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Ketchup - Pour It on (reading – 6.11. - 12.11.)

by: **Dale Phillip**

Ketchup, undoubtedly America's favorite condiment, (followed closely by mayonnaise and salsa) is poured on virtually everything. Who doesn't know a ketchup addict who can't get through one meal without ketchup on something. Or perhaps you are unabashedly one yourself.

A bottle of ketchup is found in approximately 97 percent of U.S. homes, but the present form we enjoy is relatively new, considering it has its roots in ancient China. The origin of the word ketchup is believed to be traced back to a Chinese word that can be loosely translated as ke-tep or kio-chiap. Or possibly from a Malay language sometimes referred to as kicap, kecap, ketjap. The precursor to our ketchup was actually a fermented fish sauce made from fish entrails, meat byproducts and soybeans, usually ground into a paste. This mixture not only added flavor to food, but was easy to store on long ocean voyages. As it spread along spice trade routes to Indonesia and the Philippines, British traders got hooked on the spicy, salty taste, and by the early 1700s. They took samples home to England and promptly modified the original recipe.

Even though tomato plants were introduced to England by way of South America during the 1500s, tomatoes were widely believed to be poisonous, along with other members of the nightshade family (eggplants and potatoes). The earliest usage in England was recorded in 1690 and spelled "catchup"; later the spelling of "ketchup" appeared around 1711, and the modified spelling "catsup" in 1730.

A famine in Italy during the late 1830's led the starving superstitious folks to finally try tomatoes, and the population was pleasantly surprised when no one became poisoned, leading to the popularity across Europe. The first Italian tomato sauce recipe appeared soon after the famine. Imagine Italian cooking without the tomato ... unthinkable.

Tomato ketchup appeared in America in the early 1800's. An enterprising Philadelphia native named James Mease incorporated the tomato into his recipe, setting off a revolution of tomato-based ketchup. By 1896, The New York Tribune estimated that tomato ketchup had become America's national condiment and could be found "on every table in the land." That might have been a bit of an exaggeration at the time, but certainly prophetic for the coming twentieth century, especially with the introduction of hot dogs at the two world fairs: Chicago and St Louis. Cooks and homemakers began scrambling for ketchup recipes to make at home along with the growing popularity of bottled versions. Many cookbooks featured recipes for ketchup made of oysters, mussels, mushrooms, walnuts, lemons and celery, but the Americans were the first to make the tomato its base for the prized condiment.

With many different versions of the condiment already in the U.S., a Pittsburgh businessman named Henry J. Heinz started producing ketchup in 1876 using tomatoes and vinegar as his chief ingredients, and he soon dominated the commercial market (and still does). By 1905, the company had sold five million bottles of ketchup. The first recipes Heinz tried contained allspice, cloves, cayenne pepper, mace, and cinnamon. The second included pepper, ginger, mustard seed, celery salt, horseradish, and brown sugar, along with the two primary ingredients, tomatoes and vinegar. Soon the country was hooked.

Americans currently purchase 10 billion ounces of ketchup annually, which comes out to approximately three bottles per person per year. That figure seems low, but keep in mind that Americans consume much of their ketchup outside the home, at restaurants and fast food locations.

So today, when you shake that bottle or open that packet, be thankful that your beloved ketchup is free from entrails and fish heads ... and enjoy.

About The Author

The author Dale Phillip frequently writes about the history of popular, as well as unusual, foods She especially enjoys researching and writing about nutritional supplements and alternative health subjects. You can visit her at her blog, <http://myfriendlyu.blogspot.com/>

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Please Pass the Mustard (reading – 13.11. - 19.11.)
by: **Dale Phillip**

Who doesn't love mustard, be it yellow or brown, on a hot dog, a sandwich, or even blended into a casserole, salad dressing or appetizer. We love our condiments, and, second only to ketchup, no one loves mustard more than Americans. It's practically a national institution (alongside the hot dog). During the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, a small company named French's introduced their yellow mustard on hotdogs, and the popularity exploded.

There are more than 40 species of mustard plants, with their seeds each offering a slightly different flavor and color to create many varieties of mustards. Add other flavorful ingredients, like cranberries, horseradish, hot peppers or honey, and the condiment aficionado could have a veritable cupboard full of delightful mustards to try.

In the Bible, the mustard seed is used in the book of Matthew as a parable, where Jesus teaches that one need only have the faith of a (lowly) mustard seed to move mountains. For Christians, it has been a symbol of faith since the New Testament.

The actual condiment, in some form, dates back to the early Romans, when it was ground from seeds and mixed with juice into a paste, similar to the prepared mustards we use today. The name is derived from "mustum" (from the Latin meaning "burning must" which was the practice of using the juice of young grapes to form a paste). Mustard as a spice was popular in Europe long before the ancient Asian spice trade, and grape-loving Romans planted it in their vineyards alongside the grapevines. The country of France embraced it when many brothers in French monasteries cultivated, prepared and sold mustard as early as the ninth century and can be traced back to shops in Paris in the 13th century.

Two enterprising Frenchmen by the names of Maurice Grey and Antoine Poupon created one of the most popular mustards in the world, Grey Poupon Dijon, in the 1770's. They discovered that by adding white wine to their private recipe, a totally different and pleasant flavor emerged. Their original store still exists in the town of Dijon. Who can forget the classic TV commercial where two limousines pull up next to each other, and a very proper and obviously wealthy passenger calls out the window inquiring if the other limo has any Grey Poupon on board.

Across the pond, in 1866, a Brit named Jeremiah Colman, founder of the recognizable brand of Colman's Mustard of England, was appointed as the official mustard maker to Queen Victoria. Colman pioneered the same grinding technique used today, which pulverizes seeds into a fine powder in a way that protects the escape of the flavorful oils. In many British pubs, a crock of spicy mustard can be seen on each table, which,

when placing a small amount on one's tongue, is purported to create a thirst prior to ordering one's favorite ale or beer.

Even Pope John XII was such a fan of mustard that, like Queen Victoria, he appointed a young man as the Grand Mustard Maker to the Pope. It just happened to be the Pope's nephew, who was a resident of the Dijon region in France.

Like so many other words in the English language, mustard has other unrelated meanings, such as "cutting the mustard" or "mustard gas," a lethal weapon during WWI and WWII. In Ireland, referring to someone as "mustard" can mean ill-tempered.

Regardless of your preferences (make mine Grey Poupon, please) there are hundreds of mustards to choose from. If you just can't get enough, you can visit the National Mustard Museum in Middleton, Wisconsin, where more than 5,500 mustards are on display, and you can sample many of them at the tasting bar. And of course there are hundreds of beloved mustards on sale, so you won't leave empty-handed.

About The Author

Who doesn't love mustard. We all have our favorites, and the variety available is seemingly endless. America's love affair with condiments places mustard second, only behind ketchup in popularity. What is your favorite? Visit the author's blog at <http://myfriendlyu.blogspot.com/>

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Hold the Mayo (reading – 20.11. - 26.11.)

by: **Dale Phillip**

The first time it dawned on me there were two distinct camps regarding mayonnaise was one afternoon at a restaurant. I was having lunch with a good friend, and she was interrogating the waitress about the chicken salad plate, asking her, "This doesn't have any of that horrible Miracle Whip, does it?" The waitress assured her it was pure mayo that held those little morsels together. My friend seemed relieved and ordered it, but I ordered something else. I am in the Miracle Whip camp, and I make no apologies.

I admit I come by it honestly. I grew up in a Miracle Whip household, and I inherited my mother's dislike for mayonnaise. To this day, I buy only MW and so does my sister. But mayo holds top honors in the condiment world, at least in the U.S., tied only with ketchup in popularity, and a must-have on millions of sandwiches daily, as well as in salads and sauces. Some fanatics even put it on french fries.

As a child, I frequently asked my mother why some sandwiches or salads tasted "gross" until I understood that MW had a distinctly different flavor than traditional mayo, which, in my opinion, has no flavor at all. (Please, no hate mail). When it finally clicked in my young mind, and I understood the difference, it was MW all the way from then on.

But let's travel back in time to learn about mayo, and the French passion that started it all. The creation of mayonnaise is credited to the chef of Duke de Richelieu in 1756. While the Duke was defeating the British at Port Mahon in Menorca, Spain, his chef was whipping up a special victory feast that included a unique sauce made with eggs and cream, staples of French cuisine. Some food historians insist that the Spanish pioneered the rich spread, but it seems more likely that the French did the honors. Word of mouth (and taste buds) traveled across the pond, and Americans quickly embraced the creamy madness. Many residents of French heritage, not to mention chefs searching for new frontiers, introduced it in New York City, and we know that by 1838, the popular restaurant Delmonico's in Manhattan offered mayonnaise in a variety of dishes. Gourmets were hooked.

Soon chefs were dreaming up different ways to use the wildly popular spread, especially in salads. In 1896, the famous Waldorf salad, made its debut to rave reviews at a charity ball at the Waldorf Hotel, chock full of apple pieces, celery, walnuts and grapes, all held together by that creamy mayo, and diners couldn't get enough.

As refrigeration blossomed at the turn of the century, hundreds of food manufacturers raced to get their version of mayo in the shops. One such manufacturer was Hellmann's, a New York City brand which designed wide mouth jars that could accommodate large spoons and scoops, and they soon began to dominate the sector. Mayonnaise, which had heretofore been considered a luxury, was fast becoming a household staple and taking its place at the dinner tables in millions of homes. Many professional chefs and homemakers made their own versions, but jars of the popular condiment were featured prominently on grocery store shelves.

Enter Miracle Whip, created in 1933 by the Chicago-based Kraft Foods Company. It made its debut during the Depression as a cheaper alternative to mayo, and while it does contain the key ingredients of mayonnaise (egg, soybean oil, vinegar, water), it deviates from the standard of mayo with a sweet, spicy flavor that many folks preferred and still do, but is required to label itself as "salad dressing" rather than mayo.

So whether you are a straight mayonnaise user, a renegade Miracle Whip aficionado, or you are frequently heard to state "hold the mayo", there's no getting around this wildly popular condiment, and we can thank the French gourmets once again for this creation.

About The Author

The author, an unapologetic Miracle Whip user, enjoys writing about foods, alternative health and humor. You can find other articles she has written on her blog. <http://myfriendlyu.blogspot.com/>

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5 ways to success for your website (reading – 27.11. - 3.12.)

by: **Don Carswell**

There are many ways you can make your website successful and bring in traffic, but you should have the basics done first which are important for your visitors and then you can build from there.

You want your visitors to come to your website and know exactly what your website is about and have interesting content or something that will catch the eye. Below are some of the basics you must have to start being successful online.

1. Content is king.

Having good content is very important and you need to highlight the main things you do. Your website is a selling tool and you need to write interesting content about your products and services. Your homepage should tell your visitors what your company sells and they should know it straight away.

2. Accessibility

Make sure your website is compatible with all search engines and devices, you really need a responsive website today. A responsive website will give your visitors a much better experience from a mobile device and with the large percentage of users today, it is very important to have a responsive website.

3. Testing your website.

When your website starts getting bigger, you must always test your website, you may never know when a plugin might play up or a link goes to a 404 error page if you have multiple people working on your website. So every 2 weeks or so you should test all the pages of your website and make sure it is functioning properly. Having a broken website will only scare a potential customer away.

4. Clean looking website

Simple, clean designs are a great way to go. Do not have too much going on in the website as you don't want to confuse your visitors or make them focus on 50 flashing buttons. Make sure you have a clean design so your visitors can focus on what you sell.

5. Study your competition

Frequently look at the competition, see what the biggest guys in your industry are doing. There is a reason why they are successful, you may pick up a few new ideas of your own by doing so. Try and view what you do and see how you can make it a little different from others.

The above tips will help you become successful online, you need to make sure these are done well before you go onto making more changes to your website.

About The Author

I am a web developer in Suisse responsive web design bangkokweb design suisseAgence web suisse

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