Can Opener Encyclopedia Article

Can Opener

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Contents

Can Opener Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Can Opener.....3

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Curiously, the first patent for a can opener wasn't issued until forty-eight years after Peter Durand secured his 1810 patent for the tin can. It wasn't as though the can opener was an unneeded invention. A tin of roast veal taken on William Parry's voyage to the Arctic in 1824 instructed: "Cut round on the top near to the outer edge with a chisel and hammer." The hammer-and-chisel or-screwdriver method of liberating a can's contents was finally made obsolete in 1858 when Ezra J. Warner of Waterbury, Connecticut, patented his can opener. The device used a long blade or spike to pierce the can and a shorter blade to grasp the container's rim. During the Civil War, Union troops received Warner's can opener along with their rations of canned food. Many can openers were patented during the 1860s through the turn of the century, some designed for multiple uses. A notable 1878 patent design by J. Cox was a " combined can opener, knife and scissor sharpener, tack drawer, putty knife, tack hammer; complete with finger rests." The modern type of can opener, with a cutting wheel instead of a spike or blade turned by a crank, was introduced by Lyman in 1878. However, can openers didn't become popular until wall-mounted models appeared in 1930. The electric can opener which debuted in 1957, now appears in under the counter mounts and countertop models as well as standard wall-mounted units.Aluminum is sometimes used for the tops of tin cans. These tops,which usually include a plastic cover,have a tab,which may be pulled open without the need for a can opener.