

Join me in celebrating 100 years of Vegemite!

[JENNIFER SANDLIN](#) 2:42 PM THU OCT 26, 2023



photo by [Jennifer Sandlin](#)

Happy Birthday to Vegemite, a polarizing spread that just turned 100 years old. While many find the taste unsettling, the company sells over 20 million jars in Australia every year, so it's clearly got more fans than haters.

The Guardian [explains](#):

Jamie Callister, the grandson of Vegemite creator Cyril Callister, is one of the millions of Australians who starts the day with a slice of buttery toast licked with a thin swipe of our beloved national spread.

"He was a brilliant scientist," Callister says of his grandfather, who was recruited by Melbourne-based entrepreneur Fred Walker to develop a homegrown alternative to Marmite using spent brewer's yeast from the nearby Carlton and United Breweries. "Today marks the 100-year anniversary of the first jar of his creation coming off the production line."

And while Callister – who wrote a biography of his grandfather this year – and his family are justly proud of Cyril Callister's legacy, the Vegemite grandchildren say they see the spread's lasting success as much more than that. "This isn't our story, it's Australia's story."

For most Australians, a love of Vegemite was imparted at a young age. Elizabeth Hewson, a food writer and author of *Saturday Night Pasta*, remembers the way her grandfather would feed her Vegemite on toast in bed. "Lots of butter, a thoughtful spread and cut into squares," she says. "I make it that way for my son now too."

After Britain's Marmite became unavailable during and after World War I, businessman and entrepreneur Fred Walker decided Australia needed their own.

Food technologist and chemist Dr Callister was brought into the Vegemite factory in 1923 to a rather hostile environment.

"People were basically thinking, 'what can a university smarty pants do that we can't do?'," Jamie [Callister, grandson of Vegemite inventor Cyril Callister] said.

"Over the course of the year, through trial and error, he came up with what we know as Vegemite."

The spread is essentially the by-product of beer and was developed through using leftover brewer's yeast from the Carlton United Brewery.

I'm solidly on team Vegemite—I love the salty stuff spread on a slice of toast—yum!



Some Vegemite-inspired street art in Melbourne. Photo: Jennifer Sandlin