29 Dumb Facts About Dessert - mental_floss List Show (Ep.227)

List Show
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Hi, I'm John Green. Welcome to my salon. This is Mental Floss on YouTube and did you know that Popsicles were invented by Frank W. Epperson when he was just 11? He left a glass containing soda powder, water, and a mixing stick on his back porch one night. The next morning, it was frozen; he had a Popsicle and he went on to patent that idea in 1924. Let that be a lesson to you, youth of America if you haven't discovered something important by the time you are 11, you are doomed. Anyway, that's the first of many facts about dessert I'm going to share with you today.

(Intro)

OK, let's start with a few more dessert origins. Strudel comes from a middle High German word meaning whirlpool. The oldest known recipes for strudel are from 1696 and can be found in the Vienna city library. Now we don't know who invented strudel, it was probably Mr. or Mrs. Strudel, but we're not positive. But we do know that it was inspired by an older pastry, baklava. Baklava became popular in the Ottoman Empire, and most believe it came from Turkey. But there are even older desserts like the 5th century Greek physician Aegimus wrote a piece about the art of making cheesecake. He was also the first person to write a treatise about pulses. But cheesecake, baklava, strudel, these are disgusting desserts. Let's talk about something delicious, like Bear claws, which is American.

(Libertage)

Bear claws were invented in the Western U.S. The first printed reference to one appeared in a 1942 newspaper article in San Francisco. Two towns claim to have invented the banana split in the early 1900s- Latrobe, Pennsylvania and Wilmington, Ohio. Now interestingly, residents of both towns claim that college students popularized the dish. So we don't know exactly where it's from, but we do know that apparently college students like to eat dessert. Brief personal aside, when I arrived at Kenyon College in the fall of 1995, I discovered that I could eat Lucky Charms in the cafeteria whenever I wanted and so, for about two months, I only ate Lucky Charms. Moving on from dessert origins, the world's most expensive dessert is the Frozen Hope Chocolate Ice Cream sundae at Serendipity 3 in New York City. It costs $25,000. It has a blend of 28 cocoas and edible gold toppings, because nothing tastes as good as eating gold. Plus, you eat it with a golden spoon decorated with diamonds, which you can bring home with you. Although, if you are really baller you just eat the spoon.

Another world record: biggest gingerbread house. In 2013, a 2,520 square foot gingerbread house was built in Texas. That's 35.8 million calories. But don't worry, no one ate it, because this is America, where food is for bragging about, not for eating. The word for the Sicilian dessert cannoli, by the way, comes from a word meaning 'little tubes'. So I guess this is a cannoli. No, it's a finger trap, gotta keep my finger away from it. Another word origin, French macarons aka the sandwich cookies that Blair enjoys on Gossip Girl, a reference clearly written by Meredith, got their name from an Italian word that referred to pasty food. English speakers borrowed this term to refer to an entirely different cookie, one with coconut or almonds. They added an extra o to the word to, you know, make it less confusing.

In France, they call candy apples 'pommes d'amour' which means apples of love, because nothing says love like candying your apples. That's actually my life motto. Eclair comes from the French word for lightning, but no one knows why it got that name. It may have something to do with the glistening icing or how quickly they're eaten. An eclair on my kitchen counter is very similar to a cow in a field in a thunder storm; they can both be gone very quickly with limited warning.

In the 1960s Jell-O tried to make dessert much less appetizing by introducing vegetable flavors, like celery, Italian salad, and seasoned tomatoes. And if that sounds good to you, you should head down to Texas where you can try a Pick-A-Dilly, a pickle flavored snow cone. Oh, that sounds disgusting? Well, imagine being a 16th century Italian who ate Eel Marzipan. All right, I'm done grossing you out now, I promise. Let's move on to something delicious, cookies.

Italians used to eat eel cookies, no I'm just kidding. Let's talk about the Girl Scouts. Girl Scouts sell about 200 million boxes of cookies a year, bringing in $700 million. Speaking of Girl Scouts, the first time a s'more recipe was ever published was in a 1925 Girl Scout's handbook. Marshmallows are derived from a plant called Althaea officinalis which has medicinal properties. The leaf and root of the plant can be used to treat sore throats and stomach problems.

How will we work off all the calories from these desserts? Well, perhaps on the Tour De Donut, a bicycle race that originated in Staunton, Illinois, but has since spread around to other locations. Along the 32 mile route there are 2 donut stops. Donut eating is not required, but for every donut that a participant eats, 5 minutes is subtracted from their time. I'm not very good at math, but I wonder if there's a way to win the race by just eating donuts...

Ruth Graves Wakefield, the inventor of the chocolate chip cookie, sold the rights to her recipe to Nestle in 1939 for $1. Although to be fair, that's like, $11 in today's money. Speaking of inventors, in 1897 a dentist and confectioner teamed up to create the first cotton candy machine. They called their cotton candy fairy floss. Dentists co-created cotton candy, that doesn't surprise me at all. I have a theory about dentists, that they want us to get cavities because that's how they get money. Our pain their profit. I'm not, of course, referring to the dentists in the Mental Floss fan community, I mean the other dentists; you guys are awesome.

The first time a pie was thrown in someone's face on film was in 1909. The movie was called *Mr. Flip* - I bet that guy really flipped out. Speaking of pie throwing, every year teams compete in the World Custard Pie Throwing Championship in Kent, England. This is how you win, you get 6 points for hitting someone in the face, 3 for the chest, and 1 for the arm; if you miss 3 times, points are taken away. By the way, there is a Pie Town, New Mexico. According to the town's website, the name came from a World War I veteran who broke down on the side of the road there in the 1920s and he started baking apple pies. And then the pies were so good that they built a town around him. The moral of the story is, they didn't have cell phones in the 1920s, so wherever your car broke down, you just moved there.

The store Sprinkles Cupcakes has a few 24 hours cupcake ATMs which can hold 700 cupcakes at once. The Beverly Hills ATM sells around 1,100 cupcakes a day. We only have one cupcake. And it isn't even real. In 2011, Supreme Court justice Elena Kagan got a frozen yogurt machine installed in the Supreme Court cafeteria. For that, she got the nickname The Frozen Yogurt justice. It's like the worst X-man ever. What's your super power? Well, anytime you want I can give you chocolate soft serve or vanilla soft serve or a mix of the two.

Another U.S. leader who took dessert seriously, Ronald Reagan, who with presidential proclamation 521 made July 15, 1984 National Ice Cream day. In the proclamation he describes ice cream as a nutritious and wholesome food. Now National Ice Cream day is celebrated on the 3rd Sunday every July. And on the topic of people your dad likes, in 2003 on the Tonight Show, Jay Leno took a bite out of a 125 year old fruit cake. It was brought to the show by 83 year old Morgan Ford, who explained that the fruit cake had been

passed down from generation to generation in his family. After sampling it, Leno said "it needs more time".

And finally, I return to my salon to tell you another story about old desserts. In 2004, the Associated Press ran a story about a science teacher at George Stevens Academy in Maine. It wasn't because Mr. Benatti had won an award or anything, the AP wanted to know about the unwrapped Twinkie that he had been keeping on his chalkboard for 30 years, to see what its shelf life was. Benatti told them, "It's rather brittle, but if you dusted it off, it's probably still edible". Science!

Thanks for watching Mental Floss on YouTube, which is made with the help of all of these nice people. As we say in my hometown, don't forget to watch Blossom. My hometown is a little stuck in the past, but man, that was a great show.