**Fork** (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

As a piece of cutlery or kitchenware, a fork is a tool consisting of a handle with several narrow tines on one end. The fork as an eating utensil has been a feature primarily of the West, whereas in East Asia chopsticks have been more prevalent. Today, forks are increasingly available throughout East Asia. The utensil (usually metal) is used to lift food to the mouth or to hold ingredients in place while cooking or cutting them. Food can be lifted either by spearing it on the tines, or by holding it on top of the tines, which are often curved slightly. For this former function, in the American style of fork etiquette, the fork is held with tines curving up; however, in continental style, the fork is held with the tines curving down.[citation needed] A fork is also shaped in the form of a trident but curved at the joint of the handle to the points.

Though the fork's early history is obscure, the fork as a kitchen and dining utensil is generally believed to have originated in the Roman Empire, or perhaps in Ancient Greece (though there are some evidence of its use in Mesopotamia [1] [2]). The personal table fork most likely originated in the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine, Empire. Its use spread to what is now the Middle East during the first millennium CE and then spread into southern Europe during the second millennium. It did not become common in northern Europe until the 18th century and was not common in North America until the 19th century.

Bronze forks made in Iran during the 8th or 9th century.

The word fork comes from the Latin furca, meaning "pitchfork." Some of the earliest known uses of forks with food occurred in Ancient Egypt where large forks were used as cooking utensils.[3] Bone forks had been found in the burial site of the Bronze Age Qijia culture (2400 – 1900 BC) as well as later Chinese dynasties' tombs.[4] The ancient Greeks used the fork as a serving utensil,[5] and it is also mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, in the Book of I Samuel 2:13 ("The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant came, while the fresh flesh was boiling, with a fork of three teeth in his hand..."). Still the greek name of fork is used in some languages in Europe, as for instance in the venetian, greek and albanian language.

In the Roman Empire, bronze and silver forks were used, indeed many examples are displayed in museums around Europe.[6][7] The use varied according to local customs, social class and the nature of food, but forks of the earlier periods were mostly used as cooking and serving utensils. The personal table fork was most likely invented in the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine, Empire where they were in common use by the 4th century CE (its origin may even go back to Ancient Greece, before the Roman period).[8][9] Records show that by the 9th century a similar utensil known as a barjyn was in limited use in Persia within some elite circles.[10] By the 10th century the table fork was in common use throughout what is now the Middle East and Turkey.[3]

By the 11th century, the table fork had made its way to Italy. In Italy, it became quite popular by the 14th century, being commonly used for eating by merchant and upper classes by 1600. It was proper for a guest to arrive with his own fork and spoon enclosed in a box called a cadena; this usage was introduced to the French court with Catherine de' Medici's entourage. In Portugal, forks began being used with Infanta Beatrice, Duchess of Viseu, king Manuel I of Portugal's mother.[11] That happened around 1450. Still forks were not commonly used in Western Europe until the 16th century when they became part of the etiquette in Italy.[12] It had also gained some currency in Spain by this time,[13] and its use gradually spread to France. Even at that, though, most of Europe did not adopt use of the fork until the 18th century.[8]

Long after the personal table fork had become commonplace in France, at the supper celebrating the marriage of the duc de Chartres to Louis XIV's natural daughter in 1692, the seating was described in the court memoirs of Saint-Simon: "King James having his Queen on his right hand and the King on his left, and each with their cadenas." In Perrault's contemporaneous fairy tale of La Belle au bois dormant (1697), each of the fairies invited for the christening is presented with a splendid "Fork Holder."

The fork's adoption in northern Europe was slower. Its use was first described in English by Thomas Coryat in a volume of writings on his Italian travels (1611), but for many years it was viewed as an unmanly Italian affectation. Some writers of the Roman Catholic Church expressly disapproved of its use (despite its above-mentioned use in the Bible), seeing it as "excessive delicacy": "God in his wisdom has provided man with natural forks – his fingers. Therefore it is an insult to Him to substitute artificial metallic forks for them when eating."[14][15] It was not until the 18th century that the fork became commonly used in Great Britain, although some sources say forks were common in France, England and Sweden already by the early 17th century.[16][17] The fork did not become popular in the North America until near the time of the American Revolution.[3] The curved fork that is used in most parts of the world today, was developed in Germany in the mid 18th century. The standard four-tine design became current in the early 19th century.

The 20th century also saw the emergence of the "spork", a utensil that is half-fork and half-spoon. With this new "fork-spoon", only one piece of cutlery is needed when eating (so long as no knife is required). The back of the spork is shaped like a spoon and can scoop food while the front has shortened tines like a fork. It has found popularity in fast food and military settings.

Types of forks

Asparagus fork, Barbecue fork

Beef fork-A fork used for picking up meat. This fork is shaped like a regular fork, but it is slightly bigger and the tines are curved outward. The curves are used for piercing the thin sliced beef.

Berry fork-Carving fork-A two-pronged fork used to hold meat steady while it is being carved. They are often sold with carving knives or slicers as part of a carving set.

Cheese fork-Chip fork-A two-pronged disposable fork, usually made out of sterile wood (though increasingly of plastic), specifically designed for the eating of chips (known as french fries in North America).

Cold meat fork

Crab fork-A short, sharp and narrow three-pronged or two-pronged fork designed to easily extract meat when consuming cooked crab.

Dessert fork (alternatively, pudding fork/cake fork in Great Britain)-Any of several different special types of forks designed to eat desserts, such as a pastry fork. They usually have only three tines and are smaller than standard dinner forks.

Dinner fork, Fish fork

Fondue fork-A narrow fork, usually having two tines, long shaft and an insulating handle, typically of wood, for dipping bread into a pot containing sauce

Fruit salad fork-A fork used which is used to pick up pieces of fruit such as grapes, strawberries, melon and other varies types of fruit.

Garden fork, Granny Fork, Ice cream fork

Knork-A utensil combining characteristics of a knife and a fork

Lunch fork, Meat fork, Olive fork, Oyster fork, Pastry fork

Pickle fork-A long handled fork used for extracting pickles from a jar, or an alternative name for a ball joint separator tool used to unseat a ball joint.[18]

Pie fork, Pitchfork, Relish fork

Salad fork-Similar to a regular fork, but may be shorter, or have one of the outer tines shaped differently. Often, a "salad fork" in the silverware service of some restaurants.

Spife-A utensil combining characteristics of a spoon and a knife

Sporf-A utensil combining characteristics of a spoon, a fork and a knife

Spork-A utensil combining characteristics of a spoon and a fork

Tea fork-Toasting fork-A fork, usually having two tines, very long metal shaft and sometimes an insulating handle, for toasting food over coals or an open flame

Spaghetti fork

Extension Fork-A long-tined fork with a telescopic handle, allowing for its extension or contraction.

Spaghetti fork-A fork with a metal shaft loosely fitted inside a hollow plastic handle. The shaft protrudes through the top of the handle, ending in a bend that allows the metal part of the fork to be easily rotated with one hand while the other hand is holding the plastic handle.