

# YUMMY NORTHWEST

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## Chill Out

What do you think about when you consider ice?

Is it what keeps your drinks cold in summer, or the scary stuff that makes driving unpleasant in winter? Do you have a freezer full of frozen food? Are cold desserts—ice cream, sorbets, frozen cheesecake—the only way to end a meal?

Learn more about how frozen food came to be part of our lives in this cool issue.

## A chilling history

In New York in 1923 Clarence Birdseye began putting together the system he envisioned for making frozen food to sell to the public. According to the story, he had seen people in the Arctic preserving fish by placing it in barrels filled with sea water and letting it freeze.

No one is able to exactly pinpoint who invented the frozen dinner, but the first packaged meals laid out in small compartments on a tray were created by Maxson Food Systems in 1945 to use on airplanes. By the 1950s, the idea of frozen meals was really taking off—most successfully marketed by C.A. Swanson & Son—just in time to enjoy in front of the family television set.

But Elizabeth David in her posthumously published book, "Harvest of the Cold Months: The Social History of Ice and Ices," describes a fascination with frozen food that goes way back into the mists of history.

The earliest icehouses are believed to have been built along the Euphrates River around 4,000 BC to preserve ice found in



## Some cold facts

Approximately 6 million square miles—or 10 percent of its land surface—is covered with ice. This ice plays an important role in the earth's weather patterns.

An ice cream headache is officially called sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia.

Ice becomes less dense as it cools below 40 degrees Fahrenheit, which is why ice cubes float in your cold drink.

Frozen foods can be more nutritious than fresh. As fruits or vegetables sit around after they are picked, they lose nutrients. If they are frozen immediately after harvest, there is minimal loss of nutrients.

Temperature can affect your appetite: you are more likely to be hungry if you're cold.

If you want clear ice cubes, boil distilled water, let it cool, and make the cubes as small as possible.

nearby mountains. This custom was subsequently picked up by the Chinese, Greeks, Romans, Spanish, Italians, and French, and ice became an item of trade in the 1400s.

Of course only the most wealthy could afford the benefits of this perishable item. Servants were specifically assigned to maintain the icehouse and keep its contents usable.

Some ancient icehouses still remain and range from pits dug in the ground to elaborate brick structures filled with hay.

Because of the prevailing preference for warm drinks, it took a long time for Europeans to learn to enjoy cold beverages; the Italians were the first to prefer icy drinks. But once this hurdle was passed, inventing creative culinary ways to use ice really took off. In David's book you can see drawings of immense and extravagant edibles carved from ice or created by using new methods of freezing.

In America, ice was collected in winter from frozen ponds in the northern areas and stored for year-round use.

In 1850, Alexander Twining received a patent for a refrigeration machine that could create 2,000 pounds of ice every 24 hours. Unfortunately, he built it in Ohio, near sources of natural ice, where local wags, according to David, asked "what was wrong with God's ice?" His business failed after six years.

In the Southern United States, however, an ice-making facility was a desirable necessity, and so during the Civil War—when ice from the North was not available—a Frenchman was invited to create one, which turned out to be successful.

The railroad helped spread machine-made ice throughout the country so that in the late 1800s it became what Mark Twain called (in "Life on the Mississippi") "jewelry" that once only the rich could afford but that now everyone could have. He also described the Southern production of decorative ice blocks that contained whole floral bouquets frozen within.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, a few homes had ice boxes that stored blocks of ice to keep food cold. Another French inventor found a way to put electric refrigeration into homes, although the first models were extremely expensive. In 1927 General Electric began selling a popular top-cooled electric model. Freezer compartments began appearing in the 1940s, although some earlier models had a place for an ice cube tray.

In 1928, an American inventor devised a rubber ice cube tray. Then in 1933, the first flexible metal ice cube tray was invented.

Thus ice became a household item.

## Types of ice

From **polar ice caps** to a single **snowflake**, ice comes in many sizes and appears in many forms.

**Icicles** form when water drips and refreezes. **Rime** is a kind of condensation that forms on cold objects when the temperature dips. You can see soft-looking **feather ice** when it gets very, very cold—below -20 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Dry ice** is the solid form of carbon dioxide. It isn't really ice, but it can be used to keep food cold. But be cautious: handle dry ice with gloves, and do not put it in an ice chest (it might explode).

**Black ice** forms without air bubbles, making it transparent. On the black asphalt of roads, particularly bridges, this can create a hazard for motorists. On walkways and rocky surfaces, the term for this type of clear ice is **verglas**.

Growth of ice on the ocean surface begins with a newly formed thin layer. Types of this newly formed ice include: **frazil**, **grease**, **nilas**, **pancake**, and **slush**. To see photos of these types, go to



## Fruit ice

The early sherbets created in Turkey, Persia, and India were in fact cold fruit syrups diluted with water. No one knows when exactly the idea of a more solid form took hold.

Today's sherbet contains dairy products. Dairy-free fruit ice is a simple dessert that generally uses only four ingredients: water, fruit juice, sugar, and lemon juice. It is best made and served the same day.

If you prefer an icy dessert, called *gelato*, less stirring is required. To make a *sorbet*, which is smoother and might include egg whites, stir more often.

### Banana-Pineapple Sorbet

Combine 3/4 cup crushed pineapple and 1/3 cup powdered sugar. Add 3/4 cup mashed bananas (about 1 large), 1/4 cup orange juice, and 3 tablespoons lemon juice.

Place in the freezer in a flat container and freeze until slushy. Then add 2 egg whites (or the equivalent in the dried form, rehydrated) and mix in a food processor or with a handmixer. Freeze again until firm and mix again. Serve immediately.

You can also put this mixture in an ice cream maker, following directions for ice cream.

Makes about 2 cups.

Adapted from "The Joy of Cooking," by Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker and "Cookwise," by Shirley O. Corriher.

[http://www.gl.alaska.edu/~eicken/he\\_teach/GEOS615icenom/form/types.html](http://www.gl.alaska.edu/~eicken/he_teach/GEOS615icenom/form/types.html). Large manmade ice structures include **ice hotels**. Yes, these really exist and are inhabitable in the cold winter climate of Scandinavia. They are of course temporary, disappearing when warm weather appears.

A talented ice sculpture can create a full-size bar made from ice to use for serving drinks at a party. With this at hand, your cold drinks won't get warm while you and your guests celebrate.

Ice developed for industrial use includes **flaked ice**, which is produced in mass quantities for industrial use, such as keeping food fresh during transport or in supermarkets, and **block ice**, which is produced in block ice plants for industrial cooling and for when large amounts of ice are required, such as ice sculptures.

Edible ice includes **ice cubes** and **crushed ice**, which can be produced at home for beverages.

## Well-kneaded tip

Just before kneading bread, add 1/4 cup of crushed ice. According to Shirley O. Corriher ("Cookwise"), this helps the gluten develop better, creating a more tender crumb.

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"They ate frozen meat, frozen fried potatoes, and frozen peas. Blindfolded, one could not have identified the peas, and the only flavor the potatoes had was the flavor of soap. It was the monotonous fare of the besieged . . . but . . . where was the enemy?"

— John Cheever, American author

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## About Yummy Northwest

Each monthly issue highlights an edible delight available in the Pacific Northwest and Montana.

## Contact the editor

Comments, corrections, topic ideas, and submissions are all most welcome at [Yummy\\_Northwest@hotmail.com](mailto:Yummy_Northwest@hotmail.com). View archives at [yummynorthwest.com](http://yummynorthwest.com).