



Tell me

Episode 1: Who invented cordial?

Hello everyone and welcome to *Tell me*, the Alimentarium's mini podcast. My name is Jelena and I'm one of the curators at the Alimentarium. If you've never heard of us before, the Alimentarium is the first museum in the world that looks at all aspects of human food. It's in Vevey, on Lake Geneva in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. We launched this series of podcasts in French a few months ago, to answer children's questions about food and nutrition. This is a translation of one of the episodes and we hope that you and our English-speaking visitors will also find it interesting and that it might even encourage you to send us your questions by e-mail or via social media. We've all got questions about food, no matter how old or young we are, and there is no such thing as a silly question... unless you already know the answer! So please write to us, in English if you prefer or, better still, send us an audio recording with your questions. We'll give you all the contact details at the end of this episode. In the meantime, sit back and enjoy listening to us answer Noam, who is five years old and who wanted to know:

Who invented cordial?

So, here goes...

Whether you call this drink squash, cordial or even syrup, as the French do, they call it "sirop", we have the Arabs to thank for this fruit-flavoured drink as well as for other sweet things such as candied fruit, sweets and sherbet.

Did you know that the words 'syrup' and 'sherbet' both come from the Arabic verb meaning 'to drink'?

The first recipes for cordials were found in chemist's books! And that's because the Arabs used sugar as medicine. In fact, have you noticed that, when we talk about syrup, we could be talking about two different things? It could either be a very sweet syrup which, when diluted in water, makes a refreshing drink, or it could be a spoonful of medicine, like cough syrup, for example.

The Arabs prepared their cordials with water, sugar and fruit, such as pomegranates... you know, that round red fruit full of seeds used to make the well-known French cordial called 'grenadine'.

They also used herbs, such as mint, and spices (cloves for example) and

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flowers, such as orange blossom, violets and lots of roses!

They made sherbet in a similar way, except that they used ice instead of water. This same syrup had a lot of sugar in it. When it is heated to between 135 and 140 degrees Celsius, it turns into a paste which could then be used to make sweets.

Europeans discovered just how good sweet things tasted during the Crusades. The Crusades is the name given to a very very long war between Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages. And when the European soldiers came home, they kept up the habit of drinking cordial. People then started drinking it in Spain, then in Italy and France, and the fashion spread to other parts of Europe.

So, what about maple syrup then? This is not made with fruit, and it is not made by adding water to sugar. And it has nothing to do with any wars either. It's a whole different story. Well, the Amerindians were the first to make maple syrup by heating up the sap of sugar maple trees. And that was long before Europeans arrived there in the 15th century.

So, there you go! Now you know all about sugar and spice and all things nice!

And if, like Noam, you've got questions about food, please write to us or better still send us your question as an audio file to our e-mail address community@alimentarium.org or contact us via social media. Don't forget to give us your name, and your age too, if that's ok with you!

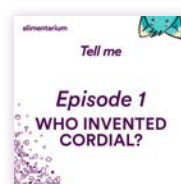
We look forward to hearing from you... and to answering you in a future episode of our Tell me podcast!

In the meantime, there's much more to explore on our website www.alimentarium.org/en.

Thanks for listening!

Take care and we hope you'll join us again soon!

Bye!



Interactive illustrations and more episodes available on our website:

www.alimentarium.org/en