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EXHIBIT SHOWCASES GOVERNMENT'S EFFECT ON THE AMERICAN DIET



During December, take a trip to the National Archives in Washington, DC to view the exhibit *What's Cooking, Uncle Sam. The Government's Effect on the American Diet*. This groundbreaking exhibit explores the nation's love affair with, fear of, and obsession with food. While sightseeing in the nation's capitol, I toured the exhibit and was captivated to learn more about the Federal government's efforts, successes and failures to change our eating habits.

Food-related holdings of the National Archives are tastefully presented in this exploration of the government's role in the American approach to food. *What's Cooking Uncle Sam?* is free and open to the public, and will be on display in the Lawrence F. O'Brien Gallery through January 3, 2012. The exhibition was created by the staff of the National Archives Experience with support from the Foundation for the National Archives.

The Government's efforts have led to unexpected consequences, dismal failures and life-saving successes. Records trace the origins of the programs and legislation aimed at ensuring that the American food supply is ample, safe and nutritious. The records also reflect the effects the government has had on our food choices and preferences. The exhibit conveys the desperate voices of depression-era farmers, and explains how the government got into the business of publishing recipes for ham shortcake and teaching homemakers to can peaches.

Dig into *What's Cooking, Uncle Sam?* to learn the fascinating history behind the government's involvement with food, and discover answers to the following:

- What made canned meat, ketchup and candy so dangerous at the time of the Industrial Revolution?
- Why did Frank Meyer, foreign plant explorer, go from the vast grasslands of Manchuria to the tiger-patrolled mountains of Siberia in search of new foods?
- What did President Lyndon Johnson serve at White House State dinners?
- Why some government volunteers were called the "Poison Squad"?
- How can donuts improve morale?
- What was Queen Elizabeth's recipe for scones?

What's Cooking, Uncle Sam? offers visitors the chance to examine letters, diaries, photos, maps, petitions, films, patents and proclamations from the food-related collection of the National Archives. Instead of a traditional chronological approach, the exhibition explores four broad themes: Farm, Factory, Kitchen and Table.

Farm—Government has had a profound effect on the way farms are run and what they produce. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) scoured the globe for new plant varieties, researched hybrid crops, distributed seeds to farmers and controlled the prices of farm commodities. Learn how programs and legislation transformed agriculture in America.

Factory—Government's attempts to ensure the safety of an industrialized food supply have changed the nature of foods, production methods, labeling and advertising. Public outcry over swill milk, rancid meat and substandard tea led to the Pure Food and Drug Act and the FDA. Food producers quickly capitalized on new regulations, touting their products as "pure," "enriched," and "unadulterated." See how the government embraced advances in food technologies, performed research on food production and secured patents for some of their methods.

Kitchen—As scientists made discoveries about nutrition, the government sought to change the eating habits of Americans. Most efforts aimed to reform the homemaker through nutrition education and cooking classes. The picture above shows the very first food group plan released in 1947. Since most Americans were underweight and many malnourished, the message was "In addition to the Basic Seven, eat any other foods you want!" Waistlines have certainly expanded since 1947. Today's citizens would go "hog wild" if told to eat any other foods you want and based on public health statistics many are doing exactly that!

Table—Although many of its overt attempts to change our diets were unsuccessful, the government did succeed in changing and homogenizing American tastes in other ways. Meals served to soldiers and schoolchildren instilled food habits and preferences that persist today. The diets and entertaining style of the Presidents and First Ladies were also influential, as many Americans wrote the White House for recipes and incorporated Presidential favorites into their family meals like the chili recipe.

What's Cooking, Uncle Sam?—related products—including a special exhibition catalogue, recipe books, apparel, and dishware — are for sale in the Archives Shop. The proceeds support educational programming and I could not resist buying the vintage magnets and book. Cookbook collectors will enjoy the **“Eating with Uncle Sam: Recipes and Historical Bites from the National Archives.”** It features over 150 historical and modern-day recipes from the collection at the National Archives, including a wide selection of regional favorites from each of the Presidential libraries. I have included two of the recipes.

The exhibit closes on January 3rd, so make plans to visit today. The National Archives is located on the National Mall on Constitution Avenue at 9th Street, NW. Exhibit Hall hours are 10 A.M. – 5:30 PM daily, except Thanksgiving and Christmas. Call 202-357-5300 or visit <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/whats-cooking/events/index.html> for more information.

MAMIE EISENHOWER'S MILLION DOLLAR FUDGE

This recipe appeared in *Who Says We Can't Cook?*, a spiral-bound collection of recipes published in 1955 by the Women's National Press Club of Washington, D.C.

4 1/2 cups sugar
Pinch of salt
2 Tablespoons butter
1 tall can evaporated milk (12 oz.)

Boil six minutes.
Put in large bowl:

12 ounces semi-sweet chocolate
12 ounces German sweet chocolate
1 pint marshmallow cream
2 cups nutmeats

Pour boiling syrup over ingredients in bowl: beat until chocolate is all melted and pour in pan. Let stand a few hours before cutting. Store in tin box.

LYNDON JOHNSON'S FAVORITE CHILI RECIPE (PEDERNALES RIVER CHILI)

Yields: 12 servings Prep time: 20 min Cook time: 1 hr

4 pounds coarsely ground beef (chili-grind)

1 large chopped onion

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon ground cumin

6 teaspoons chili powder

2 (16-ounce) cans tomatoes

Salt to taste

2 cups hot water

In a large frying pan, brown meat with onion and garlic until meat is lightly browned; transfer ingredients to a large kettle cast-iron Dutch oven.

Add oregano, cumin, chili powder, tomatoes, salt, and hot water. Bring just to a boil; lower heat and simmer, covered, for approximately 1 hour. Remove from heat. Skim off grease and serve. Serves 12.

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