

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



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Episode #019

British Food Part 4 - The (Earl of) Sandwich

January 21, 2020

[00:00:02] Hello, hello, hello, and welcome to the English Learning for Curious Minds podcast by Leonardo English.

[00:00:09] I'm Alastair Budge and today it is part for the final part of our series on British food, of our little [sojourn](#)¹ into some weird British culinary history.

[00:00:23] Before we get right into it, I want to remind those of you listening to this podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, iVoox, or wherever you get your podcasts that you can grab a copy of the transcript and key vocabulary for the podcast on the website, which is leonardoenglish.com.

[00:00:42] The transcripts are super helpful if you want to follow along, and the key vocabulary means that you'll discover a whole load of new words and you won't have to stop to look things up in a dictionary.

¹ a temporary stay, e.g. "her sojourn in Rome".

[00:00:54] The introductory promotional price for becoming a member of Leonardo English will end at midnight on January the 31st so if you want to [lock in](#)² the introductory promotional price of just nine euros per month then make sure you become a member before then.

[00:01:11] You can find out more at leonardoenglish.com forward slash subscribe.

[00:01:16] But to summarise, members get access to the transcript and key vocabulary for every podcast we have ever made, both on the website and now in lovely new downloadable PDF format so you can read it on the go, print out, share it with friends, or do whatever you want with it.

[00:01:38] Okay.

[00:01:39] We have already gone over some weird and wonderful stories from the world of British food.

[00:01:47] We have covered oysters, fish and chips, and the English breakfast.

[00:01:53] Today it is time for something a little different and you could say that we have saved the best for last.

[00:02:02] It's time to learn about what the Wall Street Journal called Britain's biggest contribution to [gastronomy](#)³.

[00:02:12] That's right, it's the sandwich.

[00:02:16] It's time to learn about the sandwich, where it came from, who invented it, and why it became so popular.

² to get and keep an advantage such as a low price

³ the art and knowledge involved in preparing and eating good food

[00:02:26] As with everything on the English Learning for Curious Minds podcast, and I might also say, anything in life, to understand something properly, you need to understand where it comes from and the history behind it.

[00:02:41] With the sandwich, it has a pretty interesting history, one that takes us back over 250 years.

[00:02:50] The sandwich, as we know it was [popularised](#)⁴ in England in 1762 by John Montagu, who was the fourth [Earl](#)⁵ of Sandwich.

[00:03:03] The story goes that Montagu, the Earl of Sandwich was a [serial](#)⁶, [habitual](#)⁷ gambler and used to spend hours at a time at the card table.

[00:03:16] During a particularly long [binge](#)⁸, a particularly long session at the card table, and with the card game at a point where he didn't feel he could get up from the table, he asked his cook to bring him something he could eat without getting up from his seat and which he could eat with one hand so he could continue to play his card game.

[00:03:44] And the cook brought him some meat [wrapped](#)⁹ between two slices of bread, the first version of a dish we now know as the sandwich.

[00:03:56] The sandwich had the advantage over a traditional meal in that it was something that he could hold in one hand while he held the cards in another.

⁴ made popular

⁵ (the title of) a British man of high socialrank, between a marquis and a viscount

⁶ used to describe someone who does something several times or repeatedly

⁷ repeated, frequent

⁸ an occasion when an activity is done in an extreme way, especially eating , drinking , or spending money

⁹ covered with paper or other material

[00:04:11] Unfortunately, the history books don't record whether the invention of the sandwich was enough to bring the Earl of Sandwich victory at the cards table.

[00:04:22] I suspect not.

[00:04:24] In any case, Montagu enjoyed his meat and bread so much that he ate it all the time.

[00:04:32] Montagu's official [biography](#)¹⁰ tells the story slightly differently, saying that his [commitment](#)¹¹ to politics, the Navy and art meant that he could not leave his desk for lunch and so needed something he could eat whilst working.

[00:04:48] But this seems to me like someone who was just a bit embarrassed at the fact that he spent more time at the card table than at his desk.

[00:04:58] I think you can make your own minds up as to which account you believe.

[00:05:03] In any case, his invention, if we can really call it an invention, grew popular in London's high society.

[00:05:13] It didn't really have a name, but people would just request "what Sandwich has", which was later just shortened to sandwich.

[00:05:23] But this isn't to say that the Earl of Sandwich was some [culinary](#)¹² [genius](#)¹³ who had this amazing idea of putting [fillings](#)¹⁴ between slices of bread.

¹⁰ the life story of a person written by someone else

¹¹ willingness to give your time and energy to a job, activity, or something that you believe in

¹² connected with cooking or kitchens

¹³ A person with very great and rare natural ability or skill, especially in a particular area such as science or art

¹⁴ the layer of food inside a sandwich, cake, etc

[00:05:36] Indeed, to us now it probably just seems obvious, right?

[00:05:41] It doesn't seem revolutionary at all.

[00:05:44] And in your country, I guess, there may well be your variants that [predate](#)¹⁵, that come earlier than, the Earl of Sandwich.

[00:05:53] So Montagu, the Earl of Sandwich, he didn't invent this [out of thin air](#)¹⁶, out of nothing, he didn't just come up with the idea.

[00:06:03] We know that he traveled abroad to the Mediterranean where Turkish and Greek [mezze](#)¹⁷ [platters](#)¹⁸ were served, so dips, cheeses, and meats. They were all [sandwiched](#)¹⁹, they were all put between, layers of bread.

[00:06:20] And in all [likelihood](#)²⁰, Montagu took inspiration from these when he sat at that card table.

[00:06:27] The sandwich [took off](#)²¹ and became very popular almost immediately. Within a few months of its creation, a man named Edward Gibbon mentioned the sandwich by name in a diary entry writing that he'd seen 20 or 30 of the [first men](#)²² of the kingdom in a restaurant eating them.

¹⁵ to have existed or happened before another thing:

¹⁶ from nothing, e.g. "I can't come up with €10,000 out of thin air."

¹⁷ a selection of small dishes served as appetizers in parts of the Middle East, the Balkans, Turkey, Greece, and North Africa

¹⁸ a large plate used for serving food or a meal with one type of food served on a large plate

¹⁹ to put something or someone in a small space between two other, usually bigger, things or people

²⁰ the chance that something will happen

²¹ to suddenly start to be successful or popular

²² important men, likely aristocrats or rich men

[00:06:47] It was popular for some of the same reasons that it is now. It's tasty, quick to make, easy to eat, and pretty affordable.

[00:06:59] Some things never change.

[00:07:02] In the UK, there were two major developments that really [boosted](#)²³ the popularity of the sandwich, both of which I think might surprise you.

[00:07:16] Firstly, in 1928, the invention of sliced bread, bread that comes pre-sliced.

[00:07:25] Now sliced bread is the kind of thing that you might not think was invented as it seems just so obvious now.

[00:07:34] Indeed, there is an expression in English that's [the best thing since sliced bread](#)²⁴, which you can use as a way of saying that something is really great.

[00:07:46] But anyway, sliced bread was invented in 1928 and this made sandwiches just so much easier to make.

[00:07:56] Cutting bread is a bit [fiddly](#)²⁵ to do in a straight line, and so buying it pre-sliced made making sandwiches incredibly easy.

[00:08:10] Secondly, was the invention of the pre-made sandwich, which arrived in 1980 in Marks and Spencer, which is an [iconic](#)²⁶ British department store.

²³ to improve or increase something

²⁴ the best and most useful innovation or development invented for a long time

²⁵ difficult

²⁶ very famous or popular, especially being considered to represent particular opinions or a particular time

[00:08:21] They used to serve sandwiches in their restaurant, and then one day at the end of the working day, instead of throwing away the [leftover²⁷](#) sandwiches, they [wrapped them up²⁸](#) and made them available for sale to the public.

[00:08:40] Now a little bit like sliced bread, you might think that the pre-packed sandwich seems so obvious and ask, why did it take so long for that to be invented?

[00:08:54] Well, the truth is that people just didn't think that it would sell because it was something that was so easy to make at home.

[00:09:04] They didn't think that people would want to buy them pre-made and pre-packaged.

[00:09:10] But they couldn't have been more wrong.

[00:09:13] They were an immediate [hit²⁹](#), an immediate success, as they suited the busy [on the go³⁰](#) life of many London workers.

[00:09:25] And the popularity of the pre-made sandwich in the UK continues to grow.

[00:09:31] [Nowadays³¹](#), it is estimated that the sandwich industry is worth 8 billion pounds in the UK alone, and it employs over 300,000 people.

[00:09:46] And it's quite a science getting the pre-packed sandwich, right.

²⁷ a leftover part of something is the part that has not been used or eaten when the other parts have been

²⁸ to cover or surround something in paper, cloth, or other material

²⁹ a thing or person that is very popular or successful

³⁰ very busy

³¹ at the present time, in comparison to the past:

[00:09:50] It can't stay on the shelves for too long, and you need to get the right combination of ingredients, so that bread doesn't go too [soggy](#)³² or wet and disgusting, right?

[00:10:02] So obviously you can't just put a whole load of tomatoes right up against the bread, otherwise it'll get wet and horrible.

[00:10:09] British supermarkets have got pretty good at making pre-packed sandwiches though.

[00:10:15] Indeed, one [travel hack](#)³³, I guess we can call it a [travel hack](#), but this is a travel hack for those of you visiting the UK, is that every British supermarket sells actually really good sandwiches ready to go.

[00:10:32] If you are looking for something quick to eat and you want a tasty [affordable](#)³⁴ meal, then just go into any supermarket and pick up a sandwich.

[00:10:44] When I say this to friends from places like France or Italy, they are always surprised, as sandwiches that you get in supermarkets in those countries are, [for want of](#)³⁵ a better word, disgusting, but in the UK, they really are pretty good.

[00:11:02] So just trust me on this one.

[00:11:05] Obviously it's not just in the UK that sandwiches are popular and I imagine that some form of sandwich is probably popular in your country.

[00:11:17] Nowhere are sandwiches more popular than in the US, where more than 300 million sandwiches are eaten every day.

³² (of things that can absorb water , especially food) unpleasantly wet and soft

³³ clever solution for a travel related problem

³⁴ not expensive

³⁵ because of not having (something) because (something) does not exist or is not available

[00:11:29] But the Americans didn't immediately [adopt](#)³⁶ the sandwich.

[00:11:33] As you may know, when the [founding fathers](#)³⁷ left Europe to found America, they wanted to leave the [stuffy](#)³⁸ European [archaic](#)³⁹ traditions behind.

[00:11:47] They wanted to build a new society starting from [afresh](#)⁴⁰.

[00:11:53] And so the theory goes that the reason that Americans [held off](#)⁴¹, they waited so long to adopt the sandwich was because it was associated with old [aristocratic](#)⁴² Britain, because of the Earl of Sandwich. It was exactly the opposite of everything that the founding fathers of the United States stood for.

[00:12:18] However, [morals](#)⁴³ and principles can only be [upheld](#)⁴⁴ for so long and sandwiches, well, they are pretty delicious.

[00:12:27] The first record of a sandwich recipe appeared in an American cookbook in 1815 and from then the sandwich has just got more and more popular in America.

[00:12:41] Now there are hundreds, thousands even, of different varieties.

³⁶ to accept or start to use something new

³⁷ one of a group of men who started the United States as a country and wrote its constitution

³⁸ old-fashioned, formal, and boring

³⁹ of or belonging to an ancient period in history

⁴⁰ if you do something afresh, you deal with it again in a new way

⁴¹ to not do something immediately

⁴² a class of people who hold high social rank

⁴³ standards

⁴⁴ to defend or keep a principle or law

[00:12:47] But when the sandwich was first eaten in America, the most popular version wasn't something you'd recognise today.

[00:12:57] It wasn't meatballs, it wasn't turkey, ham or cheese or anything like that.

[00:13:03] Can you guess what it might be?

[00:13:05] Oh, I don't know if you'll guess, it was tongue.

[00:13:08] Yes, that's the tongue of an animal.

[00:13:12] That seems gross right?

[00:13:13] It seems gross to us today. I guess.

[00:13:17] Luckily things have moved on since then, and sandwiches come in all different varieties. You may have heard of a Sloppy Joe, a Reuben, or a grilled cheese sandwich, which are some of the most popular in the US.

[00:13:34] In the UK though, probably the most [iconic](#)⁴⁵ sandwich is something called the BLT, which stands for bacon, lettuce, and tomato.

[00:13:46] Although you can find sandwiches in almost any possible shape or size.

[00:13:52] Indeed, there is a Wikipedia page of a list of [notable](#)⁴⁶ sandwiches and there are 219 on that.

⁴⁵ very famous or popular, especially being considered to represent particular opinions or a particular time

⁴⁶ important and deserving attention , because of being very good or interesting

[00:14:01] I'll leave you to [peruse](#)⁴⁷ that list at your leisure and you can create your own little [bucket list](#)⁴⁸ of sandwiches if you really want.

[00:14:10] I'll put the link in the show notes.

[00:14:13] On a personal note, my favourite sandwich has to be the one made at home on [Boxing Day](#)⁴⁹, the day after Christmas. You basically just put all the leftovers from Christmas lunch in between two pieces of bread, so that's turkey, bread sauce, ham, cheese.

[00:14:32] It's absolutely delicious, although I should admit that my brother is the real expert on this.

[00:14:39] Okay.

[00:14:40] With this comes the end of this mini-series on British food.

[00:14:46] If you haven't checked out the other episodes and you are hungry for more, if you will [pardon](#)⁵⁰ that terrible [pun](#)⁵¹, then please do check them out.

[00:14:56] Episode one is on oysters, an unlikely but very interesting food with a very important history for Britain.

[00:15:04] Then episode two is about fish and chips and talks about the weird and wonderful history of that dish.

[00:15:12] Episode three is about the English breakfast all 1,500 calories of it.

⁴⁷ to read through something, especially in order to find the part you are interested in

⁴⁸ a list of the things that a person would like to do or achieve before they die

⁴⁹ in the UK and some other countries, the day after Christmas Day, which is a public holiday

⁵⁰ to forgive someone for something they have said or done. This word is often used in polite expressions

⁵¹ a funny use of a word or phrase that has several meanings or that sounds like another word

[00:15:20] One thing that I think we can all agree on is that British food isn't boring.

[00:15:25] Yes, it might not have the same [reputation](#)⁵² as cuisines like French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, but it is full of fascinating history.

[00:15:40] It's amazing how things change and how a food can go from being the food of the [aristocracy](#) and very rich through to being the food of the poor and of course vice versa.

[00:15:58] This has been a really interesting series to make and I hope you have enjoyed it.

[00:16:03] As always, thank you very much for listening to the show.

[00:16:08] If you are looking for the key vocabulary and transcript for this podcast or for any of the others [for that matter](#)⁵³, you can grab those over on the website, which is Leonardoenglish.com.

[00:16:21] The transcripts and key vocabulary are a big, big help for those of you that need a little helping hand and mean that you don't need to keep pausing and rewinding if you missed or didn't understand a word, and you don't have to look things up in a dictionary.

[00:16:39] As a language learner myself, and having used this technique when learning French and Italian, I certainly know how useful they are.

[00:16:48] And as I said, the promotional price for becoming a member and getting access to the transcripts and the key vocabulary for this podcast and for every podcast

⁵² the opinion that people in general have about someone or something, or how much respect or admiration someone or something receives, based on past behaviour or character

⁵³ used to show that a statement is true in another situation, e.g. Ming's never been to Spain, or to any European country for that matter.

we've ever done is coming to an end at midnight on January the 31st so that's just 10 days from now.

[00:17:08] If you become a member before midnight on January the 31st then you will get that promotional price of just nine euros per month for as long as you are a member, which I hope will be a very long time.

[00:17:22] And also, if you weren't aware, there's a 30 day no questions asked refund policy, so, if at any time within the first 30 days of being a member, you find that it hasn't met your expectations or you haven't been able to use it, just let me know, let the team know and you'll get a full refund.

[00:17:42] That's how confident I am that you'll find them an amazingly useful resource for improving your listening and speaking skills.

[00:17:52] Right, that's the [sales pitch](#)⁵⁴ over.

[00:17:55] I know it's useful, our current members know that they are very useful and you should just head to leonardoenglish.com/ subscribe and take a look for yourself.

[00:18:07] You've been listening to the English Learning for Curious Minds podcast by Leonardo English.

[00:18:12] I'm Alastair Budge and I will catch you in the next episode.

[END OF PODCAST]

⁵⁴ a talk or a way of talking that is intended to persuade you to buy something

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #019
British Food Part 4 - The (Earl of) Sandwich

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Sojourn	a temporary stay, e.g. "her sojourn in Rome".
Lock in	to get and keep an advantage such as a low price
Gastronomy	the art and knowledge involved in preparing and eating good food
Popularised	made popular
Earl	(the title of) a British man of high socialrank, between a marquis and a viscount:
Serial	used to describe someone who does something several times or repeatedly
Habitual	repeated, frequent
Binge	an occasion when an activity is done in an extreme way, especially eating, drinking, or spending money
Wrapped	covered with paper or other material
Biography	the life story of a person written by someone else
Commitment	willingness to give your time and energy to a job, activity, or something that you believe in
Culinary	connected with cooking or kitchens
Genius	a person with very great and rare natural ability or skill, especially in a particular area such as science or art

British Food Part 4 - The (Earl of) Sandwich

Fillings	the layer of food inside a sandwich, cake, etc
Predate	to have existed or happened before another thing
Out of thin air	from nothing, e.g. "I can't come up with €10,000 out of thin air."
Mezze	a selection of small dishes served as appetizers in parts of the Middle East, the Balkans, Turkey, Greece, and North Africa
Platters	a large plate used for serving food or a meal with one type of food served on a large plate
Sandwiched	to put something or someone in a small space between two other, usually bigger, things or people
Likelihood	the chance that something will happen
Took off	to suddenly start to be successful or popular
First men	important men, likely aristocrats or rich men
Boosted	to improve or increase something
The best thing since sliced bread	the best and most useful innovation or development invented for a long time
Fiddly	difficult
Iconic	very famous or popular, especially being considered to represent particular opinions or a particular time
Leftover	a leftover part of something is the part that has not been used or eaten when the other parts have been
Wrapped up	to cover or surround something in paper, cloth, or other material

Hit	a thing or person that is very popular or successful
On the go	very busy
Nowadays	at the present time, in comparison to the past:
Soggy	(of things that can absorb water , especially food) unpleasantly wet and soft
Travel hack	clever solution for a travel related problem
Affordable	not expensive
For want of	because of not having (something) because (something) does not exist or is not available
Adopt	to accept or start to use something new
Founding fathers	one of a group of men who started the United States as a country and wrote its constitution
Stuffy	old-fashioned, formal, and boring
Archaic	of or belonging to an ancient period in history
Afresh	if you do something afresh, you deal with it again in a new way
Held off	to not do something immediately
Aristocratic	a class of people who hold high social rank
Morals	standards
Uphold	to defend or keep a principle or law
Notable	important and deserving attention , because of being very good or

interesting

Peruse

to read through something, especially in order to find the part you are interested in

Bucket list

a list of the things that a person would like to do or achieve before they die

Boxing day

in the UK and some other countries, the day after Christmas Day, which is a public holiday

Pardon

to forgive someone for something they have said or done. This word is often used in polite expressions

Pun

a funny use of a word or phrase that has several meanings or that sounds like another word

Reputation

the opinion that people in general have about someone or something, or how much respect or admiration someone or something receives, based on past behaviour or character

For that matter

used to show that a statement is true in another situation, e.g. Ming's never been to Spain, or to any European country for that matter.

Sales pitch

a talk or a way of talking that is intended to persuade you to buy something

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What did you struggle to understand?

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