

ALL ABOUT MUSTARD

*Barry Levenson, Founder & Curator
National Mustard Museum*

Mustard is the oldest complex condiment known. No one is sure who first used mustard to flavor foods but mustard seeds have been found in tombs of the ancient pharaohs. Also, the ancient Romans used mustard seeds in some of their sauces but these sauces were not known as “mustard.” The condiment mustard as we know it today, made from mustard seeds in combination with some liquid (water, vinegar, beer, wine, etc.) dates back to at least the 14th century.

The earliest reference to mustard in the Dijon region of France dates back to 1336, but we can assume that the early monks of Dijon had developed the art of mustard making many years before that. The ruling leaders of France enacted strict laws to govern the methods for making mustard and the ingredients allowed in its manufacture. Even today, French law regulates the making of mustard; only the brown or black seed is permitted in the manufacture of what may be called “Dijon” mustard. The French have brought mustard making to new culinary heights over the years. For many, Dijon mustard is the standard against which all mustards are measured.

Not all French mustards are Dijon mustards. For example, the mustards of “Meaux,” made only about 60 km east of Paris and well north of Dijon, date back to 1760. These grainy mustard are favorites of chefs around the world and the classic “Moutarde de Meaux” is famous for its stoneware crock and red top.

Mustard making developed along the river ways of Europe and made its way into Germany, Belgium, and eventually into the British Isles. The English developed their own style of mustard. It was originally made in homes and in monasteries, with little commercial activity involved. In the mid 1600s, the town of Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire became famous for its thick horseradish mustard that became so popular that William Shakespeare mentions it in one of his plays: “His wit’s as thick as Tewkesbury mustard” (Henry IV, Part II). The bard mentions mustard in three other plays; he never mentions ketchup or mayonnaise.

The greatest name in English mustard came on the scene in 1804 when Jeremiah Colman began milling mustard seed at Norwich. For at least the first half century, Colman’s mustard meant only dry mustard, as homemakers, taverns, and restaurants would use the mustard powder to make “prepared” mustard. Colman’s eventually manufactured its own “prepared” mustard and it is still one the most popular mustard around the world. Through the use of brilliant marketing campaigns, Colman’s became the quintessential English mustard. Its most famous ad campaign was “The Mustard Club,” a whimsical fictitious club of odd characters (Master Mustard, Lady DiGester, and its president, Baron de Beef, to name a few).



In fact, serve Best Foods Mustard-with-Horseradish wherever you formerly used ordinary mustard. See how much more exciting it tastes! It's inexpensive, too! At all good grocers everywhere.



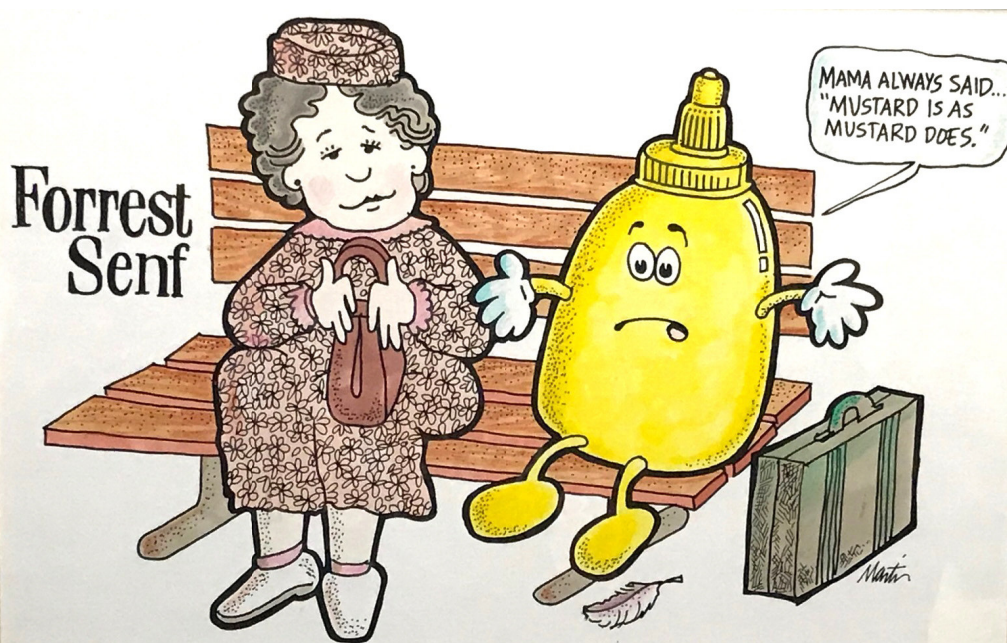
The American mustard scene was different. The European settlers used some mustard flour but there was very little in the way of American prepared mustard until the late 1800s; even then, they were of the northern European style. Since there were few French settlers, Dijon mustard was not a popular type of mustard used in the U.S. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a New York spice merchant by the name of French (nothing to do with France!), developed a mild yellow mustard sauce that quickly caught the attention of the public. French's "Cream Salad Mustard" became the national rage (although it contained no cream!).

At the same time, J.W. Raye was producing prodigious quantities of a similar mustard sauce for the sardine packing industry. Some claim that Mr. French and Mr. Raye entered into a "gentlemen's agreement" under which French would stay out of the then more lucrative sardine sauce market and Raye would stay out of the then more speculative domestic household market. French's is, of course, America's largest producer of mustard but the Raye company has survived, albeit on a smaller scale, with its own line of specialty mustards.

A little known secret: the English Colman company bought French's in the 1920s. Both were part of the Reckitt & Colman Company. It was eventually Reckitt-Benkiser, makers of many well-known not food household products (e.g. Woolite, Easy-Off Oven Cleaner). In 2017, the McCormick Spice Company purchased the French's brand.

The other iconic American mustard brand is Grey Poupon. It was originally a French mustard and you can still buy Grey Poupon in France, although the formulation is slightly different. Grey Poupon's brilliant advertising campaign ("Pardon me, but do you have any Grey Poupon?") made this Dijon-style mustard the most famous "gourmet" mustard in America. Grey Poupon was originally owned by Heublein, then Nabisco, then Kraft, and is now part of the Heinz-Kraft empire.

Today, American mustards are as varied and numerous as the cuisines and regional variations that have transformed food across the country. Flavors such as curry, cranberry, root beer, and blue cheese may be found in the many specialty mustards that are now available.



What gives mustard its distinctive tang? Allyl isothiocyanate is the naturally occurring substance (also present in the horseradish root) that gives mustard its sharp nasal hit. Real Dijon mustard has that classic nose and people tasting fresh Dijon mustard often – mistakenly – think there is horseradish in it. We like to call mustard with its big nose hit as “strong” rather than “hot” and leave the “hot” descriptor to the totally different sensation that you get from peppers.

Mustard has always been a versatile and healthy condiment. It is low in calories and fat (contrast mayonnaise!) and generally has little sugar (ketchup??). It is also an excellent emulsifier, meaning that it brings oil and vinegar together.

Should you refrigerate mustard? Even though mustard is a very safe food and is not likely to grow anything harmful if left unrefrigerated, we recommend refrigeration of all mustards in order to keep the flavor brighter and fresher. Keep mustards tightly covered but if you discover that your mustard has dried up, do not panic. Add a little water and it will bounce back to life.



RECIPES USING MUSTARD

*** Triple Walnut Salad ***

This mustard uses the French Walnut Mustard of Edmond Fallot, winner of the Grand Champion Award at the 2015 World-Wide Mustard Competition.

THE DRESSING:

6 Tbsp. Walnut Oil
4 Tbsp. **Cuisine Perel Late Harvest Riesling Vinegar**
1 Tbsp. **Edmond Fallot Walnut Dijon**

THE SALAD STUFF:

6 cups Salad greens (Romaine, Bibb, fresh spinach, etc.)
2 Pears (halved, cored, thinly sliced)
¾ cup Toasted walnuts
¾ cup Dried cranberries (or dried cherries)
½ cup Crumbled blue cheese

Mix the dressing in a small jar. Cover, shake, and pour over the salad ingredients. Toss well and served. Dressing can be made ahead and stored in the refrigerator for up to three days. Serves 6.

*** Mustard Cream Sauce ***

This is French gourmet fast food. The idea of a “mustard cream sauce” sounds fancy but it is so easy to make.

1 “splash” White wine
1 cup Heavy cream
2 to 3 Tbsp Dijon mustard

After sautéing steak or chicken in a pan, place steak or chicken on a plate and cover loosely with foil. Pour off any excess fat. Deglaze the pan with wine. Add heavy cream and reduce over high heat until reduced by half; it should be thick. Turn off the heat and add the mustard. Serve atop the meat with plenty of crusty French bread.