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A biscuit (pron.: /ˈbɪskɨt/) is a baked, commonly flour-based food product. The term is applied to two distinctly different products in North America and the Commonwealth Nations and Europe. \* In the United States and Canada, it is a small, soft, leavened bread, somewhat similar to a scone, though generally softer and fluffier. Although yeast may be used as a leavening agent, it is often replaced or supplemented with baking powder or baking soda. A Southern regional variation on the term, “ beaten biscuit”, is closer to the British variety. \* In Commonwealth English, it is a small and generally sweet baked product that would be called either a “ cookie” or a “ cracker” in the United States and a “ cookie” in English-speaking Canada.[1] Biscuits in the United Kingdom and Ireland may be savoury (savoury biscuits are often referred to as “ crackers”) or sweet, such as chocolate biscuits, ginger nuts, custard creams, or the Nice biscuit. Although in Commonwealth Nations, the term “ cookie” may be synonymous with “ biscuit”, a cookie is generally a softer baked product. Biscuit|

American biscuit (left) and one variety of British biscuits (right) – the American biscuit is soft and flaky; these particular British biscuits (Bourbon) have a layer of chocolate filling between two hard biscuit layers|

Etymology   
The modern-day confusion in the English language around the word “ biscuit” is created by its etymology. The Middle French word bescuit is derived from the Latin words bis (twice) and coquere, coctus (to cook, cooked), and, hence, means “ twice-cooked”.[2] This is because biscuits were originally cooked in a twofold process: first baked, and then dried out in a slow oven.[3] This term was then adapted into English in the 14th century during the Middle Ages, in the Middle English word bisquite, to represent a hard, twice-baked product History

Biscuits for travel

Ship’s biscuit display in Kronborg, Denmark   
The need for nutritious, easy-to-store, easy-to-carry, and long-lasting foods on long journeys, in particular at sea, was initially solved by taking live food along with a butcher/cook. However, this took up additional space on what were either horse-powered treks or small ships, reducing the time of travel before additional food was required. This resulted in early armies’ adopting the style of hunter-foraging. The introduction of the baking of processed cereals including the creation of flour provided a more reliable source of food. Egyptian sailors carried a flat, brittle loaf of millet bread called dhourra cake, while the Romans had a biscuit called buccellum.[6] Roman cookbook Apicius describes: “ a thick paste of fine wheat flour was boiled and spread out on a plate. When it had dried and hardened, it was cut up and then fried until crisp, then served with honey and pepper.” Many early physicians believed that most medicinal problems were associated with digestion. Hence, for both sustenance and avoidance of illness, a daily consumption of a biscuit was considered good for health.

Confectionery biscuits

Traditional Polish toruń gingerbread   
Early biscuits were hard, dry, and unsweetened. They were most often cooked after bread, in a cooling bakers’ oven; they were a cheap form of sustenance for the poor. By the seventh century AD, cooks of the Persian empire had learnt from their forebears the secrets of lightening and enriching bread-based mixtures with eggs, butter, and cream, and sweetening them with fruit and honey. One of the earliest spiced biscuits was gingerbread, in French pain d’épices, meaning “ spice bread”, brought to Europe in 992 by the Armenian monk Grégoire de Nicopolis. He left Nicopolis Pompeii, of Lesser Armenia to live in Bondaroy, France, near the town of Pithiviers. He stayed there for seven years, and taught French priests and Christians how to cook gingerbread. This was originally a dense, treaclely (molasses-based) spice cake or bread. As it was so expensive to make, early ginger biscuits were a cheap form of using up the leftover bread mix. Biscuits today can be savoury or sweet, but most are small at around 2 in (5. 1 cm) in diameter, and flat. The term biscuit also applies to sandwich-type biscuits, wherein a layer of “ creme” or icing is sandwiched between two biscuits, such as the custard cream, or a layer of jam (as in biscuits which, in the United Kingdom, are known as “ Jammy Dodgers”)

Dunking a biscuit   
Sweet biscuits are commonly eaten as a snack food, and are, in general, made with wheat flour or oats, and sweetened with sugar or honey. Varieties may contain chocolate, fruit, jam, nuts, or even be used to sandwich other fillings. Usually, a dedicated section for sweet biscuits is found in most European supermarkets. In Britain, the digestive biscuit and rich tea have a strong cultural identity as the traditional accompaniment to a cup of tea, and are regularly eaten as such. Many tea drinkers “ dunk” their biscuits in tea, allowing them to absorb liquid and soften slightly before consumption.

A dark chocolate Tim Tam   
Savoury biscuits or crackers (such as cream crackers, water biscuits, oatcakes, or crisp breads) are usually plainer and commonly eaten with cheese following a meal. Other savoury biscuits include the Jewish biscuits known as matzos. Many savoury biscuits also contain additional ingredients for flavour or texture, such as poppy seeds, onion or onion seeds, cheese (such as cheese melts), and olives. Savoury biscuits also usually have a dedicated section in most European supermarkets, often in the same aisle as sweet biscuits. The exception to savoury biscuits is the sweetmeal digestive known as the “ Hovis biscuit”, which, although slightly sweet, is still classified as a cheese biscuit. Savoury biscuits sold in supermarkets are sometimes associated with a certain geographical area, such as Scottish oatcakes or Cornish wafer biscuits. Dog biscuit

A dog biscuit (Costco Kirkland brand)   
A dog biscuit is a hard biscuit-based dietary supplement for dogs or other canine, similar to human snack food. Dog biscuits tend to be hard and dry. Dog biscuits may be sold in a flat bone-shape. Some manufacturers claim the dry and hard biscuit texture helps clean the dog’s teeth, promoting oral health. History

“ Dog’s bread”, made from bran, has been mentioned since at least Roman times.[1] It was already criticized (as in later centuries) as particularly bad bread; Juvenal refers to dog’s bread as “ filth” – “ And bit into the filth of a dog’s bread” Et farris sordes mordere Canini.[2] In Spain, “ pan de perro” is mentioned as early as 1623 in a play by Lope de Vega.[3] It is used here in the sense of giving someone blows; to “ give dog’s bread” to someone could mean anything from mistreating them to killing them.[4] The latter meaning refers to a special bread (also called zarazas) made with ground glass, poison and needles and intended to kill dogs.[5] DIGESTIVE BISCUIT

A digestive biscuit (originally known as a Wheaten), sometimes referred to as a sweet-meal biscuit, is a semi-sweet biscuit originated in the United Kingdom and popular worldwide. The term ‘ digestive’ is derived from the belief that they had antacid properties due to the use of sodium bicarbonate when they were first developed.[1] Historically, some producers used diastatic malt extract to ‘ digest’ some of the starch that existed in flour prior to baking.

History

McVitie & Price’s Digestive tin box   
Digestives are known at least as far back as advertisements for Huntley & Palmers in 1876, with a recipe being given in Cassell’s ‘ New Universal Cookery Book’ of 1894.[4][clarification needed] Even further back, one 1851 issue of The Lancet London advertised at least two sources of digestive biscuits, one such baker, William Hill, offered “ brown meal digestive biscuits”.[5] At the time, it was asserted grain millers knew only of bran and endosperm.[6] After 10% of the whole grain’s coarser outer-bran coat was removed, and because the innermost 70% of pure endosperm was reserved for other uses, brown meal, representing only 20% of the whole grain, remained, and was itself composed of about 15% fine bran and 85% white flour.[7] By 1912 it was more widely known that brown meal included the germ, which lent a characteristic sweetness

Ingredients   
The typical digestive biscuit contains coarse brown wheat flour (which gives it its distinctive texture and flavour), sugar, malt extract, vegetable oil, wholemeal, raising agents (usually sodium bicarbonate, tartaric acid and malic acid) and salt.[14] Dried whey, oatmeal, cultured skimmed milk and/or emulsifiers such as DATEM may also be added in some varieties. Digestive biscuits outside the United States, like many foods, are not reliant on the addition of high-fructose corn syrup (sometimes referred to as “ glucose-fructose syrup”), and hence may add more natural sugar instead, such as in New Zealand[15] or in the United Kingdom.[16] A digestive biscuit averages around 70 calories, although this sometimes varies according to the factors involved in its production.

Consumption   
Digestive biscuits are frequently eaten with tea or coffee. Sometimes, the biscuit is dunked into the tea and eaten quickly due to the biscuit’s tendency to disintegrate when wet. The digestive biscuit is also used as a cracker with cheeses, and is often included in ‘ cracker selection’ packets. In the UK alone, the annual sales of chocolate digestives total about £35 million. This means that each year, 71 million packets of these are sold – and each second 52 biscuits are consumed.[1] Digestives are also popular in food preparation for making into bases for cheesecakes and similar desserts.[17] Chocolate digestives

The coated side of a milk chocolate digestive biscuit. Chocolate digestive biscuits also are available, coated on one side with milk, dark or white chocolate. Originally produced by McVitie’s in 1925 as the Chocolate Homewheat Digestive, other recent varieties include the basic biscuit with chocolate shavings throughout (chocolate ‘ chips’ within the biscuit mix), or a layer of caramel, mint chocolate, orange-flavoured chocolate,[18] or plain chocolate. American travel writer Bill Bryson described the chocolate digestive as “ a British masterpiece”.

COOKIE   
In the United States, Canada and Australia a cookie is a small, flat, baked treat, usually containing fat, flour, eggs and sugar. In most English-speaking countries outside North America, the most common word for this is biscuit; in many regions both terms are used, while in others the two words have different meanings. A cookie is a plain bun in Scotland,[2] while in the United States a biscuit is a kind of quick bread similar to a scone. In the United Kingdom, a cookie is referred to as a biscuit, although some types of cookies maintain this name, such as the American-inspired Maryland Cookies.

Description

A dish full of cookies   
Cookies are most commonly baked until crisp or just long enough that they remain soft, but some kinds of cookies are not baked at all. Cookies are made in a wide variety of styles, using an array of ingredients including sugars, spices, chocolate, butter, peanut butter, nuts or dried fruits. The softness of the cookie may depend on how long it is baked. History

Cookies packed in a tin for shipment   
Cookie-like hard wafers have existed for as long as baking is documented, in part because they deal with travel very well, but they were usually not sweet enough to be considered cookies by modern standards.[4] Cookies appear to have their origins in 7th century Persia, shortly after the use of sugar became relatively common in the region.[1] They spread to Europe through the Muslim conquest of Spain. By the 14th century, they were common in all levels of society, throughout Europe, from royal cuisine to street vendors.