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The Quick 10: The Birthplaces of 10 Great **American Foods** by Streeter Seidell - October 21, 2008 - 3:44 PM

We've compiled a list of all the foods you love, and all the places you need to thank for them. 1. Louis' Lunch, New Haven, Conn. The Hamburger There are competing claims for the coveted "Inventor of the

THE QUICK 10

Hamburger" title, but according to Louis' Lunch (and the Library of Congress, for that matter), this small New Haven restaurant takes the prize. The story goes something like this: One day in 1900, a rushed businessman asked owner Louis Lassen for something quick that he could eat on the run. Lassen cooked up a beef patty, put it between some bread, and sent the man on his way. Pretty modest beginnings for arguably the most popular sandwich of all-

time, huh? If you visit Louis' today, you'll find that not much has changed. The Lassen family still owns and operates the restaurant, the burgers are still cooked in ancient gas stoves, and, just like then, there is absolutely no ketchup allowed. 2. The ChipShop, Brooklyn, N.Y. The Fried Twinkie

Sometimes what counts isn't being the inventor, it's being the innovator. Take the fried Twinkie, for example. The Twinkie—in all its indestructible glory—has been around for ages, but when ChipShop owner Christopher Sell had the brilliant idea to freeze the snack, dip it in batter, and deep-fry it, the Twinkie took gluttony

to new heights. Even The New York Times raved about how "something magical" happens when you taste the deep-fried Twinkie's "luscious vanilla flavor." Sell, who was trained in classical England, he fried up everything from M&M's to Mars bars. 3. Myers Avenue Red Soda Co., Cripple Creek, Colo.

French cuisine, didn't start with the Twinkie, though. In his native **Root Beer Float** If you thought what happened up on Cripple Creek only happened in song, you're sorely mistaken. In August of 1893, a failed goldminer-turned-soda-company-owner named Frank J. Wisner was drinking a bottle of his Myers Avenue Red root beer while looking

up at Cow Mountain. Just then, a full moon illuminated the snowcap on the otherwise black mountain, and Wisner had a brilliant idea—float a scoop of vanilla ice cream in a glass of his root beer. The new drink was christened the "black cow" and became an instant classic. Today, of course, most of us call it a root beer float.

4. Cozy Dog Drive In, Springfield, III. **Corn Dogs** In 1946, Ed Waldmire, Jr., revolutionized the stick-meat world when he debuted the Cozy Dog—the first corn dog on a stick. At first, he wanted to call his creation the "Crusty Cur," but his wife convinced

him to change the name to "Cozy Dog." She felt people wouldn't want to eat something described as "crusty." Good call, Mrs. Waldmire. Shortly after the Cozy Dog's inception, the Cozy Dog 5. Lombardi's, New York City, N.Y.

Drive In opened alongside old Route 66 and has been serving up corn dogs ever since. The Pizzeria Pizza has existed in one form or another for a long time, but America got her first true pizzeria when Gennaro Lombardi opened

up a small grocery store in NYC's Little Italy. An employee named Anthony "Totonno" Pero started selling pizzas out of the back, and in no time, Lombardi's was concentrating on its burgeoning pizza business instead of plain old groceries. In 1905, the establishment

was licensed as a pizzeria, and it's stayed that way ever since.

Well, almost. The original restaurant closed in 1984 but reopened down the street 10 years later. On its 100th anniversary in 2005, Lombardi's decided to offer its pizza for the same price it'd been sold for in 1905—5 cents a pie. Needless to say, the line wrapped around the block.

contains, you'll understand why it's truly a work of inspired genius. Since 1979, Rutgers University has played host to a collection of mobile food vans collectively known as the "Grease Trucks." Originally, they served a sandwich called the Fat Cat, which contained two cheeseburger patties, French fries, lettuce, tomato, and onions. Then one night in 1997, a hungry (and broke) student named Darrell W. Butler convinced one of the vendors to put chicken fingers, mozzarella sticks, French fries, and marinara sauce on a sandwich. Strangely, the concoction sounded so appetizing that the

6. R.U. Hungry, New Brunswick, N.J.

The Fat Darrell

7. Pat's King Of Steaks, Philadelphia, Pa. **Philly Cheesesteak**

8. Brown Derby, Los Angeles, Calif.

Cobb Salad

Robert H. Cobb, owner of the Brown Derby restaurant in Los Angeles. Late one night in 1937, Cobb and his friend, Sid Grauman (owner of the famous Grauman's Chinese Theatre), were rooting around in the Derby kitchen looking for a snack. Cobb essentially grabbed whatever was left in the fridge, chopped it all up, and prepared a salad. Grauman came by the next day and ordered himself a "Cobb salad." Word spread quickly (this was Hollywood, after all), and soon it became the landmark restaurant's signature dish. 9. Pig Stand, Dallas, Texas **Onion Rings** According to most sources, the onion ring was invented when a careless cook at a Pig Stand location in Dallas accidentally dropped

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10. Melrose Inn, Prospect, Ky.

Derby Pie

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Editor's Note: This piece originally appeared in mental floss magazine.

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...and now, for always being sunny.

Omaha, NE. Nebraska is also the birthplace of Jello and Kool-Aid.

How could you forget Potato Chips? Invented in Saratoga, NY in 1853. wikipedia.org/wiki/Potato_chips late-night cheesesteak cravings. and w00t indeed to spatz. streeter. good work.

Sorry David, the corn dog is purely a Texan invention. It was made first in 1942 (four years before yours was), when two brothers didn't have any buns to put their hot dogs in. They dipped them in corn bread and has the best corn dogs ever! Francisco).

Oh, and speaking of PA, what about Primanti Brothers and their sandwiches topped with fries? chocolate bars to pizza is also why Scotland has the worst record for heart disease in Europe :-(

Now located in boston, God could I use a fat darrel. Illinois?? Get a rope!!

The corn dog was invented at the Texas State Fair in Dallas in 1941. Every Texan knows that. Springfield, posted by <u>Alice</u> on <u>10-22-2008 at 10:51 am</u> Having lived in New Haven for a couple of years, I worked right around the corner from Louis' Lunch. They definitely have pride in tradition, but I am sad to report that I wasn't very impressed with the burger. The posted by **Lori** on <u>10-22-2008 at 11:21 am</u> I can't believe the French Dip didn't make this list of 10 Great American Foods. That and the Ceaser Salad

in Philly, it's eat. Winning sports championships...now that's another thing! posted by **erin** on <u>10-22-2008 at 2:19 pm</u>

I second the disbelief that Philippe's french dip is not on the list. @BKReporter, Nope they are all closed down, unfortunately. Very sad, my brothers used to own a them one summer.

The inventors name was Kulakofsky, which doesn't sound all that irish to me. Actually This is the inventor of the Hamburger, nearly 20 years before your "Inventor". having a serious challenger to the title of inventing the hamburger. According to the McDonald's hamburger chain the inventor was an unknown food vendor at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. Newspaper columnist, Texas historian, and restaurateur Frank X. Tolbert said that this food vendor was Fletcher Davis. Davis operated a café at 115 Tyler Street on the north side of the courthouse square in Athens, Texas, in the late 1880s. Local lore holds that Davis was selling an unnamed sandwich of ground beef at his lunch counter at that time. During the 1980s Dairy Queen ran a commercial filmed in Athens, calling the town the

How could anyone leave out chocolate chip cookies? Streeter Seidell hates America!

batter, deep fried them, and gave birth to a classic. The Fletcher family stand is still at the Texas State Fair, posted by **LeeLee** on <u>10-23-2008 at 11:47 am</u> You left out Toll-House cookies (I forget where), potato chips (Sarasota NY), and the ice cream cone (San posted by **Amy W.** on <u>10-26-2008 at 5:08 pm</u> why was it called a hamburger is it doesn't have ham in it posted by **bored** on 11-3-2008 at 6:56 pm

corn meal... The deep-fried Mars Bar is a Scottish, not an English invention – the habit of deep-frying everything from Phillipe's French Dip is (IMHO) merely a bastardization of that great Buffalo, NY sandwich, the Beef on Weck. Phillipe first worked in Buffalo before heading to LA, so it wouldn't be surprising if he got the idea of dipping a roast beef sandwich in au just from the Beef on Weck which was already popular in Buffalo when he worked there.

birthplace of the hamburger.

posted by **Zach** on 10-22-2008 at 10:34 am

posted by **Adam** on <u>10-22-2008 at 10:02 am</u>

posted by **Kelly J** on <u>10-22-2008 at 7:51 am</u> posted by **Alan** on <u>10-22-2008 at 8:07 am</u> Does anyone know if the Pig Stand is open. The last I heard the government shut the chain down because posted by **BKReporter** on 10-22-2008 at 8:22 am

The potato chip was invented in 1853 by chef George w. Crumb in Saratoga Springs NY. articles from Streeter!!!

Woot. posted by **dooflotchie** on 10-21-2008 at 9:11 pm posted by **Cathy b.** on <u>10-22-2008 at 4:58 am</u>

What? Just WOOT!?! Streeter deserves more than just a woot!!! I adore him! Can't wait for some flossy What about Buffalo Wings???!!! I can't believe that wasn't mentioned.

the owner failed to pay his taxes. As a former Texan though, I really miss it. "Philadelphia is known for many things (Ben Franklin, the Liberty Bell, and Rocky, for starters)"

I'm glad the Fat Darrel was mentioned, a favorite of mine as I'm from Jersey.

stoves or ovens in which they cook the burger are pretty cool though! (which was either created in San Diego or Tijuana Mexico). Check the Wiki Pages for both of them for more information.

Not to be picky, but Philly has its fair share of fine dining, including Le Bec-Fin, one of the most highly rated restaurants in America. Just because it's known for cheesesteaks doesn't mean the city can't do high-end cuisine. I have to agree with MF and as a Pittsburgh native I hate Philly, but it has the most BYOB's in the country. The food is truly amazing. Of course, nothing beats Pat's, whiz wit, but still! If there's one thing they can do

posted by **bhp** on <u>10-22-2008 at 3:45 pm</u> I'm so proud to have lived 2 blocks from the grease trucks *heaven!* and now 2 blocks from Pats King of Steaks... If you are ever in New Brunswick, I recommend the Fat Bitch. *they had a Fat Dyke, but some found that offensive, word is they'll still make it for you if you ask posted by **Morgan** on <u>10-22-2008 at 6:37 pm</u> I'm not surprised, but I am a little disappointed that the Reuben didn't make the top 10.

posted by **Matt** on <u>10-22-2008 at 7:15 pm</u> The cheeseburger was invented in Pasadena, CA in the 1920's. Do a wiki search for cheeseburger. Caesar Salad was invented in Tijuana Nachos were invented in Mexico, but right on the Texas border. home of the Prairie Heart Center.

when I wrote this.

Honestly, I don't care WHERE corn dogs came from! I *love* them so much...:) Growing up in Muskogee, we had a little 'store' in our mall food court that was simply called "Corn Dog". ha! And the corn dogs were enormous and so very very tasty. *sigh* No corn dogs in NZ, though, sad to say. The hot dogs aren't much to speak of, and I haven't even seen

documented was that the Unitarian minister in Ithaca, NY invented it with a drug store owner who couldn't sell ice cream sodas on Sunday because of blue laws, so they made them without the soda – just ice cream, flavored syrup, and topped with whipped cream. Comment Name (required) Mail (will not be published) (required) Website

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Might have been in Texas or New Mexico, I'm not sure. the way Robert Cobb made it for Sid. \$hit-faced drunk at 2am in New Brunswick. Martha: According to Wikipedia and general lore, nachos were invented in Mexico, in a border town just across from Texas for a group of hungry Army wives, and were named for the chef creator. Considering the story, the creation was probably a little looser than you may think, but who knows. "Streeter Seidell will be contributing occasional articles to the mental_floss blog. Get excited."

posted by Eric McWilliams on 10-22-2008 at 1:03 pm posted by MF on 10-22-2008 at 1:45 pm

This "Irish Classic" of corned beef, saurkraut, swiss cheese, and thousand island dressing was founded in posted by **pizzadough** on 10-22-2008 at 7:02 pm Fletcher Davis late 1880s, Athens, Texas. In 1974, The New York Times ran a story about Louis' Lunch

posted by **Bryan** on 10-22-2008 at 9:44 pm I am so happy that I grew up (and still live) 20 minutes from south philly. (sup, delaware?) Nothing can beat posted by **Laura** on 10-22-2008 at 11:30 pm posted by **Mike** on <u>10-23-2008 at 6:59 am</u> I didn't include stuff like potato chips and buffalo wings because MF had already published pieces on them posted by **Streeter** on <u>10-23-2008 at 9:07 am</u>

> posted by **Dawn** on <u>11-13-2008 at 12:18 am</u> posted by Chinese Food on 9-8-2009 at 10:41 am posted by **Cy Guy** on <u>4-29-2010 at 10:03 pm</u>

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Philadelphia is known for many things (Ben Franklin, the Liberty Bell, and Rocky, for starters), but fine dining is not really its forte. That's OK, though, because Philly is the home of Pat's King of Steaks, and Pat's King of Steaks is where the Philly cheesesteak was born. One day back in 1932, hot dog stand owners Pasquale (Pat) and Harry Olivieri decided to change things up and make a steak sandwich with onions. A cab driver who ate at Pat's daily insisted on trying the new sandwich, and with the first bite declared, "Hey, forget 'bout those hot dogs, you should sell these!" Cab drivers know fast food about as well as anyone, so the brothers did just what the cabbie suggested. In no time, the modest stand turned into the Pat's that exists today. Controversy remains, however, over who's responsible for putting the cheese in cheesesteak. Pat's claims it was the first to do so (in 1951), but across-the-street rival Joe Vento of Geno's Steaks (opened 1966) insists he added the finishing touches.

Let's face it; most salads are wimpy little affairs meant for nothing

course. Not the mighty Cobb, though. With lettuce, eggs, bacon,

chicken, avocado, tomatoes, chives, watercress, Roquefort cheese, and a special dressing, the Cobb salad is not your traditional salad (or a healthy one, either). The man responsible for the concoction is

more than occupying your mouth while you wait for the main

You may not know what the Fat Darrell is, but when you hear what it

next 10 people in line ordered it, and the Fat Darrell became a mainstay at the Grease Trucks. Hey, not any old sandwich gets to be named Maxim

magazine's top "Meat Hog" sandwich.

drive-in, inventing Texas toast, and being one of the first restaurants to advertise using neon signs. Not bad for a little outfit from Texas. A Kentucky favorite, derby pie is a chocolate and walnut tart with a pastry-dough crust—and that's about all we know about it. Why? Because the recipe is jealously guarded by the Kern family. Melrose Inn manager George Kern created derby pie in the mid-1950s with help from his parents, Walter and Leaudra, and the dessert was such a hit that the family was soon baking the treat full-time. In fact, Mrs. Kern, being the crafty monopolist she was, copyrighted the name, and to this day, you can only get real "Derby-Pie®" through Kern's Kitchen, Inc. Not only that, but a man from New England once handed Leaudra a blank check for the recipe so that his daughter could make the pie at home. She refused.

an onion slice in some batter, then pulled it out and tossed it in the fryer for lack of a better destination. Now, you'd think inventing the onion ring would be enough for one restaurant chain, but not Pig

Stand. The company also lays claim to opening America's first

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posted by **n2y2** on <u>10-21-2008 at 4:14 pm</u>

posted by **Josh** on <u>10-21-2008 at 4:36 pm</u>

posted by **Martha** on <u>10-21-2008 at 5:36 pm</u>

posted by **ESJ** on <u>10-21-2008 at 6:39 pm</u>

posted by **Lelah** on <u>10-21-2008 at 7:38 pm</u>

posted by **Random** on <u>10-21-2008 at 8:19 pm</u>

I'm an

1 Trick of a tiny belly: Cut down a bit of your belly every day by using this 1 weird old tip. Root Beer float was originally called the Black Cow? Arbys used serve a milk-shake called a Black Cow – my favorite shake ever. It was root beer flavored; that name makes sense now.

When I was a kid, I loved "purple cows" during the summers in Cape Cod. It was a grape soda float, and

now I know where the name came from. I'd be interested in how the history of the nacho is handled. Supposedly it was created as a much less casual dish than we get today. Each chip was individually arranged (?) and baked, more like hors d'ourves. At Disney's Brown Derby restaurant in Disney World (a re-creation of the original Brown Derby), the waiters tell a different story. Supposedly, Sid Grauman had just had some dental work done, and he wanted something that tasted good but which wasn't hard. Most Cobb Salads aren't this way, but at the Disney Brown Derby (and, they say, at the original), the ingredients are diced and mixed together because that's I assure you, Fat Darrells and any other Fat Cat sandwiches are really only extremely good when you are

I have not seen an Arbys that had it on the menu for years.

posted by OkayNoodle on 10-22-2008 at 2:36 pm business right across from one in downtown San Antonio, where the original Pig Stand (a little building actually shaped like a pig) currently resides. I miss walking across the street for lunch when I worked with

posted by **<u>iamesey</u>** on <u>10-22-2008 at 7:44 pm</u> The corn dog was Springfield Illinois. Our three claims to fame are the corn dog, The nation's first drive up window at a Maid Rite and the Horseshoe sandwich (Toast topped with meat, usually hamburger or deep fried chicken, topped with fries and cheese sauce). Knowing this it might not suprise you that we are also posted by **David Baker** on 10-22-2008 at 8:17 pm

Also left out, the Ice Cream Sundae, which while there are competing claims to its invention, the most well

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