

Victorian invention fact file

Invention: Ice cream

Date invented: 1700, but first sold in 1851

Inventor(s): Mary Eales (in England,
though developed also in other countries)

The first evidence of ice-cream, or simply flavoured ice, comes from way back in the Persian Empire. During the hot Persian summers, people would add grape juice to snow as a treat. In fact some of the snow actually had to be taken from the tops of mountains!

In the 1700s, the first ice cream recipes appeared in England, in the book 'Mrs. Mary Eales's Receipts'. This recipe was the first to call for cold cream instead of ice, which was then flavoured with fruit.

Ice Cream quickly became an expensive luxury for England's higher classes. One tale even suggests that the royal family tried to keep ice cream to themselves, but simply couldn't stop it from taking over the British public. Meanwhile ice cream spread across the pond to America, where new recipes and processes were created, such as the first ice cream sundaes.

Ice cream as we know it today, however, is most closely associated with vans, cones and beaches - a portable, tasty snack on a summer's day. Nobody realised this potential, however, until a Swiss-Italian businessman called Carlo Gatti opened the first ice cream stall outside London's Charing Cross station in 1851, serving scoops or ice cream in wafer shells, marking the true invention of modern ice cream.

Rumours suggests that cones weren't used to hold ice cream until 1904 at the St. Louis World's fair, when an ice cream seller ran out of the cardboard ice cream holders, but noticed that the booth next to his was a Syrian Waffle Maker. You can guess what happened next- the waffle maker offered to make his waffles into cones to hold ice cream, and the craze started! Of course, that is only a rumour. However a cookery book published in 1888 also suggests serving ice cream in a cone, though evidence does show a significant increase in the use of ice cream cones after the 1904 world's fair.

What happened next?

Companies like Walls and Ben and Jerry's each began using their own methods of creating ice cream, and almost all of them were hugely popular with the public. The ice cream industry grew and now ice cream is, as you probably know, one of the most popular food products in the world- especially on a hot day at the beach!



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