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The Best Snack in Every State

How many of these snacks have you tried?

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Spend enough time delving into the origins of American food, and a pattern quickly

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How these foods came to be considered ours, well, that's simple. In most cases, we just wanted it more, we wanted it now, and later, and everywhere, and we figured out how to make it so.

This is the story for many of our favorite snack foods. Sure, a recipe for something like a potato chip appeared in a British cookbook a few decades before George Crum, a St. Regis Mohawk chef in upstate New York, famously started making what came to be known as Saratoga chips. But who do you think started mass-producing those chips, well before they became a favorite in other countries? Ohioans, that's who.

And what of the pretzel? Nobody can dispute that the Germans came first, but did they figure out a way to package the bierstube staple and sell it on the open market by the bagful? No, that was done by Pennsylvania Dutch immigrants, back in the 1800s. To this day, in fact, it's estimated that eighty percent of the pretzels eaten in the United States are produced in the state of Pennsylvania.



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And on it goes – soft drinks, flavored soft drinks in particular, can be traced back to places like Sweden and the United Kingdom, long before America was a country, but it wasn't until the late 1800s that Dr. Pepper (Texas, like you needed to be reminded) and Coca-Cola (Georgia, of course) found the formulas that would turn soda into a global phenomenon.

How did we make this list? Narrowing down the choices was a tough job, made easier by one stipulation – in order to be considered, the food in question needed to be able to ship without a lot of effort. (In other words, probably no dry ice.)

While the primary goal of our state-by-state projects is finding the very best of everything, we've also aspired to paint a broad picture of American food culture, and to celebrate the considerable breadth and diversity of what's on offer, from sophisticated tinned seafood in the Pacific Northwest to the humble but mighty boiled peanut in the Deep South.

For this reason, you won't find potato chips representing 25 different states, even if we can think of at least that many worthy regional favorites, nearly off the top of our heads.

Who knows – maybe that's the next list.

Alabama: Cheese Straws

The South didn't invent the cheese straw; they just perfected it. Conventional wisdom

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social food essential was (and still is) typically made with part pastry, a southern

cheese straw is a simpler affair, going back to when home bakers would toss tangy cheddar cheese in with the biscuit dough scraps, to create a stick-shaped snack. Makers like the celebrated Acre restaurant in Auburn and Cake by Donna in Fairhope have been spotted giving the humble snack serious gastronomic credibility. You can also prowl the local shops (or the internet) for Alabama brands like [Betsy's Gourmet Bakery](#), and Joyce's Cheese Straws.

Alaska: Kelp Pickles

Subsistence agriculture and snack time intersect beneath the chilly but relatively temperate waters of Alaska's Southeast, filled with kelp. To the naked eye and nostril, this appears to be nothing more than a weed pulled from the briny depths. Those who know better can tell you that kelp pickles are unforgettably tasty – a trip way up north in a jar. Fortunately you don't have to go anywhere, or plunder an Alaskan pantry or anything. Barnacle Foods in Juneau ships their dill, spicy dill and sweet and spicy pickles all over the country [via their website](#), or you can check out specialty food stores in cities around the country. The company's kelp salsas are delicious as well.

Arizona: White Sonora Wheat Crackers

With its own fascinating (and ancient) grain story and some of the finest bakers (and pizza makers) in the country, [modern American bread craft](#) reaches dazzling heights in Arizona, and a lot of that happens because of the work being done at [Hayden Flour Mills](#), opened in 2011 by a hobby baker who developed a fascination with heritage grains. A box of the mill's White Sonora wheat crackers is not only the perfect complement to your next cheese platter, it's a celebration of the oldest wheat varietal recorded in North America – planted right here as early as the 1600s.