



## Fish and chips

*Fish and chips are a staple<sup>1</sup> in the modern English diet, sold everywhere from pubs to chippies across London. (Pawel Libera/Getty)*

During the 1870s, Industrial Revolution inventions helped to spur<sup>2</sup> the growth<sup>3</sup> of the fish and chips trade, particularly in London. The new ice machines that kept the catch (1) cold and the development of railway tracks connecting major cities and ports, made fish more accessible and affordable than ever before. Soon, fish and chips shops began popping up around London, providing cheap and nourishing meals to the city's factory and mill workers.

Turning to the origin of chips, historians credit Belgian housewives in the 1680s with this culinary invention. When the Meuse River froze during winter, resourceful women fried potatoes in place of scarcely<sup>4</sup> available fish. By the 1830s, the imported staple of fried potatoes was implanted firmly among London's poor.

By 1910, there were around 25,000 chippies in the UK and more than 35,000 at its peak in 1927, compared to just 10,500 today.

Fish and chips are so engrained<sup>5</sup> in English culinary culture that they were one of the few foods never rationed during World War II. The government believed that safeguarding this comfort meal during a time of distress was key to keeping morale up.

Former British prime minister Winston Churchill famously called fish and chips "the good companions".

A 2010 celebration of the iconic dish by the Independent newspaper revealed the dish to be more iconic to England than the Queen or The Beatles. ....

More than 229 million portions of white fish fillets are sold each year in England, each one coated in a light batter and deep-fried, and served alongside fat fried slices of potatoes. For many English people, fish and chips are best served wrapped in newspaper and devoured with a combination of a two-pronged wooden fork and greasy fingers, preferably seaside. But most historians agree that it was in London, not on the coast, where the first fish and chips shop (called a chippie) opened its doors. It was here too that the city's working class propelled the dish into popular culinary culture. And it is in London that one of the oldest surviving chippies still stands today.

By Caitlin Zaino, 19 April 2013  
Adapted from <http://www.bbc.com/travel>

<sup>1</sup> A staple : un plat/aliment de base

<sup>2</sup> To spur : stimuler

<sup>3</sup> Growth : la croissance, l'augmentation

<sup>4</sup> Scarcely : rarement, peu

<sup>5</sup> Engrained : enraciné

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