

Title:

Does The Sloppy Joe Have An Origin?

Word Count:

556

Summary:

In most of the United States, the sloppy Joe sandwich is a lunchroom staple, consisting of skillet-cooked ground meat, usually beef, spicy tomato sauce or tomato paste, and bread or a bun. Sometimes greasy and oversweet, the sloppy Joe has been served in school cafeterias for years. Certainly, when one considers the commercially available versions of the sandwich, this is what comes to mind; the manwich, for example, which is seasoned beef and sauce in a can, ready to be heat...

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Article Body:

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Ideally, though, the meat in the sloppy Joe is both sweet and spicy At the same time, and is heavily sautéed to give the sauce thickness, And far from the cold, greasy monstrosity served to school kids. It has become, in some more fashionable delis, an experiment in bringing Diners back to their youth with combinations that go well beyond tomato Paste and beef. One possible selection, for example, is pork in tomato Sauce with ginger, garlic, and chili sauce. With cheddar cheese and on a freshly baked Kaiser roll, topped with fresh spices, it is a far cry from something on a hamburger roll served by a lady in a hairnet.

In New Jersey, however, the sloppy Joe is something completely different. Instead of ground beef, it contains some kind of deli lunch meat, for example, turkey, ham, roast beef, or even sliced cow tongue. It is served on rye bread, often "double-" or triple-decker." The sandwich is dressed with Swiss cheese, cole slaw, and Russian dressing, similar to a reuben sandwich.

One theory of the origin of the sandwich is that it originated at Sloppy Joe's Bar in Havana. The New Jersey version, however, first appeared on the menu of the Town Hall Deli in South Orange, NJ in 1936. To this day, that version, called the original sloppy Joe, is a triple-decker sandwich with layers of ham, tongue, and Swiss cheese, with Russian dressing served on long, thin slices of buttered rye and cut into quarters. Another version is made with smoked salmon, creamed cheese and egg salad, and yet others include corned beef.

Some further evidence of the Cuban connection is seen in a sandwich served in the West Village of New York City. It is essentially a Cuban ropa vieja sandwich, which is based on a marinated pulled skirt steak that is then stewed in a combination of tomato sauce with garlic, cumin, tomatoes, peppers and chilies. This particular iteration is then served on a steam-oven bun.

The New Jersey version of the sandwich, legend has it, was brought back to the states by a mayor of Maplewood, NJ in 1934 or 35. Of course, given all the versions of the sandwich, there are many explanations for its invention and name. Some hold that it originated in Sloppy Joe's bar in Cuba. Others attribute it to Sloppy Joe's in Key West (a favorite hangout of Ernest Hemmingway), which is responsible for the first appearance of the name in print. Still another attributes the ground-meat form of the sandwich to a diner in Iowa, or to the depression-era habit of making almost anything out of hamburger.

Whatever its origin, the sloppy Joe, staple of school cafeterias and New Jersey delis both, remains a favorite of all ages, with wide regional variations - all of them delicious.