

# The History of the Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich

In the last half-century, peanut butter & jelly has become an American icon- a true cultural phenomenon. In fact, the average American will have eaten 1,500 peanut butter and jelly (PB&J) sandwiches by the time they graduate high school! A staple for many since childhood, PB&J is a revered classic. Celebrities and regular folks alike love the sandwich, which counts President Bush, The Backstreet Boys and Chef Emeril Lagasse among its biggest fans.

Food historians do not know exactly when the peanut butter and jelly sandwich was first prepared, and there have been no advertisements or mentions of PB&J before the 1940s. Peanut butter wasn't invented until 1890, and it became a hit at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. During the 1920s and 1930s, commercial brands of peanut butter such as Peter Pan and Skippy were introduced. Around the same time, pre-sliced bread became common in the U.S. However, there's no mention of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches before the 1940s.

It is known, however, that both peanut butter and jelly were on the U.S. Military ration menus in World War II, and some have suggested that the GIs added jelly to their peanut butter to make it taste better. It was an instant hit and returning GIs made peanut butter and jelly sales soar in the U.S.

Food rationing on the homefront may have contributed to the combination's popularity as well. Meat and butter were scarce and expensive in the U.S. during World War II. Peanut butter was a cheap, readily available source of protein. No matter how it started, the PB&J was a big hit in postwar America and has been ever since. Many people believe the sandwich is popular with children because of that salty-sweet flavor. Parents appreciate how fast, simple, and inexpensive PB&J is to make.

Preparing a peanut butter and jelly sandwich is a ritual for many people. The type of jelly, bread, and way you cut the PB&J is said to be a very important part of the process. To date, the average American household consumes nearly six pounds of peanut butter a year. As for jelly, grape is the number one choice among most adults and children when selecting a fruit spread for their PB&J sandwich. Following closely behind is the other classic flavor, strawberry. In addition, most kids prefer their PB&J without a crust. One in four parents reports their kids like to have the bread crust removed. And, don't forget about slicing it! Only one in four parents refrain from cutting their kids sandwiches. Among the parents who do cut them, diagonal (40%) and horizontal (31%) cuts are most commonly used, however, some parents admitted to cutting the sandwiches in a variety of fun shapes including hearts, circles, stars and animals. The habit of cutting the bread, whether diagonally or horizontally, is all part of the PB&J preparation ritual. Any way you slice it, the PB&J is truly an American classic.



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<b>K</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>
<i>What We Know</i>	<i>What We Want to Know</i>	<i>What We Learned</i>