

Food Timeline

From covering the basics to making everyday delicious – how our food has developed since 1884



Cardiff, c1900

1884

Our Penny Bazaars sold some basic food items, such as flour, spices and confectionery.

Licquorice Allsorts.	Sharps Toffee
Lemonade Powder	Mixed Fruit Jellies
Sumor's Chocolates	Fruit Delights
Tangerines	Marsipan Mixture
Pear Drops	Broken Chocolate Cream
Ginger Snaps	Empress Shortbread
Assorted Creams	Brandy Snaps
Tea Biscuits	ld. Chocolate Wafers.

Staff Bulletin, 1927

1920s

In the 1920s our Confectionery Departments sold a wide variety of items from pear drops to brandy snaps.



1927

Ice cream counters were introduced in 1927, two years later we began selling freshly made sandwiches from the same counters.

1931

M&S food departments opened in all stores, selling canned goods, fruit, vegetables and cakes.



Watford, 1939



Blackpool, 1938

1934

Provisions including cooked meats, sausages, pies, cheese and bacon were introduced to selected stores.

1935

Café Bars opened in a selection of stores. Customers could order hot meals including chops, steaks or fish and chips.



Edmonton Café Bar, 1930s



Ealing Broadway Café Bar, 1940s

1937

We established our own fruit distribution centre in London's Covent Garden – a move to work directly with producers and suppliers that continues today.



Fruit display, 1930s



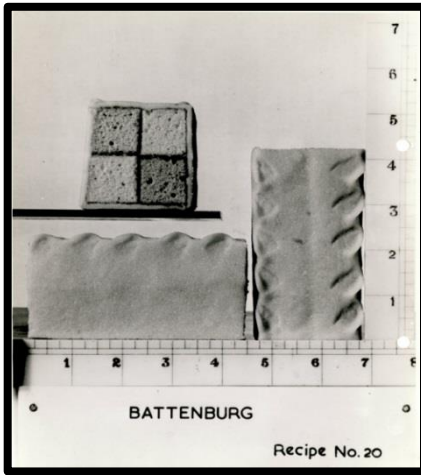
Café Bar, 1940s

1941

Food rationing was introduced. Café Bar and restaurant meals were not rationed, though some foods were in short supply. Our Café bars were very popular with customers as meals could be purchased without having to use up ration coupons.

1948

After the war we appointed Nathan Goldenberg as our first Technical Executive and Chief Chemist. His Food Technology department went on to improve quality control, hygiene and safety standards across M&S food departments.



Recipe testing, 1950

Self-service food shopping was introduced the same year. It completely revolutionised food retail spaces, with customers selecting their own food from open shelving. Wood Green store made history as it was used for the first trials of self-service at M&S.



Customer leaflet, 1948



Wood Green store, 1948

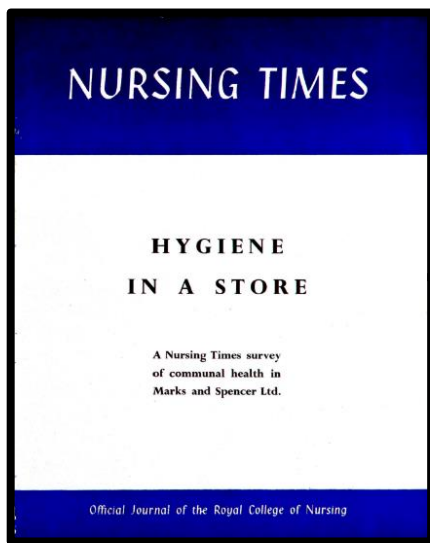
1950s

Our Cake Department worked closely with suppliers to produce high quality, fast-selling cakes which could be produced in volume. Swiss Rolls and Gateaux were amongst the first cakes produced for M&S in this way. Following the de-rationing of sugar in 1953, our range of cakes and biscuits expanded rapidly.



1954

The first use of 'St Michael' on foods was likely to have been on a packet of Almond Crisps.



Nursing Times, September 1960

1960

Nursing Times published a survey on hygiene in M&S stores, with recommendations on how techniques could be transferred to hospitals. It included praise of the smoking ban, introduced in 1959.



1960

Fresh, chilled chicken is launched in stores for the first time in newly installed chilled cabinets – it is an immediate success with customers. We advertised that all 'St Michael' chickens reach the customer only two days after being killed.

Remember when chicken used to taste like chicken?
 A *St Michael* fresh chicken still does!
 NOW AT LOWER PRICES!

If you think that chicken these days tends to lack flavour, you're in for a nice surprise. St Michael chickens and chicken portions are **fresh, not frozen**, really plump and tender. You'll taste the difference immediately. And now, St Michael chickens are at **new lower prices!**

Some examples:
 Small 56p Now only 51p Large 81p Now only 74p
 Medium 66p Now only 60p Extra Large 93p Now only 88p

At all Marks & Spencer stores

new lower prices

St Michael chickens
 fresh not frozen

new lower prices

tender and succulent
 full of flavour

examples
 9's 14's 17's
8'9 13'6 15'6

St Michael FOOD—always sold FRESH!



Armoride House, 1965

1965

Armoride House opened adjacent to Marble Arch as our first separate food hall.



Frozen Foods, 1972

1971

Frozen foods are trialled in Edgware Road and are then extended to 100 stores by 1973. Products ranged from peas and fish to foods such as lasagne.

1972

The Food Technology Department introduced 'sell-by' dates to wrappers, an innovation adopted by other retailers and which would later become a legal requirement.



Sell-by dates, 1972



Food packaging

1973

Foil-wrapped, boil-in-the bag, 'convenience foods', such as Ravioli, were trialled in 1973, with more boil-in-the-bag products on offer by 1974.

1973

Package holidays were becoming more popular, so M&S food ranges begin to reflect the public's interest in new cuisine, such as a new range of frozen Indian dishes that included chicken korma and pork vindaloo.



Food packaging

1979

Our ready-prepared Chicken Kyeve was launched. It was so successful we set up a new factory dedicated to producing the product.



Chicken Kiev Packaging, 1990

1980

Sandwiches were re-launched – the most popular was Prawn and Mayonnaise, launched in 1981.



Marble Arch, 1982



Food packaging, 1985

1985

A new range of vegetarian main meals, including lasagne and moussaka were introduced.



Food packaging, 1985

1985

We launched the Calorie Counted Menu range with all seven meals containing less than 300 calories.

1987

We opened our first food only store at Pinner, North London. Customers were offered late night shopping every night, and a 200 space car park next to the store.



Pinner, 1987



Percy Pig packaging

1992

Percy Pigs were launched. By 2014 over one billion Percy Pigs had been sold.

2000

The Count On Us range was launched, with meals containing less than 3% fat and reduced calories.



Food packaging

2000

The growth of the organic market in the UK led to a relaunch of the M&S organic range. It had previously had to be withdrawn in 1993 due to lack of demand. By 2000 we sold 150 organic products in 150 stores.



Free range eggs advert

2002

By 2002 all eggs used in our food range came from free range hens.



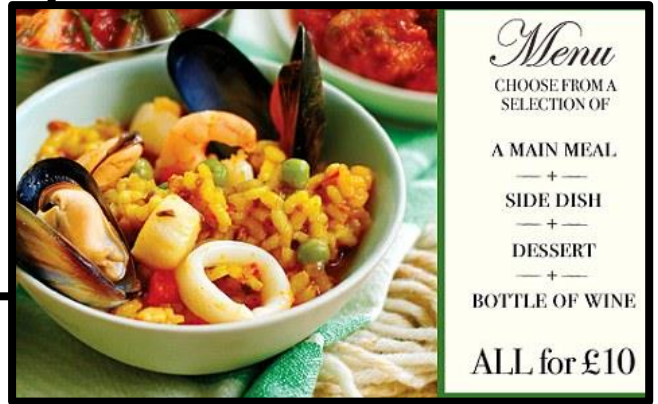
Melt in the Middle Chocolate Pudding advert

2004

Our first 'This is not just food, this is M&S food' television advert was aired. One of the most iconic adverts from this campaign featured the Melt in the Middle Chocolate Pudding. When aired, sales of the product increased 3000%.

2008

The popular Dine In For Two For £10.00 promotion was launched.



2010

The Fuller Longer range was developed with expert advice from scientists at the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health at the University of Aberdeen, renowned for its ground-breaking research on effective weight-loss.



Fuller Longer packaging

2012

We launched Simply M&S, a range of everyday food products and must-have kitchen ingredients that offered M&S quality at great value prices.



Simply M&S packaging

2014

Our Adventures in Food campaign, launched in 2014, showcased products such as our Chocolate Jaffa Spheres.



2016

We introduced a special yeast containing Vitamin D which improves bone health. Two slices of bread now includes 15% of the RDA for Vitamin D. We also applied this to all of our Food on the Move sandwiches.

2017

As a first in the UK we trialled laser labels for avocados which label the very outer layer without damaging the fruit inside, saving the use of paper and glue.



2017

This year saw the launch of Adventures in Wonderfood, a new eat well range of healthy, balanced meals, snacks and ingredients created with everyday nutrition in mind.

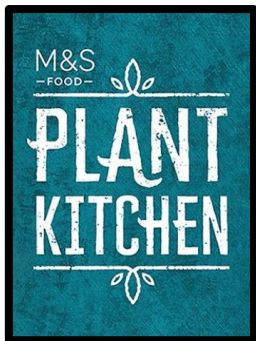


2017

We partnered with British Airways to supply hot and cold food on short-haul flights, bringing together two iconic British brands.

2018

We became the first UK retailer to have an own-brand range of gluten-free pastries. The 'Made Without' selection includes croissants, chocolate twists and apricot pastries, all made with creamy French butter.



Our No-Pork Sausoyges

2019

We launched food ranges suitable for customers with specific food preferences. New lines include Plant Kitchen designed for vegans, Halal and Kosher meat ranges.

2019

We opened the first 'Food Renewal' store at Hempstead Valley in July.

New hero displays for Produce, larger Bakery, Frozen and Ambient sections, all encourage families to do a complete shop with us.



Food Renewal store at Hempstead Valley

2020

Our joint venture with Ocado launched. This included a new Food to Order offer, allowing the full availability of our food ranges to be delivered straight to your door.

2020

We launched Food Box options using our Clothing & Home distribution network to support our customers through the Covid-19 pandemic. Box options included Mixed Vegetable and Seasonal Fruit.



2021

We introduced Scan & Shop with Sparks, including hand-held scanners and Mobile Pay Go.

SCAN & SHOP
with SPARKS



2022

We became the first national retailer to sell 100% slower-reared, higher-welfare fresh chickens.



2024

Following the launch of our Remarkable Value range in 2019, we invested in the price of over 200 products as part of our trusted value promise for 2024.