Did Adventists Invent Peanut Butter?

I heard that Adventists invented peanut butter. Is that true?

Peanuts can be traced back as far as 950 B.C., and would appear to be indigenous to South America. The Incas made a paste from peanuts, but the first patented peanut butter-making machine was licensed to Dr. Ambrose Straub of St. Louis in 1903.

It is said that a doctor invented peanut butter in 1890, but Joseph Lambert—who worked for John Harvey Kellogg—was selling his own hand-operated peanut grinder in 1896.


It was John Harvey Kellogg, however, who patented a “process of preparing nut meal” in 1896, and used peanuts.

By 1914, peanut butter was in commercial production.

George Washington Carver is famous for the 300 uses he discovered for peanuts. In the multitude of uses he found, such as ink and oils, he also popularized peanut butter. He did not patent any of these discoveries, believing the peanut was a gift of God. His work, beginning in 1880, preceded any of the patents described.

Peanut butter is really only crushed roasted peanuts, so likely it has been discovered and rediscovered many times since the Incas began using peanuts nearly 3,000 years ago.

George Washington Carver, among recent peanut butter protagonists, deserves primacy of place—he certainly moved the peanut from a lowly food product to one of major prominence in the world of food.

It’s interesting to note that the peanut is, in fact, a legume, but its properties are similar to those of true nuts. Despite its heavy calories, it is a healthful product. For populations struggling to secure sufficient calories, peanuts can make the difference between survival and desperation.

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While this column is provided as a service to our readers, Drs. Landless and Handysides unfortunately cannot enter into personal and private communication with our readers. We recommend that you consult with your personal physician on all matters of your health.