

## History of Popcorn

What's the first thing you notice inside a movie theater? The smell of popcorn. Popcorn and movies are a perfect match, but it wasn't always that way.

The history of popcorn and movies begins in the 1930s in America.

The world was in a depression. Finding work was hard and most people didn't have much money for entertainment.

A few people saw an opportunity. They parked a popcorn machine in front of a movie theater. A bag of fresh popcorn was a cheap snack and people loved to eat it while watching a movie. At that time, movie theaters didn't sell snacks or drinks like they do today.

Popcorn was a hit. Some popcorn sellers were making more money than movie theater owners.

After watching popcorn sellers achieve remarkable success with little investment, movie theater owners copied the idea. Within a few years, popcorn machines and snack counters were common in theaters. Popcorn was an obvious choice. It was cheap to make and didn't require expensive equipment.

During World War II, the link between popcorn and movies grew stronger. Sweet snacks were hard to find because of a sugar shortage. Theaters sold salty popcorn instead. From that time forward, people began to associate popcorn with movies.

Why is popcorn so expensive? Blame the movie studios. Most of your ticket money goes to the movie companies. Theater owners keep approximately 30% of ticket revenue. That's not enough to pay for air conditioning, rent, sound systems and other costs. So, theater owners need other ways to generate income, like selling really expensive popcorn. Sales of snacks and drinks account for 50 to 70% of the average theater's profit.

Popcorn is a substantial component of the movie business. As one theater owner said, "I'm not in the movie business. I'm in the popcorn business."

## History of Salt

We consume salt every day. It keeps us alive and enhances the taste of food. Salt is cheap and plentiful. Long ago, things were different. Salt was so important, it influenced business, government and empires.

The history of salt goes back thousands of years.

People in early societies boiled ocean water to get salt. That required great effort. Although difficult to produce, it was essential for survival. Salt mixed with meat or vegetables preserved food. That is how people were able to eat during the winter months when food was not always easy to find.

The historical importance of salt can be appreciated by looking at three empires. During the Roman Empire, road networks were constructed in order to simplify transport to and from distant salt fields. Because of its high value, soldiers were paid with salt instead of money. When Rome wanted to start a war, they collected money by raising salt taxes.

Two thousand years ago in China, half of all the tax money collected by the Tang dynasty came from the sale of salt. It also played an important role in the development of modern weapons. Without saltpeter, a kind of salt, the Chinese might not have invented gunpowder.

Salt also played an important role in India when it was controlled by the British. Salt taxes and bad laws in the 1930s made people angry at the British Empire. In order to protect British companies, the government passed a law that said individual people could not make or sell salt.

People like Gandhi protested. He led a salt march that attracted 100,000 followers. The salt march helped make Gandhi an important leader.

The next time you eat food with salt, think about how that small rock has fed people, built empires and triggered social change.

## History of Pizza

Many people think pizza started in Italy. That's part of the story, but it's not the whole story. The history of pizza begins thousands of years ago.

Ancient people collected wheat and pounded it into small pieces. They added water and cooked it on a hot rock. That was flatbread.

Around 700 BC, the Greeks discovered new ways to prepare and cook flatbread. They made it round and added an outside edge. Oil, onions and garlic were added before cooking. They also used yeast to make the bread easy to eat.

The Romans came up with several improvements, like adding cheese and meat. They also made a thin crust cooked in a wood burning oven.

Ten centuries later, tomato sauce was finally added to flatbread. The tomato first arrived in Europe in the 1530s, but it was rarely used. Many thought it was poisonous.

The people of Naples, Italy were perhaps the first to cook with this round, red fruit. By the 1750s, flatbread with tomato sauce was an essential part of the diet in Naples. By the 1790s, the streets in busy neighborhoods were filled with food stands selling low cost pizza. When visiting Naples, everybody wanted to eat the local dish. In 1830, the first pizza restaurant opened. That restaurant is still open today.

In 1889, pizza became popular in Italy. That's when the King and Queen visited Naples. The queen loved pizza with red sauce, white cheese and green herbs; the same colors as the Italian flag. After the visit, Italy experienced a pizza craze.

The rest of the world didn't experience pizza until after the 1950s. Following World War 2, millions of Italians moved abroad. When they moved, they brought their food culture with them.

Pizza shops popped up everywhere. People around the world fell in love with pizza, a food that was started in ancient times, improved by the Greeks and Romans, and perfected in Naples.

## History of Ketchup

Ketchup is a red, sweet sauce made from tomatoes. But ketchup wasn't always red or sweet or made from tomatoes. It's changed a lot since it was discovered in Asia about 500 years ago.

The history of ketchup begins in China.

Chinese sailors frequently traveled to Asian ports in search of trade opportunities. Their business was buying and selling. In Vietnam, they encountered fishermen who had a thick, brown sauce made from anchovies. Though odd in appearance, Chinese sailors liked the sauce. They called it ke-tsiap, which means fish sauce.

Around the 1600s, Chinese sailors met traders from England. The British bought the sauce and sold it in England. English people enjoyed it a lot. Over time, ketchup became an important part of China's vast global network of trade which included tea, spices, and manufactured products. Factories were eventually established in Indonesia to produce ketchup for export.

Because of its popularity and the cost of shipping from Asia, businessmen in England manufactured their own fish sauce. They made it with different materials like mushrooms, walnuts and beer. But no tomatoes. At this time, people in Europe didn't eat tomatoes, which were thought to be poisonous.

Two centuries later, tomatoes were used to make ketchup for the first time. This early version had anchovies in order to retain the fishy taste.

In the 1870s, an American named Henry Heinz changed the formula. He removed the fish and added more tomatoes and some sugar. This combination turned ketchup into a red, sweet sauce. That's basically the same product we buy in shops today.

The history of ketchup is a story about trade and change. The next time you put ketchup on your fries, remember this. You're eating an international food with roots in an era of globalization once dominated by China.