recalls that at the Véry restaurant he consumed at one sitting "a hundred Ostend oysters, twelve cutlets of salt-meadow mutton, a duck with turnips, two partridges and a Normandy sole," not to mention the desserts, fruit and liqueurs he finished up with.

continues

## A FEAST FOR THE EYES continues

The first cheese factory in the U.S. to make cheese from scratch was started in Rome, New York in 1851 by Jesse Williams. By combining milk from his dairy with that purchased from local farmers, he could make large cheeses with uniform taste and texture. Before then, companies would buy small batches of home made cheese curd from local farmers to make into cheese, each batch of curds producing cheese with wide differences in taste and texture.

An 1853 New Years Eve dinner party for 21 scientists was held inside a life size model of an Iguanodon dinosaur on the grounds of the Crystal Palace in London. Sculpture Benjamin W. Hawkins had teamed up with paleontologist Richard Owen to create more than 2 dozen lifesized dinosaur models for a special exhibit.

The first Vegetarian Community was established in Kansas in 1856.

Born in 1856, American financier and philanthropist Diamond Jim Brady was known for his collection of diamond jewelry and for his gargantuan appetite. He was known to eat 6 or 7 giant lobsters, dozens of oysters, clams and crabs, two ducks, steak and desserts at a single sitting. He would also mix a pound of caviar into a baked potato. George Rector, a New York restaurateur said he was 'the best twenty-five customers I ever had.'

1856 Charles Dickens wrote in Household Words (1856), "Aluminium may probably send tin to the right about face, drive copper saucepans into penal servitude, and blow up German-silver sky high into nothing." He was pretty accurate in his prediction, even though aluminum had been discovered in 1808, and had only been used commercially since 1854.

Fannie Merritt Farmer was an American culinary authority and author of the 1896 edition of 'The Boston Cooking School Cook Book' which became known in future editions as the 'Fannie Farmer Cook Book.' Director of the Boston Cooking School, and founder of Miss Farmer's School of Cookery, she is often cited as the first cookbook author to introduce standard measurements

The metric system was authorized in 1866 to standardize weights and measures in the U.S.

All of the Peking (Pekin) ducks in the U.S. are descended from 9 ducks imported to Long Island, New York in 1873.

During the Siege of Paris in 1870, camel was listed on the menu of Voison restaurant's Christmas Eve menu.

A patent was issued in 1889 to Daniel Johnson of Kansas City, Kansas, for a Rotary Dining Table for use on ships. The table and attached chairs rotated so that everyone could be served from one location, making it unnecessary to carry food around the table to serve everyone.

William Painter received a patent in 1892 for the crown-cork bottle cap with a cork seal. It was used up until the 1970s, when the cork liner was replaced with a plastic liner.

At the 1893 Chicago Fair, Pabst beer won a blue ribbon, and was called 'Pabst Blue Ribbon' beer from then on.

Frederick Osius worked on improving the electric blender, and went to musician Fred Waring for financial backing. Waring backed its development, in part so he could puree raw vegetables for the ulcer diet his doctors prescribed. The Waring Blender (originally called the Miracle Mixer) debuted in 1937 and by 1954 one million had been sold.

National Biscuit Company changed the name of their Animal Biscuits to 'Barnum's Animals' in 1902, and redesigned the package as a circus wagon with a string attached so it could be hung on Christmas trees.

1906 The term 'filet mignon' is first used by O. Henry in his 1906 book, The Four Million.

A 1907 ad campaign for Kellogg's Corn Flakes (then the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Company) offered a free box of cereal to every woman who would wink at her grocer.

1908 There were an estimated 75,000 soda fountains in the U.S. in 1908.

John Van Wormer invented the waxed cardboard milk carton in 1915. It took him 10 years to perfect the machinery to make them. A gallon of milk cost 36 cents in 1915: in 2006 dollars that would be \$7.22.

## A FEAST FOR THE EYES continues

Electric refrigerators were first offered for sale in 1916, for \$900.

On January 15, 1919, a large 50 foot high storage tank in Boston burst and sent a tidal wave of over 2 million gallons of molasses traveling at over 30 miles per hour. Houses, buildings and parts of the elevated rail system were crushed in its path. Twenty-one people died, and over 150 were injured. It took over 6 months to clean up the mess. The damage from the Great Molasses Flood was in the millions of dollars

Nancy Green was hired to represent and demonstrate Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix. At the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the exhibit was so popular that police had to control the crowds at the Aunt Jemima booth. Fair officials awarded her a medal and proclaimed her Pancake Queen. She played the part of Aunt Jemima until her death in a car accident in 1923.

A popular demonstration at the 1922 Los Angeles County Fair was how to make toothpaste from orange by-products.

Marilyn Monroe was crowned Artichoke Queen of 1947 in Castroville, California. Jayne Mansfield turned down the title 'Miss Roquefort Cheese' because she believed it "just didn't sound right."

Assemblyman Seeder introduced a bill to the Maine Legislature in 1939 to make it illegal to use tomatoes in clam chowder.

Chiquita Banana, the song and the advertising jingle, were created for United Fruit Company in 1944.

I'm Chiquita banana and I've come to say  
Bananas have to ripen in a certain way  
When they are fleck'd with brown and have a golden hue  
Bananas taste the best and are best for you  
You can put them in a salad  
You can put them in a pie-aye  
Any way you want to eat them  
It's impossible to beat them  
But, bananas like the climate of the very, very tropical equator  
So you should never put bananas in the refrigerator.  
Music © 1945 Shawnee Press Inc.

In a survey conducted of the U.S. armed services in 1951, banana cream pie was the favorite dessert.

The first fast food taco is introduced by Glen Bell at his hamburger and hot dog stand in San Bernardino. Bell invented a contraption that holds tortillas in hot oil to form the U-shaped taco shell.

80% of U.S. households have a refrigerator in 1956, but only 8% of British households do.

