

# The history of ice cream



## ‘Who invented ice cream?’

There is **no** sure answer to this question. Perhaps it was the Chinese in 200 BC – they used ice to freeze rice with milk. Perhaps it was Alexander the Great, or the Roman Emperor Nero AD 37–68 – they both liked snow flavoured with fruit and honey.

## 13th Century China > Italy

In 1269, **Marco Polo** travelled to East Asia. He returned home 24 years later with many ‘Marvels of the World’, including a recipe for ice cream from China. So, the Italians became the first people in Europe to enjoy this luxury.

## 16th – 17th Century Italy > France > England

Italian noblewoman, **Catherine de Medici**, was a great fan of ice cream. In 1533, she married **Henri II** of France and introduced him to the delicious dessert. Later, **Charles I** of England became an ice cream fan when his French chef made it for a royal banquet. He called it ‘cream ice’ and paid his chef £500 to keep the recipe secret. However, in 1665 it appeared in an English cookery book by **Lady Anne Fanshaw**. She called it ‘Icy cream’.



For many years, ice cream was a luxury, enjoyed only by royalty and the rich. It wasn't until 1686 that ice cream first appeared on a restaurant menu. A Sicilian, **Procopio dei Coltelli**, opened the Café Procope in Paris and introduced Italian Gelato. It was made of milk, cream, butter and eggs – more like the ice cream we know today.

### 18th – 21st Century America and the world

We don't know exactly when ice cream arrived in America, but it was probably with European settlers in the early 1700s. We do know that the first advertisement appeared in the **New York Gazette** in 1777, and the first ice cream parlour opened in New York City in 1790. We also know that the first ice cream factory opened in Baltimore in 1851, but grocery shops didn't start selling it until the 1930s.

The popularity of ice cream grew and grew. In 1946\*, the Americans celebrated victory in World War II with ice cream, and in 1984, US **President Ronald Reagan** made July 'National Ice Cream Month'.

\*Although the war ended in 1945, food rationing didn't end until 1946.

## Ice cream – some amazing facts

- 1 The most popular ice cream flavour is vanilla, followed by chocolate and strawberry.
- 2 Some of the most unusual flavours are toothpaste, fish & chips, garlic, and pizza.
- 3 **President George Washington** once spent \$200 on ice cream (about \$3,000 today!).
- 4 **NASA** says that ice cream is one of the things most missed by astronauts in space.
- 5 In the early days of TV, mashed potato was used in cooking shows because ice cream melted under the lights.



- 6 The busiest day for selling ice cream is Sunday.
- 7 Americans eat on average 27 litres of ice cream a year, but New Zealanders love it more. They eat 28 litres.
- 8 The US ice cream industry makes \$21 billion a year.

