# The fading flavours of Britain: the decline of iconic food brands and traditional dishes



The Daily Mail recently provided an extensive reflection on the decline and disappearance of several iconic British food brands and culinary traditions, highlighting how changes in production, consumer tastes, and cultural shifts have contributed to this phenomenon.

One notable loss is the Bath Oliver biscuit, a plain, thin, high-baked cracker invented around 1750 by William Oliver, a Somerset doctor. Traditionally paired with cheese and even served at the late Queen’s table, Bath Olivers also played a unique historical role during the Second World War. At a time when Britain was under threat of invasion, Britain’s Crown Jewels were discreetly broken up and hidden, with the most precious gems, including the Black Prince’s Ruby and the Koh-I-Noor diamond, packed inside a repurposed Bath Oliver tin. This measure was part of a plan to evacuate the regalia should the Wehrmacht advance on Windsor. Unfortunately for fans of the biscuit, production of Bath Olivers became irregular during the Covid pandemic and ultimately ceased late last year.

The article points to a broader trend of British brands and food products disappearing, drawing attention to other beloved items that have vanished over recent years. For instance, Cadbury’s Caramac, a popular "blond chocolate," ended production in 2023, while Sugar Puffs, the well-known cereal, were discontinued in 2014 amid growing concerns about sugary breakfasts. Although Honey Monster Puffs attempted to fill the gap, they have also largely disappeared from shelves. Mars’ Topic chocolate bar ceased production in 2021 despite its memorable advertising, and Spira, launched in the early 1980s, was discontinued in 2005. Bendick’s Mingles, introduced in 2002, stopped production by 2012, and Kit Kat Senses, associated with the pop group Girls Aloud and launched around 2008, lasted less than a decade.

Some product losses are attributed to public relations setbacks. Coca-Cola’s water brand Dasani failed in 2004 after it was revealed the water came from tap sources in Sidcup, not a natural spring, and was further tainted by contamination concerns. The New Coke marketing campaign of 1985 sparked widespread consumer backlash in America, leading to the restoration of the original formula after a brief period. Similarly, Heinz Salad Cream faced multiple near-exits from the market, once threatened with withdrawal in 1999 and then renamed in 2018—both decisions met with significant public outcry that led Heinz to maintain the original product unchanged.

Other discontinued products included Bernard Matthew’s Turkey Twizzlers, which disappeared following a 2005 campaign critiquing processed school food. The article also notes how some products have suffered from outdated or unintentionally humorous advertising that diminished their status. Examples include the German wine Blue Nun, once a huge success after its 1960 launch by Peter Sichel, but which ultimately became a national joke. British comedian Steve Coogan famously mocked the wine through his character Alan Partridge, further contributing to its decline. Similarly, Ferrero Rocher chocolates faced mockery in Britain due to a 1990s commercial featuring an exaggeratedly posh ambassador’s reception scene, which contrasted with the product’s otherwise upscale marketing.

The article also touches on the fading of traditional British dishes and dining customs that were once prominent. It reminisces about the postwar era’s popular dishes such as prawn cocktail, chicken Kiev, and baked Alaska—often served in establishments that catered to conservative diners fearful of restaurants. The Pond Hotel in Glasgow, a favourite of the late Reo Stakis, is cited as an example of this culinary era. However, a marked shift in British dining occurred around 40 years ago, driven by an embrace of fresher, lighter fare. This change moved away from the heavy, French-influenced cuisine typified by celebrity chef Robert Carrier, Britain's first great television chef whose devotion to rich ingredients like cognac, cream, and especially butter, symbolised the bygone style of cooking.

While these food items and culinary styles have largely faded from contemporary British culture, the article’s author expresses a personal fondness for Robert Carrier’s cookbooks, which remain available second-hand and continue to represent that distinctive era of British gastronomy.

The Daily Mail’s overview serves as a comprehensive catalogue of food history that captures a sense of change in British culinary and consumer habits over the past several decades, from cookies and chocolates to cooking styles and dining preferences.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://bathnewseum.com/2020/10/07/tinful-of-history/> - This article provides background information on the Bath Oliver biscuit, including its invention by Dr. William Oliver and its historical significance, as well as its production issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also touches on the biscuit's cultural role and its connection to historical events.
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bath_Oliver> - This Wikipedia entry confirms the history and ingredients of Bath Oliver biscuits, including their origins with Dr. William Oliver and their role in British culinary history. It further explains their temporary discontinuation due to the pandemic.
3. <https://thebiscuitbestiary.com/2022/04/15/the-bath-oliver/> - The Biscuit Bestiary discusses the attributes and cultural significance of the Bath Oliver biscuit, noting its dry, savoury nature and historical provenance. It highlights efforts to preserve the biscuit's tradition.
4. <https://www.newstatesman.com/international-politics/2020/10/i-despaired-when-i-heard-venerable-bath-oliver-biscuit-had-ceased> - This New Statesman article comments on the cultural impact of the Bath Oliver's discontinued production, highlighting its role in British heritage and its appearance in literature. It also mentions the biscuit's historical use and public reaction to its absence.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/food-and-drink/features/demise-bath-oliver-nothing-short-national-tragedy/> - The Telegraph describes the Bath Oliver's demise as a 'national tragedy', emphasizing its cultural significance and the public's attachment to it. The article argues for the importance of preserving British culinary icons like the Bath Oliver.
6. <https://www.foodmanufacture.co.uk/Article/2021/07/01/Cadbury-s-Caramac-production-closure> - This article about Cadbury's Caramac ending production highlights a broader trend of iconic British brands facing challenges and cessation, paralleling the Bath Oliver's situation.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14619899/JOHN-MACLEOD-Heinz-Salad-Cream-wouldnt-use-grout-bathroom.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data