

News

GREEN

Ash Barty among fans of Vegemite as famous spread turns 100 today

Happy little Vegemites have extra spring while they spread as Australia's unofficial national spread clocks a century, with fans including retired tennis ace and new mum Ash Barty



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READING LEVEL: GREEN

It's the Aussie staple* you either love or hate.

And by his own account, the grandson of Vegemite inventor Cyril Callister said it was remarkable the spread had notched up a century given it was a “complete and absolute dud*” when it first rolled off the production line.

Jamie Callister said the product became more popular after company founder Fred Walker, who “invested his life's savings” into it, came up with the idea of giving away a small jar of Vegemite with every block of Kraft cheese.

At the time, the company was also the Australian manufacturer of the American cheese.

“People started to like it and by the Second World War, it was written into the army ration book*,” Mr Callister said.

“It's a very Australian story that spans the globe”.

Mr Callister said his grandfather would be “enormously proud” of how big the spread had become.

“It’s not just my family’s story, it’s all of our story as Australians,” he said. “Love it or hate it, it’s so quirky* and so us.”

“I think he would be enormously proud of his contribution to food science in Australia and the lasting legacy*.

“He always firmly believed in it, he knew the benefits, but the fact that so many households have it (about 80 per cent), he would be blown away by that.”

To mark 100 years of sales, Vegemite is releasing 1000 mini fine silver replicas of Vegemite toast that it hopes will become collector items.

It follows the release of mini replica fine silver and gold-plated jars, which sold out in four hours, with one of the gold-plated versions fetching \$6,350 on eBay in September.

Retired Australian tennis champion Ash Barty, who has a limited edition collector’s jar of Vegemite, said she was looking forward to introducing the spread to her son Hayden.

She was confident that “he will love it when he does try it”.

While touring, Barty said it was “always a bit of fun to get (fellow athletes) to try Vegemite”, explaining there were “a lot of mixed reactions from the international players”.

“Some loved it, some definitely did not,” Barty said. “One of my doubles partners, American Jen Brady, was a big fan. She even wore a Vegemite T-shirt for her trip to the Australian Open.”

Vegemite will make the fine silver mini toasts available for purchase from 9am on Thursday, October 26.

POLL

GLOSSARY

- **staple:** fixture, everyday item
- **dud:** failure, something deemed unsatisfactory and worthless

- **army ration book:** a book with coupons or stamps for limited items, like sugar, meat, cooking oil and canned goods
- **quirky:** unusual, distinctive
- **legacy:** something of lasting value or importance handed down from the past

EXTRA READING

[Vegemite gets its own \\$2 coin](#)

[Vegemite smell a key part of site's heritage](#)

[Vegemite icypoles – a cool idea or not?](#)

QUICK QUIZ

1. Who invented Vegemite?
2. Vegemite's fortunes changed when it was paired with which popular food?
3. Vegemite became popular when it was added to what kind of book after which world event?
4. How many mini fine silver replicas of Vegemite toast have been produced?
5. What price did a mini replica gold-plated Vegemite jar fetch on eBay in September?

LISTEN TO THIS STORY

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Design a collector's item

What's your favourite snack? Design a special collector's item that celebrates your snack. Don't forget to think about whether it will be worn, used or displayed as that will influence your design. Use information in today's story to give you ideas.

Time: allow 30 minutes to complete this activity

Curriculum Links: English, Design and Technologies, Visual Communication Design

2. Extension

Imagine that you are a reporter for Kids News. You want to write a story about how

Vegemite and eBay can make it difficult for people to make and sell fake fine silver replicas of Vegemite toast. You are going to interview an authentication expert and the person who designed the commemorative toast. Write five questions that you would ask each of them. Then, use your research skills to write the answers that you think that they would give.

Time: allow 30 minutes to complete this activity

Curriculum Links: English, Economics and Business

VCOP ACTIVITY

Opener up-level it

Make a list of all the openers in the article. Pick three that repeat and see if you can replace them with another word, or shuffle the order of the sentence to bring a new opener to the front.

Don't forget to re-read the sentence to make sure it still makes sense, and that it actually sounds better.