

STAMP STORIES

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When we release this edition of Stamp Stories, the holiday season will be starting here in the United States. First comes Thanksgiving at the end of November and then we encounter the religious holidays of Hanukkah and Christmas, followed by the celebration of the western New Year. I always look forward to this time of year. It provides the occasion to spend time with our families and reconnect with our friends, but it also provides one of my favorite fascinations besides stamp collecting. And that is holiday food.

In thinking about the holidays and searching for a topic, it occurred to me that, other than a crystalline rock composed of sodium chloride, the only material that we humans commonly ingest for sustenance is biological. Being an omnivore, *Homo sapiens* consume all sorts of plant and animal matter to provide energy. This would seem to make food an entirely appropriate subject for one of our Stamp Stories.

Almost every country listed in the Scott Catalogue has released stamps showing food items or examples of local cuisine, either as the primary topic or part of the design. Postal, revenue, and other issues exist that show the plant or animal used as the foodstuff. Some designs show food gathering or the stages of food production. Other issues deal with food preparation and promote food festivals. Each of these items could rightfully find a place in a biology topical collection or a thematic exhibit.



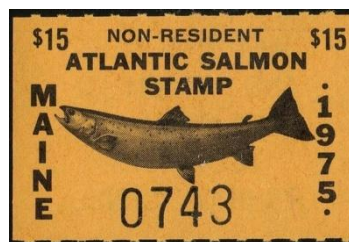
Traditional Holiday Meal



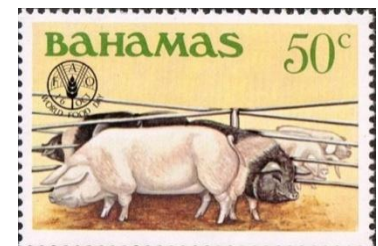
Fruit Growing

With the exception of Paleontology, you can find food-related items in each one of our standard checklist sections. Botany items include all sorts of fruits, vegetables, and grains as well as herbs, spices, and beverage sources. The U.S. Parcel Post stamp, issued in 1913 and shown at left, depicts fruit pickers on ladders in an orange grove. These stamps were intended for use only to pay the parcel post rates, but post office employees found this so confusing that after six months the USPOD allowed them to be used on all mail.

Mammals, birds, fishes, and marine creatures listed in other sections all provide main courses for our tables. The Maine Atlantic Salmon stamp at near right paid the non-resident fishing license fee. The Bahamas stamp at far right is the high value in a four-stamp set issued in 1981 showing food animals to publicize World Food Day.



Salmon fishing tax stamp



Bacon on the Hoof

Even the Entomology section lists insects that provide honey or protein directly in the form of the actual adults and larvae. Chocolate-covered ants, anyone?

The point of these illustrations is to show that using your topic to link to food and vice versa is only limited by your imagination. But they are only the introduction to the part of the meal that I really want to write about. Only a couple days ago I received a greeting card from my young friend, Cynthia, who knows me very well. On its front, it read, "Life is short. Eat dessert first." She wrote, "When I saw this card, of course I thought of you." As those of you who know me can attest, I never met a dessert I didn't like. The holiday tradition in my family included massive amounts of baked goods. It was typical for my grandmother to make 60 dozen cookies that we packaged and gave as gifts to neighbors and charity.



Along with locusts, this is Biblical food

This leads me to address the real subject of this story.

(See *Stamp Stories*, page 220)

STAMP STORIES (from page 212)

Dessert! You can find postal issues depicting all kinds of dessert items. Some of them show natural things such as fruits and berries. All very tasty, I am sure. Other stamps show manufactured sweets including candies and sugar confections. As for me, my motto, often misattributed to Marie Antoinette (and mistranslated as well), is “Let them eat cake.”

My search for the yummiest looking item of baked goods on a stamp finally led me to a recent issue from Slovenia promoting local cuisine (Sc#902b). This stamp is one of a pair issued on 25 November 2011, as part of a gastronomy series that began in 2004. It was produced using four-color offset printing in sheets of 16 se-tenant stamps. The “D” denomination is for the domestic rate, which at the time of issue was 44c.

It shows one of the famed delicacies produced by the popular resort of Bled called *kremšnita*, or cream slice. The story of this delicacy dates to the early 20th century, when a Bled baker named Ravnik brought a notebook of recipes for various desserts from his apprenticeship in the bakeries and pastry shops of Austria and Germany. One included instructions for a tasty sweet vanilla cream, which is the primary ingredient of Bled cream slices.

After World War II, pastry chef Ištvan Lukačević arrived in Bled from Yugoslavia to work in the Ravnik bakery. He became familiar with the house recipes from the old notebook, including the one for vanilla cream. In the summer, he worked at the coffee and pastry shop of Hotel Park, and it was there that he got the idea of offering guests something a little tastier than the common heavy and very sweet cream slice.

He spread vanilla cream on a layer of puff pastry, then on top of that a thinner layer of whipped sweet cream, then a layer of puff pastry, a dusting of icing sugar, and thus was the Bled cream slice. Today this dessert treat is one of the biggest attractions of Bled. Here is a recipe by chef Jadranka Von Koprivnjak-Stojcic of Adrianna's Catering, Rockville Maryland. <http://adriannacatering.com/recipe-blog/kremsnita-a-vanilla-and-custard-cream-cake-dessert>

Ingredients:	4 cups milk	2 teaspoon vanilla sugar
	8 eggs	2 puff pastry sheets
	1½ cups sugar	3 cups heavy whipping cream
	¼ cups flour	2 tablespoons powdered sugar

Pastry:

- Preheat oven to 350° Fahrenheit.
- Prepare the pastry dough: on a lightly floured work surface, use a floured rolling pin to roll each sheet thin.
- Place the pastry on a baking sheet and bake for ten minutes.
- Remove the pastry from the oven and leave them to completely cool.

Custard:

- Separate the eggs and mix 8 egg yolks with 1½ cups sugar until light and fluffy.
- Gradually add flour, vanilla sugar, and 1 cup of milk.

To finish:

- In heavy saucepan over medium heat, boil 3 cups of milk.
- Fold egg yolks mix in to boiling milk and cook slowly stirring gently, until mixture starts to thicken.
- Remove from heat and combine with 8 beaten egg whites (very stiff).
- Place one sheet of pastry in a 2-3 inch deep pan. Pour the custard over the pastry and chill well.
- Beat a 3 cups heavy whipping cream with 2 soup spoons of powdered sugar and pour over the chilled custard.
- Cut the second pastry sheet into 20 squares. Lay the squares over cream. Before serving, sprinkle with powder sugar.
- Serve very cold.

A high school classmate, who is retired from the U.S. Foreign Service and is married to a Slovenian, currently lives in Ljubljana. Not long ago he invited me to visit. Excuse me while check with a travel agent.

