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**Toasting the Toaster: Humble Kitchen
Workhorse Celebrates 100th Anniversary**

Grain Foods Foundation Celebrates National Bread Month

DENVER, CO – It's the world's first comfort food, and one of the most enduring simple pleasures in our nation's history. More than 75 million Americans enjoy a piece of golden brown toast every day. In fact, our nation's love of toast has inspired the creation of collectors' conventions, a national toaster museum, web sites, songs about toast and cookbooks with recipes for nothing but toast.

November is National Bread Month and to celebrate bread and our nation's love affair with toast, the non-profit Grain Foods Foundation is recognizing the 100th anniversary of the invention of the first electric toaster.

This is a milestone in the history of America's fascination with electronic gadgets. Before radios, before blenders, before televisions, before microwave ovens, before computers and before i-Pods were popular, there was the toaster—the first electric appliance in history to mass populate American homes.

While some gadgets come and go, toasters remain a popular item. About 12 million toasters are sold annually, according to Consumer Reports. Approximately 90 percent of homes in America have a toaster.

"Toast is one of those perfect foods that will never go out of style. Warm, crunchy and golden brown, toast is delicious, inexpensive, easy to make and a low-fat, low-calorie source of grains," said Judi Adams, MS, RD, president of the Grain Foods Foundation.

While some may take the humble kitchen workhorse for granted, collectors around the world admire the design and functionality of the toaster. Collectors in Minnesota, Michigan, Texas, New York, South Carolina and Virginia, just to name a few, have toaster collections numbering into the hundreds.

“Electric toasters are design marvels that have served a useful function in our homes for the past 100 years,” said Eric Norcross, creator and curator of the Toaster Museum Foundation (www.toaster.org). “Vintage toasters are historic artifacts that track our nation’s design ideals over the past century.”

The earliest toasters were designed to mimic small pieces of furniture. In the 1930s the toasters copied the art deco style of buildings and in the 1940s and 50s, toaster design reflected the streamlining taking place in the automotive industry, explained Norcross, who has more than 600 toasters in his collection.

While some admire the toaster, millions more admire toast. It is the third most popular breakfast item in the United States, and with the variety of vitamins and nutrients packed into one slice of bread, it is one of the more nourishing choices for breakfast.

“There’s nothing more satisfying than a piece of perfectly toasted bread to compliment any breakfast,” said Ted Allen, cookbook author and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*’s food-and-wine connoisseur. “One of the most comforting, simple moments you can have is to make yourself a slice of toast for breakfast or for a midday snack. The scent of bread caramelizing in the toaster is wonderful.”

The process that caramelizes toast—cooking the sugars in the bread and turning them golden brown—begins at 310 degrees Fahrenheit and is called the Maillard reaction, which gives toast its flavor and its crunch.

Bread and toast can be a good source of whole grain, which may help prevent heart disease and some cancers. The high folic acid content of enriched grains found in white bread and toast may help prevent neural tube defects. Women of child-bearing age are encouraged to increase their intake of folic acid. Grain foods are the largest source of folic acid in the American diet.

There is also a scientific study on the benefits school children receive from eating what many consider the British national dish: beans and toast. A researcher from the University of Ulster has presented data showing that “toast alone boosted children’s scores on a variety of cognitive tests.” The toast combined with beans was even more beneficial.

On the racier side, a recent nationwide survey conducted by Harris Interactive® for the Grain Foods Foundation found that nearly 10 percent of Americans are more passionate about toast than they are for, well, passion. One in ten said they “would rather eat toast in the morning than have sex.” Another 52 percent indicated they prefer toast in the morning over candy, 38 percent want toast more than chocolate, and 29 percent prefer their morning toast over a bubble bath.

Yeah Toast!

Singing about toast has actually propelled the career of Michigan comedian Heywood Banks. He uses a toaster as a percussion instrument and sings such lines as, "Take a piece of bread, put it in the slot, push down the lever and the wires get hot: I get toast. Yeah Toast!" His animated cartoon titled "Toast," which can be found on the ComedyHome.com Web site, has been circulated to thousands around the world. He's created a children's book based on his "Yeah Toast!" song lyrics, and he sells "Yeah Toast!" t-shirts and music CDs.

"Toast is the reason I've been able to perform for 25 years. It built my house," said Heywood Banks, who performs across the country and has produced five CDs of comedy songs. "I can say without equivocation that people in this country are passionate about their toast."

History

Historians believe toast first became common about 5,000 years ago in Egypt. The Romans spread the idea of toast across Europe. The word "toast" comes from the Latin "tostum" which means scorch or burn.

The first electric toaster was most likely invented in 1905, which is the year Albert Marsh developed the Nichrome wire, making the electric toaster possible. The first toaster had a colorful name, "El Tosto," and was manufactured under the Pacific Electric Heating name, which later became Hotpoint Electric. Although there is some debate over the electric toaster's origins, most agree that 1905 was an important year.

The first U.S. patent for an electric toaster was made in 1909 by General Electric for an appliance that was nothing more than exposed heating elements surrounded by a wire cage to hold the bread. This model, the D-12, is considered the first commercially successful toaster in U.S. history.

The first automatic pop-up toaster was the Toastmaster 1A1, invented in 1926. Among the great variety of toaster designs that popped-up during that period, it was the pop-up toaster that became the winning design for consumers, becoming a highly desired wedding gift along the way.

However, the toaster did not really take off until after 1933 when sliced bread was invented, which makes it official: historically speaking, the toaster is the next best thing since sliced bread.

To document innovation, design and the impact of electricity on the household and family, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History has close to 100 non-electric and electric toasters in its collections, ranging from the 18th century to the 1980s.

To get a sense of how revered toast was earlier in our nation's history, consider that the official White House Cookbook of 1887 devoted five entire pages and 21 different recipes for nothing but toast.

One White House recipe calls for cooking apples with butter and sugar in a sauce pan and pouring the mixture over warm toast.

Apple Toast

Six apples
1 ounce butter
2 ounces powdered sugar
2 Tablespoons water
4 slices toast

Core, peel and slice six apples; toss with powdered sugar and water. Melt butter in sauce pan, sauté apples for a few minutes until tender. Toast four slices of bread; butter if desired. Pour apple mixture over the top of toast; sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve hot.

Source: White House Cookbook: A Selection of Original Recipes During a Period of 40 years, 1887 (recipe abbreviated)

About the Grain Foods Foundation

The Grain Foods Foundation, a joint venture of members of the milling and baking industries formed in 2004, is dedicated to advancing the public's understanding of the beneficial role grain-based foods play in the human diet. Directed by a board of trustees, funding for the Foundation is provided through voluntary donations from private grain-based food companies and is supplemented by industry associations. For more information about the Grain Foods Foundation, visit www.grainpower.org.

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