Pretzel Encyclopedia Article

Pretzel

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Pretzel Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Pretzel.....3

Pretzel

While popcorn and potato chips are indigenous American foods, the pretzel has European roots. The packaged and processed pretzels we are familiar with today are less popular than the early pretzels that were soft, bready, and served warm.

The Italian word for pretzel, *bracciatelli*, means folded arms. According to legend, the first pretzels were made in 1610 by an Italian monk who rewarded his best students with a bready snack that was shaped to resemble arms folded in prayer. The pretzel has no other religious significance but is often eaten during Lent in many parts of Europe.

Americans today often think of the "Bavarian" pretzel and assume that pretzels originated in Germany. Though the pretzel came first from Italy, its popularity soon spread throughout Europe. In the early 1600s, Turkish soldiers, who tried to penetrate the walled fort in Vienna, Austria, by digging a tunnel beneath it, were foiled by pretzel vendors who heard them and warned the Viennese troops. From that point on, the pretzel became the recognized symbol for baker throughout Europe.

When the Europeans immigrated to America, they brought the art of pretzel baking with them. In 1861, Julius Sturgis opened America's first commercial pretzel bakery in Lititz, Pennsylvania, a small town about ten miles from Lancaster. As early as 1879, a couple of Lancaster men invented a machine that twisted pretzels, a tedious task when done by hand. Today about 90 percent of all pretzels are made by fully mechanized bakeries.

In modern bakeries, after the pretzel dough is made, it is placed in the hopper of a twisting machine. A small bit of dough is pushed out and rolled into the desired length. Then it is twisted and dropped onto a long belt, which carries it to the cooker, where the pretzel passes through a hot solution that gives it a golden brown color. Next the pretzel is salted and carried through an oven, where the baking process is completed.

Though pretzel vendors still appear on the streets of American cities, the popularity of the pretzel lagged behind the overwhelming number of competing snack foods. But pretzels remain a popular item in bars, as they are often served with beer. By the late 1990s, according to the National Pretzel Bakers Institute, over 300 million pounds of pretzels and pretzel products were produced each year in the United States.