

PA Milk Marketing Board
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Oh, Happy Day, When Milkshakes Were Invented!

I have to tell you... I love a good vanilla milkshake or vanilla malt. Thinking about when they would soon be available all across the region piqued my curiosity about their origin.

Milk drinks have been around as long as someone could settle a cow long enough to milk it. Most milk drinks were originally served hot or cooked due to the lack of refrigeration, and they can be traced back to the 16th century. No one referred to them at that time as milkshakes, the most common drinks being known as *posset* or *syllabub*. (Art of Drink, 2021)

The term *milkshake* did not emerge until 1885. Milkshakes were at that time made with whiskey and described as a “sturdy, healthy egg nog type of drink” (Flexner & Berg, 1982) They were served as a tonic as well as a casual beverage.

Today we use the terms *shake* and *milkshake* interchangeably, but at one time they had different meanings. Milkshakes were considered to be a beverage made with milk, ice and a flavoring; shakes were characterized by ingredients in addition to the milk. *Cream Shakes* were made with the addition of cream, *Egg and Cream Shakes* included eggs as well as cream, and the *New York Egg Cream Shake* was made with just milk and eggs.

Ingredients were added to a jar and then shook together for several minutes until a froth formed.

The first written reference to what we know today as a milkshake came in an article in the Atlanta Constitution, May 17, 1886, in which it was referred to as an Atlanta beverage that cost about five cents.

The first patent for a blender-type mixer for milkshakes was granted in 1889 to F. H. Shepherd and J. W. Meyer. Hamilton Beach introduced the Cyclone Mixer in 1910 and this, along with the growing popularity of soda fountains—city and town hangouts for young people—created popular demand for the cool, creamy beverage.

The invention of freon-cooled refrigeration also helped increase the popularity of milkshakes by making ice cream a new and available ingredient. Some advertisements referred to milkshakes that contained ice cream as *frosted*s. A Denton, MD, newspaper wrote in 1937 that if you wanted a “frosted shake, add a dash of your favorite ice cream” (Encyclopedia of American Food and Drink, 1999), and it wasn’t long before ice cream was a regular ingredient in the milkshake.

The fun soda fountain culture of the 1950s led to names for certain combinations of ice cream and other flavorings. One example was the “Burn One All the Way” a shake that contained both chocolate malt and chocolate ice cream. Another was “Shake One in the Hay” which was a strawberry milkshake.

There was this milkshake machine salesman, Ray Kroc, who bought exclusive rights to a machine invented by Earl Prince and used it in what would become the multi-billion-dollar MacDonald's fast-food chain founded by Kroc. The post-World War II era also saw the popularity of milkshakes in foreign countries, particularly Europe.

I know that there are modern-day enemies of the milkshake, those who talk about cholesterol and dairy issues, fat and sugar, but nothing will ever take away my pleasure in drinking a cold, frothy vanilla milkshake on a hot summer day. It isn't anything but good!

If you would like to try one of the original milkshakes, simply add 4 ½ ounces of milk, 1 ounce of flavored syrup, 2 Tablespoons light cream, and 2 ice cubes to a cocktail shaker or quart jar with a lid. Shake for 3 minutes, pour into a drinking glass, garnish with a dash of nutmeg and enjoy! (Art of Drink, 2021)

PMMB is always available to respond to questions and concerns. I can be reached at 717-210-8244 or by email at chardbarge@pa.gov.