

CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF ENRICHMENT

Bread is one of the world's oldest foods as well as a staple in households across the globe. The modern history of bread begins with the creation of the first sandwich in the late 18th century. Today's enrichment of flour plays a vital role in America's health and well being, dramatically reducing diseases caused by vitamin deficiencies. Here we celebrate the 70th anniversary of flour enrichment with a look back at its history.

Not wanting to put down his poker hand during his marathon gambling sessions, John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich, begins ordering meat slices stuck between two pieces of bread. The tradition caught on, with the name Sandwich attached.

1762

The first electric toaster, known as the D-12, is developed by General Electric.

1909

Commercially packaged sliced bread comes to market.

1928

The American Medical Association's Council of Foods and Nutrition and Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry issues a statement supporting fortification of staple foods, like flours, with vitamins to combat deficiency-related diseases. Bakers begin to voluntarily enrich bread with high-vitamin yeast.

1938

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) holds public hearings to gather information for developing standards of identity for flours. The term "enriched" is adopted as the descriptive term for the addition of nutrients to flour.

1940

The FDA issues a final rule to establish definitions and standards of identity for enriched & un-enriched flours to become active on January 1, 1942. After a National Nutrition Conference for Defense inaugurates the bread and flour enrichment programs, the American Bakers Association holds a symposium to educate bakers about the enrichment of flour and bread.

1941

Approximately 75-80% of flour and white bread produced in the US is voluntarily enriched with thiamin, niacin, iron and dry milk. The War Foods Administration issues War Food Order requiring enrichment of flour and white bread effective January 1943.

1942

Riboflavin enrichment of bread begins. The FDA revises the definitions and standards of identity for enriched flours to increase minimum fortification requirements to better meet the nutritional needs of low-income populations.

1943

The War Food Order requiring enrichment of flour and white bread is repealed but the Millers National Federation and the American Bakers Association continue practicing voluntary enrichment.

1946

Due to flour enrichment, pellagra death rates in the US Southern states drops to 0.5 per 100,000 people (down from 10.5 in 1933).

1949

The FDA issues a policy statement that gives general guidelines for food manufacturers to follow when enriching their products.

1980

The Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA) is signed into law establishing federal enrichment standards. NLEA prevents states from having standards of identity for enriched products that are not identical to federal standards.

1990

The FDA amends standards of identity of enriched grain products to include folic acid to increase intake in women of childbearing age for the prevention of some birth defects.

1996

Folic acid fortification of enriched grains begins January 1.

1998

The low-carb craze reaches its peak, making bread a nutritional scapegoat.

2000s

The Grain Foods Foundation is formed to educate Americans on the importance of including grains and bread in a healthy diet.

2004

The tenth anniversary of the FDA's folic acid fortification mandate. Since the FDA required fortification of enriched grains, the number of babies born in the US with neural-tube birth defects has declined by 26 percent.

2008

The grain industry celebrates the 70th anniversary of the enrichment of flour. Since 1941 more than 150,000 Americans have avoided potentially fatal diseases such as beriberi and pellagra.

2011

