

2 MILLION

YEARS OF

THE FOOD

INDUSTRY

W. H. ...



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Today...

Primitive tools have led to sophisticated machines, and farming has become a science in response to the food needs of the planet.

Fire's most important contribution to modern industry was turning water into steam to drive the wheels of the industrial revolution.

Water, essential to all life, is the only food permanently available in modern kitchens, at the turn of a tap.

Each new generation of domestic and industrial ovens is a sign of our technological evolution. Yet, apart from the microwave oven, today's cooking methods were all invented in history or even prehistory.

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Selective plant breeding has vastly increased production of cereals which form the basis of our food supply. Processed industrially into food products or ingredients, they are also valuable as animal feed for meat and milk production.

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Only about twenty species of the animal kingdom are regularly bred for food, whereas we eat hundreds of species of fish. Most fish are still caught by trawling the seas, although we often cultivate shellfish in underwater prairies.

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Fruits and vegetables, like cereals, concentrate solar energy in a readily digestible form. They were among the first foods preserved in cans, and are processed even when they are sold fresh.

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Spices, coffee, tea and cocoa were once the meat of kings, worth more than their weight in gold. Today, they have joined the more common food products on supermarket shelves.

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Some raw food materials can be eaten straight from the farm or orchard. Others must first be refined to separate the edible from the inedible parts, or to give more stable food ingredients.

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Fermentation is one of the oldest food processing methods. It is a low-energy means of preserving perishable foods like meat, milk and fish, and is widely used today, both for large scale production and in small cottage industries.

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Distilling refines low-alcohol beverages by extracting their "spirit". One of the early reasons for commercial distilling was to cut down weight for sea transport.

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Foods are preserved by stopping growth of microbes which spoil them. From the earliest drying processes to modern fridges which freeze the freshness in, preservation has been vital in ensuring food supplies all year round, and in offering greater convenience.

Out of the ordinary

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Optimized production and processing has made food safer and more plentiful than it has ever been, and has reduced food costs as a part of the total family budget. This in itself is an extraordinary performance.

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Past, present or future, the same questions recur. How to get enough good, safe food, with a minimum of effort? Throughout its long history, the food industry has never been better placed to answer these questions...

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