

KALAS GYÖRGYI

sandwich grófja és a nápolyi pizza

HORVÁTH ILDI RAJZÁVAL

A History of Our Favourite Foods
illustrated by Ildi Horváth





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Györgyi Kalas

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ÉS A NÁPOLYI PIZZA

The Earl of Sandwich and the Neapolitan Pizza



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~ KEDVENC ÉTELEINK TÖRTÉNETE ~



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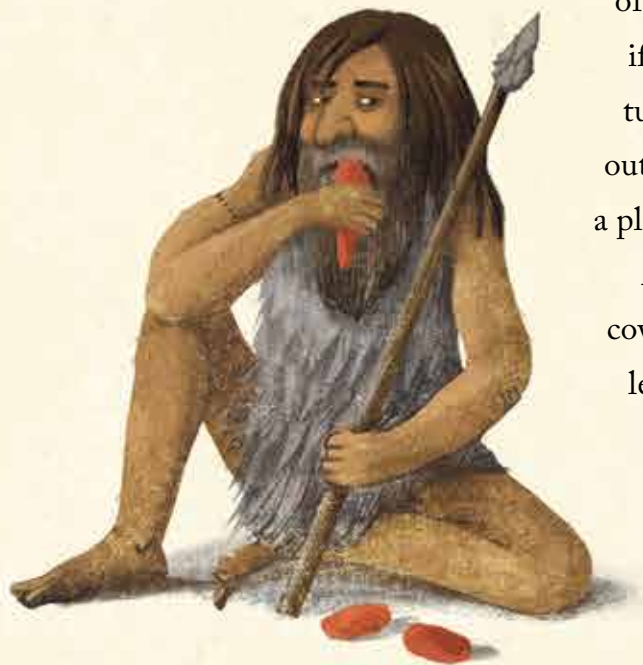


FOREWORD

Has it ever occurred to you that every type of food has its own story? Putting a bit of salami between two slices of bread and calling it a sandwich was not always obvious. Someone somewhere once figured out that if you put a grain of wheat between two big stones and crushed it you would make flour, and that flour could be used to bake bread, which is much tastier than chewing raw wheat grain. Someone else realised that if you pour the semolina into warm milk, it thickens and becomes semolina pudding. And how to create cocoa powder to sprinkle on semolina pudding from the fruit

of the cocoa tree. Not to mention that if you cook ripe fruit for a long time it turns into jam. Someone also worked out that tea tree leaves can be made into a pleasant drink.

All this took a very long time to discover. Not only did cavemen only slowly learn how to make fire, but they also realised that fire is not just good for warmth and light! At some point it turned out that food accidentally



dropped into the fire was much softer, tastier and easier to chew. Think how long it would take to chew a raw potato! In comparison, it only takes a few minutes when fried. But who realised that sunflower seeds can be used to make a golden oil in which to fry potatoes?

Humans have always loved experimenting and discovering new flavours and new foods. That is how we have developed a very diverse gastronomic culture, with many delicious dishes: soups, cakes, cheeses, pasta, spreads and drinks. Most of our food has been around as long as we humans have been, it is an important part of our culture, and has many interesting stories to tell. These are presented to you in this book, which is not a cookbook, but a long history of your favourite dishes.



Santa Maria,
the ship of
Christopher
Columbus

KOLUMBUSZ KRISTÓF
HAJÓJA,
a santa maria

fried Potatoes

You might not think that the history of French fries would be very interesting; after all, it is one of the simplest foods in the world – although the simplest foods are often the best. The potato's journey, however, was quite exciting!

Like many popular vegetables today, it came to Europe from America, South America, to be precise. Potatoes were unknown even to the indigenous peoples of North America. The Incas of South America, on the other hand, cultivated at least fifty different types of potato. Axomamma, the goddess of the potato, was an important character in the Incan religion.

THE INCAS

The Incas were an indigenous South American tribe. They lived in what is now Peru until the Spanish conquered the area under Pizarro.

The Incas created one of the largest and most mysterious cultures in the world.

They never invented letters, but they did develop a very interesting system of knot writing using different numbers and



colours of rope in which knots were tied in order to record information. They built a highly developed network of roads and 40-50-metre-long suspension bridges up in the high mountains.



POTATO – APPLE OF THE EARTH

The English word potato comes from the Spanish word patata, but other names are also common, for example 'spud', which comes from the middle English word for a short knife but got its current meaning (potato) in the 19th century as a regional slang word. In French they are similarly referred to as patate but also as pomme de terre or 'apples of the earth'. Although many people traditionally think of potatoes as yellowish in colour, there are also blue, purple and red potatoes, and there are many different types of yellow ones, too.



While one type makes delicious, mashed potato, another is great baked.

Potatoes – like tomatoes – were long thought by Europeans to be poisonous because the edible part grows underground. For ages, they were only fed to animals. The leaves do actually contain toxic substances. They only became an accepted food in Europe after kings and famous politicians began to eat them. Finally, one French king resorted to a ruse: he hired soldiers to guard the potatoes as if they were very precious. This, of course, made everyone wonder why the tubers were so closely guarded. The guards pretended not to notice that more and more people were stealing the potatoes, which, thanks to this scam, became very popular with the French. The cultivation of potatoes eventually helped to overcome the great famines that used to be common in Europe.



NEW PLANTS FROM AMERICA

A lot of food that we now think of as commonplace came to us from America. Before Christopher Columbus, the diet of Europeans was largely made up of grain, meat, fruit and berries. Tomatoes and potatoes have already been mentioned, but corn, peppers, pineapples, beans, peanuts, cocoa, sunflowers and pumpkins also came from the Americas.



THE HISTORY OF CHIPS

Historians have argued a lot about the origins of potato chips. Many people believe that Belgian fishermen first made “French fries” during the lean winter months when there were not enough fish. The potatoes were cut into an oblong shape, resembling the shape of small fish.



BELGIUM

Belgium, or as it is officially known, the Kingdom of Belgium, is a small country in western Europe. It is neighboured by the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and France. It is a very interesting country in many ways, not least because its capital, Brussels, is the seat of the European Union. Belgium has only slightly more inhabitants than Hungary (11.5 million), but it has three official languages. The Flemish people there speak a dialect of Dutch, the Walloons speak French and those living near the German border speak German.

The very thin kind of potato chip so familiar today, also known as straw fries, was popularised around the world by American fast-food restaurants. French fries were once considered to be a sophisticated dish in America. Two hundred years ago, they were served to the US President Thomas Jefferson at the White House, the official residence of the US President in Washington. Nowadays, on average, people in the United States eat 13 kilograms of French fries annually. That's the equivalent of at least sixty large portions. How many French fries do you think you eat each year?

CRISPED POTATOES

There is a legend about the invention of chips – or “crisps” as they are called in Britain – which, although it may not be true, you may come across in many places. It is said that in 1853, Cornelius Vanderbilt, a millionaire railway and shipping magnate, repeatedly sent back his dinner at a New York hotel because he thought the potatoes were cut too thickly. The chef was so infuriated that he ended up slicing the potatoes really thinly, thus creating the first potato crisps. However, it was not until the 1920s that the potato peeler and modern packaging were invented. Potato chips were wrapped in waxed paper bags which were sealed with a hot iron. An American businessman, Herman Lay, quickly began to sell the freshly packaged crisps from the boot of his car, and from there the product rapidly spread across America and the rest of the world.



COCOA and CHOCOLATE

You have seen the wide variety of food that humankind owes to the discovery of America. Just like a life without tomato sauce, a life without chocolate or cocoa is really hard to imagine. Cocoa is another native of the Americas that is at home in the rainforests of Central and South America, where it is warm enough for it to survive.

Whipping cream

Sugar

Milk



HABTEJSZÍN



CUKOR



TEJ



KAKAO

Cocoa



The cocoa fruit is a funny looking plant, you probably wouldn't recognise it if you saw it! It is roughly the size and shape of a cantaloupe melon, but a bit longer. Or maybe it is more like a tubby cucumber. It is usually a yellow colour, but it can also be red or brown. However, unlike melons and cucumbers, they grow on huge trees rather than on the ground. The brown cocoa beans that lie inside the fruit most closely resemble almonds. It is this



bean that was roasted, ground

into powder, and then boiled in water to make the thick, fatty, drinking chocolate that was first drunk by the indigenous people. They thought of it as the food of

the gods!



Unlike tomatoes and potatoes, which were thought to be poisonous for a long time, cocoa instantly became an expensive delicacy in Europe. People even paid for it in gold. In fact, in Europe they also adopted the names used by the indigenous people, cocoa and chocolate (xocolat) which are Inca words.

The first chocolate factory opened in Spain as early as 1580. Cocoa became increasingly popular, and because it is easy to grow in warm climates.



Cocoa trees were planted in Africa and Australia. Nowadays, more cocoa is produced in Africa than America. But cocoa trees can also be seen in Europe, for example at the Budapest Botanic Gardens or the Vácrátót Botanical Gardens.

Have you ever tasted cocoa powder on its own? Not the sugared, instant version, of course, but the real thing. If you haven't, you might be surprised to find that it is not sweet at all, in fact it is bitter! Until recently, what was called chocolate was bitter cocoa milk, and for centuries that was consumed with spices rather than sugar. While it didn't taste great, it was soon recognised as being very nutritious because of the fat and vitamins it contained! In Europe, they discovered that when flavoured with honey it was really delicious!

Sugar was largely unknown at that time and very expensive, so honey was the only sweetener. Solid chocolate was only produced much later. For one thing, that needed sugar, and for another, modern machinery was needed to mould the ground cocoa into blocks. It was a Swiss chocolate maker who discovered how to use milk to soften the otherwise bitter cocoa, but

only after another Swiss entrepreneur, Henri Nestlé, had invented milk powder. No wonder then that the world's most famous milk chocolate is from Switzerland, it is its home country, after all. Good quality chocolate is expensive because the process is slow and complicated.



SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is in western Europe and is even smaller than Hungary. Bern is its capital. It has four official languages: French, Italian, German and Romansh. It's no coincidence that milk chocolate was invented in Switzerland because a lot of cows live in the Swiss Alps. The typical Alpine landscape has green hillsides sprinkled with cattle. Not many crops will grow in the mountains. However, the favourite food of cows is fresh green grass, which grows well in the mountain pastures. It's no surprise then that another of Switzerland's most famous products is cheese.

SUGAR

Sugar, which was for a very long time one of the most expensive delicacies, is required as well as milk to make chocolate delicious. Sugar is difficult to produce and sugar cane, the raw material it is made from, only grows in warm climates. For a long time in Europe, the only available sweetener was honey, and people wondered why sugar didn't require bees to make it. It was such a precious commodity that it was viewed as a medicine. We have talked a lot about how many plants came to Europe from America, but for sugar



cane the journey was the other way around. Quickly, a lot of sugar cane was grown in Central America. Just the same, sugar remained very expensive. It has been just two hundred years since it was realised that it is much easier to make sugar from beet. Sugar beet are obviously not the same as carrots: they are much larger and white in colour. However, unlike sugar cane, they grow very well in Europe. Sugar consumption increased with the spread of beet sugar. Two hundred years ago, people in Hungary consumed just under half a kilo of sugar annually; today, it is more than forty kilos. Imagine forty packets of sugar next to each other! Seems like a lot, doesn't it?



WHITE CHOCOLATE?

White chocolate is not really chocolate at all because it has no cocoa powder in it, but cocoa butter is used! So, it is also made from cocoa, but only from the fat extracted from the cocoa bean, which is a light white colour something like butter. Cocoa is a very fatty plant, and the chocolate is made by separating the light fat and the brown powder.



making CHOCOLATE

STEP 1: The cocoa pods are harvested from the trees.

STEP 2: The cocoa beans are not immediately removed from the pods, the fruit is left to stand for a while, which gives it a much more delicate flavour.

STEP 3: The cocoa beans are removed and left to dry in the sun for 1-2 weeks.

STEP 4: The cocoa beans are then roasted.

STEP 5: Like walnuts, the cocoa beans are then broken into pieces and ground. After the grinding, the paste is pressed and the cocoa butter is extracted, leaving the cocoa paste.

STEP 6: Sugar and milk is added to the mixture.

STEP 7: The mixture needs to be ground, stirred, and heated several times in order to make the chocolate silky. It is then put into a mould and left to cool. If it gets warm it will melt again!

