

Corn chips

Americans still munching bunches of Fritos

United Press International
DALLAS — In 1932, Elmer Doolin stopped for lunch in a small cafe in San Antonio. He spent a nickel for a sandwich and then paid another nickel for a small bag of homemade corn chips.

Doolin liked the tasty chip and bought the recipe from its maker, a Mexican who wanted to return to his native land, for \$100. Included in the sale were 19 retail accounts for the product and the manufacturing equipment.

Doolin's decision to spend that second nickel, it turned out, brought great changes to the American snacking habits and laid the cornerstone for a huge corporation. Frito-Lay Inc. now produces about 170 million pounds of Fritos a year — about 3/4 of a pound for every man, woman and child in the United States.

Doolin produced his first batch of corn chips, which he called Fritos, in his mother's kitchen in San Antonio. He was able to produce about 10 pounds per hour and sales ran between \$8 and \$10 per day. And he often cooked the chips at night and peddled them by day.

Now Fritos are among 30 products turned out by Frito-Lay, which is a subsidiary and the largest profit-maker of PepsiCo Inc. Frito-Lay is the largest company in the snack food industry with 15 percent of the total sales. Although Fritos aren't the largest seller in the Frito-Lay line — Doritos are — they are the most consistent seller, company officials say.

The chips, which have changed very little in 50 years, are produced at 21 plants throughout the United States under such exacting standards that a Frito purchased in Maine

is almost sure to taste the same as a Frito bought in Dallas, Seattle or Miami. Quality control — making every batch of Fritos taste exactly the same as those sold years before — is a high corporate priority.

The company moved to Dallas from San Antonio in 1933. Doolin rapidly expanded, even while working on a shoestring budget.

Frito-Lay Inc. now produces about 170 million pounds of Fritos a year — about 3/4 of a pound for every man, woman and child in the United States.

But by World War II, Fritos had become so popular they were canned and sent to U.S. military forces.

However, efforts to sell Fritos overseas have failed, and now the only Fritos sold outside North America are in the post exchanges of American military installations. Not surprisingly, they are very popular in Mexico.

Fritos are basically corn — Texas corn, in fact. Eighty-five percent of the corn used in the manufacture of Fritos still is grown in Texas — most of it in West Texas near Lubbock. Shipping this food-grade corn by rail from Texas to plants throughout the nation is costly and Frito-Lay has tried, with only minor success, to grow the same corn in other states.

Frito-Lay says it uses more corn than the cereal industry. More than 60,000 acres of Texas farmland is used in growing

corn for Frito-Lay.

About 85 percent of the Fritos produced are the regular variety, but Fritos also come in king size, barbecue and light varieties. Each Frito is about 1.75 inches long and about half an inch wide. Anything longer than two inches and the chips tend to crumble in the packaging process, manufacturing Vice President Jim O'Neal said.

Production of Fritos is the same at all 21 plants. The hard kernels of corn are first boiled in water and lime in a softening process.

Then it goes into a cooking kettle for 30 to 50 minutes and from there to a soaking process for 12 to 15 hours, long enough for the corn to absorb moisture and cool.

After washing to remove husks and other materials, the corn is taken to a mill where it is ground between a stationary stone and a revolving stone — thus creating the texture of the finished product.

The ground meal that comes out of the mills is forced through an extruder, which makes the ribbons that are cut into Frito-size lengths. These are dropped into vats of hot vegetable oil that is kept constantly moving so each chip gets exactly the same exposure. Fritos are salted as they leave the frying oil and are ready for packaging.

Most plants make about 1,000 pounds of Fritos an hour. The product is tested and retested all along the line. If it does not measure up, the entire batch is discarded.



staff photo by Peter Rocha

Feels so good

Freshman petroleum engineering major Kenn Smith, from Alice, enjoys a massage from Tena Gibbs, a freshman business major from Cleburne. Smith and Gibbs were participating in the MSC All Night Fair on Friday night.

Search for missing family continues over weekend

United Press International
LAKE DALLAS — More than 120 reserve deputies were asked to join Denton County authorities Sunday for another massive search for a family that disappeared near Lake Lewisville area earlier this month, authorities said.

An eight-hour search Saturday failed to produce any new developments in the disappearance of Ken Merillat, 32; his wife, Alice, 27; and their daughter Kendra, 5.

The body of a second daughter, Kayleen, 6, was found last Sunday floating about 15 feet from shore. Authorities said they feared the bodies of other family members, who have been missing since Feb. 14, may also be in the lake.

"The sheriff issued a call up for more than 120 reserve deputies to join in another mass search of the lake," said Dallas County Sheriff's Department spokesman Jim Ewell. "We expect at least half of that contingent to show up tomorrow morning."

Ewell said the reserves will pair off with the volunteers and a patrol car will be assigned as the base radio station.

Searchers Saturday covered Hackberry Park, Westlake Park and the Corinthian Yacht Club area, located near where the young girl's body was found, a sheriff's department dispatcher said.

Today's Almanac

United Press International
Today is Monday, March 1, the 60th day of 1982, with 305 to follow.

The moon is approaching its first quarter.

The morning stars are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

There is no evening star. Those born on this date are under the sign of Pisces.

American singer-actress Dinah Shore was born on March 1, 1920.

On this date in history: In 1781, the American colonies adopted the Articles of Confederation, paving the way

for a federal union.

In 1932, famed flyer Charles Lindbergh's 20-month-old son was kidnapped. The boy's body was found May 12, and Bruno Hauptmann was electrocuted for the kidnap-murder in 1936.

In 1954, five congressmen were wounded when Puerto Rican nationalists began firing from the gallery of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1961, President John Kennedy formed the Peace Corps for overseas aid and service.

A thought for the day: American writer Henry Thoreau said: "It is characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things."

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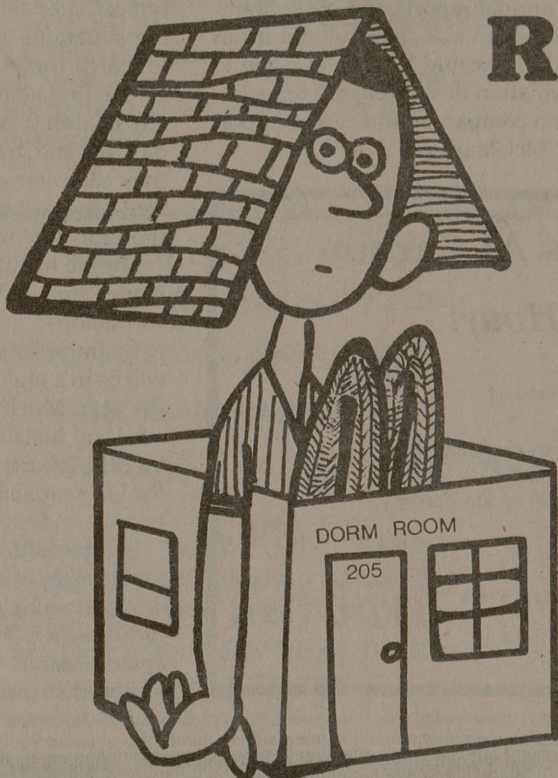
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