

YUMMY NORTHWEST

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YOU COULD HAVE FOOLED ME!

I know I really can't fool you intelligent Yummy readers, but let's have some fun this month.

What food has provided more fun than animal crackers? Celebrate their special day this month by playfully eating some.

No one is quite sure how the first of April got its fun-loving reputation, but it seems likely that it began when the Gregorian calendar was adopted in the 16th century. Folks in the countryside didn't know about the change or that the new year now began on January 1. They continued traditional new year celebrations for eight days in the spring, ending with April 1.

Educated people made fun of this ignorance, and eventually anyone who did something ridiculous was called an April fool. It became fun to try to make others think something false was true on April 1.

Coming into the present day, almost everyone, including the media, has tried to fool someone on April 1. Out of an abundance of food-related pranks reported on the Internet come the following gems.

Grow Your Own Pasta (1957)

The BBC story about pasta harvests caused great excitement. On the April 1 *Panorama* TV show, footage was shown of happy Swiss peasant women picking spaghetti from trees. Years of careful cultivation resulted in the uniform length of the strands, the announcer explained. Though there had been trouble with a spaghetti weevil, harvests were back to normal in 1957. Hundreds of viewers called to ask where they could view the harvest or

National Animal Crackers Day April 18



Lions and Tigers and Koala Bears, Oh My!

Though not native to the Pacific Northwest, animal crackers have probably been enjoyed by everyone who lives here.

These small shortbread cookies have many guises, but the ones in the circus wagon box with the string handle are the most popular.

In 2002, Barnum's Animal Crackers, made by Nabisco, celebrated a century of fun eats.

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where they could buy a tree for their own gardens. Eager gardeners were told that some people had buried cans of spaghetti with sauce with great success.

Candy to Feed an Empire (1994)

British ads showcased a new Mars Bar (the equivalent of a Milky Way bar in America) called the Emperor. It was said to weigh 32 pounds, for sale one day, only on April 1.

Taco Liberty Bell (1996)

The Taco Bell Corp. announced it had purchased the Liberty Bell and was renaming it the Taco Liberty Bell. U.S. citizens were understandably upset until the company admitted it was a joke. Getting into the spirit of the occasion, then White House press secretary Mike McCurry responded to questions about the sale by saying that the Lincoln Memorial had also been sold and would thereafter be called the Ford Lincoln Mercury Memorial.

Left-Handed Whoppers (1998)

Burger King announced it was selling a Whopper hamburger for left-handed eaters. It had the same ingredients as regular Whoppers, but the toppings were rotated 180 degrees so they would not squish out from the right side of the bun. Thousands of customers asked for it on April 1, while others wanted to know if there was a version for right-handed folks.

Case of the Whistling Carrot (2002)

The British supermarket chain Tesco claimed it was selling a newly developed carrot with air holes, which meant that when the carrot was perfectly cooked, it whistled, like a kettle letting the cook know when the water was boiling.



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Over the years, 53 kinds of animals have found a home in the circus wagon box. The koala bear was the latest addition in 2002. The public voted for the koala while rejecting a penguin, a walrus, and a cobra.

Before 1902, animal-shaped cookies ("animal biscuits") were imported to America from England. American bakeries adapted the design, calling them "animals," "zoologicals," or "circus crackers."

The National Biscuit Company, later known as Nabisco, made and distributed the cookies nationally. The string on the box was added so it could be hung on a Christmas tree.

The commercial popularity of animal cookies in both Britain and the United States began in 1889 when Barnum and Bailey toured England with their immense American circus. But although the Nabisco brand is called Barnum's, he was not responsible for its name and never got any royalties.

Many companies make their own imaginative animal-shaped cookies.

The version made by Mother's Cookies is drenched in white or pink icing (at Christmas the colors change to red and green) and covered with colored sprinkles.

These seem sickeningly sweet to adult palates and specific animal shapes are difficult to distinguish under the icing layer. But they are made by a California company that maintains its independence despite now being owned by a large corporation. Distribution is limited to only a few Western states, including Washington and Oregon, so the company can keep an eye on quality.

Another company uses its zoological shapes to raise money for animal welfare. Barbara's Bakery in Petaluma, Calif., gives a portion of its profits to help the Audubon Society care for puffins and to support the National Wildlife Refuge Association. Barbara's Animal Cookies and Snackimals are made with natural, organic ingredients, including a wheat-free variety.

Occasionally, local products are sold at stores such as Made In Washington (they



Animal Crackers

by Christopher Morley

Animal crackers and cocoa to drink,
That is the finest of suppers I think;
When I'm grown up and can have what I please
I think I shall always insist upon these.

What do YOU choose when you're offered a treat?

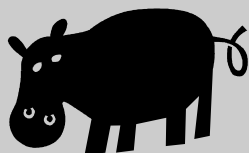
When Mother says, "What would you like best to eat?"

Is it waffles and syrup, or cinnamon toast?

It's cocoa and animals that I love most!

The kitchen's the cosiest place that I know;
The kettle is singing, the stove is aglow,
And there in the twilight, how jolly to see
The cocoa and animals waiting for me.

Daddy and Mother dine later in state,
With Mary to cook for them, Susan to wait;
But they don't have nearly as much fun as I
Who eat in the kitchen with Nurse standing by;
And Daddy once said, he would like to be me
Having cocoa and animals once more for tea!



have had cookies shaped like salmon) and Made In Oregon.

What can you do with animal crackers besides eat them plain with cocoa or milk? Make the **Zoo Cake** that appeared in the 1957 "Betty Crocker's Cook Book for Boys and Girls." Betty's recipe calls for dipping animal cookies in chocolate and placing them on the sides and top of an iced cake. Build a fence with gumdrops, and you've got the delicious animals right where you want them.

Speaking of chocolate-dipped animal cookies, Cadbury's has their own delicious version. It's only sold in Britain, but look for it online or start asking for it at your local store and maybe someone will order it for you.

Chocolate Clay

Make sure kids know they can't always eat clay – but they certainly can eat this stuff.

10 ounces of chocolate (chopped chunks or chips)
1/3 cup light corn syrup

Melt the chocolate in a microwave. Or place the chocolate in the top of a double broiler over hot water and stir until melted.

When the chocolate is melted, add the corn syrup and blend. Pour the mixture onto waxed paper or parchment paper.

Spread the chocolate until it's about 1/2-inch thick. Cover loosely with waxed paper or parchment paper and let it rest for at least a couple hours or overnight. The chocolate will become very pliable.

About Yummy Northwest

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