



General Mills

history of innovation

Bisquick



Bisquick is one of General Mills' most enduring favorites among consumers.

In 1930, when Carl Smith, a General Mills sales executive, was returning to San Francisco by train, he arrived at the dining car too late to order. Yet he was served a plate of delicious, oven-hot biscuits only moments after he sat down.

He was amazed by the cook's ability to produce fresh biscuits in such a short time. His curiosity led him to the galley, where the chef was pleased to show him his trick for making fresh baked biscuits. The chef had blended lard, flour, baking powder and salt and stored the mixture in an ice chest. From this batter, he had quickly made the biscuits to order. This was an entirely new idea at the time.

Smith recognized the potential of a pre-mixed baking mix and took it to the head chemist of the Sperry division of General Mills, Charlie Kress. The challenges in creating such a product were significant. Most important was the creation of the proper blend of ingredients to make the biscuits as good as - or better than - homemade.

Secrecy surrounded all testing operations; General Mills was concerned that other companies also were going to market biscuit mixes. *Bisquick*, however, was the first on the market. And just months after its release nationally, there were 96 biscuit mixes on the market. Only six, though, survived into the following year, and they all trailed in sales behind *Bisquick*. Some of the technologies used in the development of *Bisquick* were later used to create cake mixes.

In the beginning, *Bisquick* advertising told consumers that it "Makes Anybody a Perfect Biscuit Maker." The new product, however, could be used to make a variety of foods. Recipes were developed for meat pies, coffee cakes, pancakes, nut breads, dumplings, shortcake and cobblers, among others. In the mid-1950s, the advertising claimed, quite appropriately, that *Bisquick* was "A World of Baking in a Box."

Bisquick promoted itself with various offers. The first was a



Bisquick



Bisquick Baker pan that was given to those buying a package of the brand new product. Also in the 1930s, Shirley Temple's image was featured on a small mug, pitcher and bowl. Other promotions through the years have included canisters, dishes, bowls and trays, as well as numerous cookbooks and booklets.

In the late 1960s, a new *Bisquick* formula was created, adding more shortening, a new leavening system and buttermilk.

In 1981, the World's Largest Peach Shortcake was created at the South Carolina Peach Festival. It was five layers and measured 25 1/2 feet in diameter. More than four tons of *Bisquick* and nine tons of peaches were used.

From 1980 to 1985, the *Bisquick* Recipe Club provided its members with a newsletter and cookbooks, and encouraged the sharing of recipes and tips among *Bisquick* users.

Today *Bisquick* remains a household word. Although different formulas and package sizes have been developed over the years, the product in the familiar yellow and blue package has been used by cooks to make an ever-changing and growing variety of delicious foods. *Bisquick* remains the country's premiere convenience baking mix, with a leading share of the grocery category it created.

