



## Spinach Through the Ages MP3

**Gary Crawford** [00:00:01] Spinach - it's a food with a long history.

**Voiceover** [00:00:03] (Music plays)

**Rachel Schoenian** [00:00:03] Spinach is thought to have originated in ancient Persia which, today, is modern-day Iran.

**Voiceover** [00:00:11] (Music plays)

**Gary Crawford** [00:00:12] And this piece of music is called "In a Persian Market." But, today, we are in a farmers market: the Veg-Ucation tent of the Agriculture Department farmers market in Washington D.C., with Chief Veg-Ucators, Rachel Schoenian and Chantel Oyi. Obviously, talking about:

**Rachel Schoenian, Chantel Oyi** [00:00:27] Spinach!

**Gary Crawford** [00:00:30] Yes, lots of interesting history about this food. From Persia, it spread to India and then China, and arrived in England and Spain, and in the 1300s, finally to America. And it does occupy a unique place in U.S. food history, and Rachel, why is that?

**Rachel Schoenian** [00:00:42] Spinach was the first frozen vegetable to be sold commercially.

**Gary Crawford** [00:00:46] - all because of the work of one American inventor and entrepreneur, Clarence Birdseye II, who is considered the father of the modern-day frozen food industry. Rachel, you told us earlier, this guy was, for a while, a fur trader up in northern Canada in the early 1900s. He was ice fishing up there at one time. You take it from there.

**Rachel Schoenian** [00:01:07] He discovered that the fish he was catching fresh, which froze almost instantly after catching, tasted almost fresh when it was thawed out. And he contrasted that with the frozen fish that he had tasted in New York, which sometimes tasted mushy or was dry when it thawed out.

**Gary Crawford** [00:01:24] So Birdseye set out in the 1920s to develop ways to flash freeze various foods and develop ways to package, store, and ship those foods.

**Rachel Schoenian** [00:01:33] So, he went on to create a large frozen food company which was very successful.

**Voiceover** [00:01:42] "Birdseye Frosted Foods. Better buy Birdseye!"

**Gary Crawford** [00:01:46] And you can still find foods carrying Birdseye brand in your supermarket frozen food case. But it all started with spinach which was not a great American favorite food, but it did get a bit of a boost in 1931 with the introduction of this comic strip character who later became a movie cartoon favorite.

**Voiceover** [00:02:03] "Oh I'm Popeye, the Sailor man. I'm strong to the finnick' 'cause I eats my spinach, I'm Popeye..."

**Rachel Schoenian** [00:02:12] Popeye's favorite food was canned spinach which he liked to eat straight from the can.

**Gary Crawford** [00:02:15] And it gave him instant power to overcome his much bigger opponents and, Rachel, I found out, reportedly, spinach consumption in this country rose quite a bit in the years after Popeye became a national hit. And in fact, in 1937, the Texas town of Crystal City, which was a big spinach growing area, proclaimed itself the world spinach capital and erected a big statue of Popeye because they owed the increase in business to that iconic character. But spinach is still not a huge favorite food, but next time our Veg-Ucation experts here will talk about the nutritional aspects of and give us a really tasty recipe centered around, here we go -

**Rachel Schoenian, Chantel Oyi** [00:02:55] Spinach!

**Gary Crawford** [00:02:56] That's right. Gary Crawford for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington.