

Questacon

The Great Aussie Picnic



Centenary of Federation

Australians have always been innovative when it comes to transporting a packed lunch to the great outdoors.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Australians love to get out and experience our amazing environment first hand, and what better way than with a nice meal and a drink to enhance the experience. But how to get all your food out to the bush or the beach, without it spoiling? And what happens if it does spoil?

A GREAT AUSSIE SOLUTION

Australians have invented the wine cask to keep wine fresh and transportable and the esky to keep food and drink cool. The Wiltshire Staysharp knife was invented by an Australian and of course what picnic would be complete without a lamington?

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Wine turns into vinegar if exposed to air for long enough. As wine is poured out of a bottle, air comes in to take up the space. The wine cask stores the wine in a plastic bag. When wine is taken from a cask, the tap does not allow air to get in. Instead the bag simply crumples down. This means that no air touches the remaining wine and it stays drinkable. Also because the packaging is collapsible, there is less rubbish to carry away from the picnic.



The esky was developed by Malley's, a Sydney refrigeration company. It consists of two layers - a polypropylene outer layer, and a polyurethane inner layer. This provides a lightweight, portable case that has great insulation properties. So if you put in something cool, it stays cool.

The original Malley's esky had a steel outer layer.

The Wiltshire Staysharp knife was invented in Australia in 1965. It consists of a scabbard to store the knife, which sharpens the knife every time it is removed. There are two tungsten carbide bars inside the scabbard, in a sharpening "cassette".



The Wiltshire Staysharp knife assembly now comes apart for easier cleaning.



The great Aussie lamington, a sponge cake coated in chocolate icing and rolled in coconut, was said to be invented as a way of using up stale cake. One story says the lamington was named after the wife of Baron Lamington, the Governor of Queensland in the late 1800s. It is said that Lady Lamington was so miserly she would not throw out her stale cakes, and instead thought up an innovative way to reuse them.

The great Australian lamington has been around since the 1800s.

FURTHER INFO FACTS AND FUN

- One of the first refrigerators, the Coolgardie Safe, was invented in Australia. It was a wet hessian box that used evaporative cooling to keep food cool.
- Australians were at the forefront of modern refrigeration development. An immigrant to Australia, Eugene Dominique Nicolle put in two patents in the 1860s for a refrigeration system based on ammonia.
- Today, Nylex are the manufacturers of the esky, having bought out Malley's in 1981.
- Vegemite is another traditional Australian food that came about to use up left-overs. The spread is made from a by-product of brewer's yeast from the beer brewing process. Vegemite was first sold in 1923, but the spread was renamed Parwill in 1928 in an attempt to attract customers of a rival spread – "if Marmite.... then Parwill". The change of name was not successful and the spread returned to its original name.
- Visit the Vegemite web site at <http://www.vegemite.com.au/>
- Find recipes for lamingtons and other great Aussie foods at <http://members.tripod.com/virtaus/volume3/cuisine/>

For more info on great Australian Science check out:

Questacon's Innovative Australians <http://www.questacon.edu.au/innovaus>

CSIRO's Australia Advances <http://www.csiro.au/promos/ozadvances>

The Australian Academy of Science's Nova <http://www.science.org.au/nova>

The Australian Science Archive Project <http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/>