Hot Dogs Encyclopedia Article

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Contents

Hot Dogs Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Hot Dogs.....3

Hot Dogs

Long a staple of sports arenas and backyard cookouts, the unpretentious hot dog is one of America's favorite sandwiches. More than 20 billion of them are consumed in the United States each year.

Allegedly married to the ubiquitous bun when Harry Stevens, who sold ice cream at New York Polo Grounds, instructed his crew to sell frankfurters on rolls, the hot dog did not become famous until it came to Coney Island, New York. Though the hot dog had been served at Feltman's 7,000 seat restaurant for years, Nathan Handwerker, once an employee at Feltman's, sparked interest in the hot dog when he sold his dogs for a nickel (half the price of Feltman's) at his hot dog stand just steps away from the subway stop on Coney Island. Interest in hot dogs was so great that Oscar Meyer began marketing hot dogs in supermarkets in the 1930s. Not only was Oscar Meyer the first to sell hot dogs through supermarkets, it was also the first to specifically target children as consumers of the food. From 1936 Oscar Meyer's Weinermobile began driving across the country promoting its hot dogs to children.

A hot dog with mustard.

In its simplest iteration a hot dog consists of a frankfurter in an oblong-shaped bun with any of various toppings including mustard, ketchup, pickle relish, cheese, sauerkraut, and beans. Legend has it the hot sausage sandwiches were given their descriptive moniker by sports cartoonist T. A. "Tad" Dorgan, who caricatured the wieners as dachshund dogs at the turn of the century. The term "hot dog" first appeared in print in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1900. Traditional hot dogs are made of beef, pork, veal, chicken, or turkey, with or without skins. Regular hot dogs are about six inches long, although they are also available in two-inch "cocktail" and foot-long varieties.

Further Reading:

Herbst, Sharon Taylor. *The New Food Lover's Companion.* New York, Barron's Educational Series, 1995.