



A Brief History of the Pronto Pup

BY MARIE SHERLOCK

HAUTE CUISINE, IT IS NOT. But as a day-at-the-beach treat or a state-fair staple, the Pronto Pup—a wiener on a wooden skewer, dipped in corn meal batter and deep fried—reigns supreme.

Turns out that this “banquet on a stick,” was invented in Rockaway (now Rockaway Beach), Oregon, in the late 1930s. After seven-plus decades, the Original Pronto Pup—a restaurant selling the genuine article and several other versions—is back in Rockaway Beach. The Pronto Pup has come full circle.

The journey started back in 1939. George Boyington was looking for a way to deal with the soggy buns that plagued his hot dog stand in Rockaway when the (all too frequent) Oregon rain descended. Boyington’s brainstorm was to put the wieners on a stick, coat them in a corn meal-based batter and then deep fry them, making them impervious to drizzle and tastier in the process.

With this idea firmly formed, George and wife Versa began working on bringing their batter-dipped, hot dog on a stick to reality. By 1942, with the trademark for the name “Pronto Pup” secured, the Boyingtons began selling franchises at an amazing clip. Soldiers returning from the war thought they were a sure investment—and, indeed, they were. Millions upon millions of the delicacies were sold in the ensuing decades at state fairs, beach resorts, carnivals and elsewhere.

Fast forward to 2015 when Portland attorney Anthony McNamer happened upon the back story to the Pronto Pup. “When I found out that the corndog was invented in Rockaway Beach, it seemed strange to me that they didn’t make a bigger deal out of it,” explains McNamer. (It should be noted that the place where the corndog originated is a matter of sizzling debate in certain circles.) “I thought, ‘they should have a giant corndog statue or something,’ and the idea snowballed.”

McNamer’s idea for a corndog statue turned into a full-fledged Pronto Pup Restaurant, and over the course of six months he purchased a lot on Highway 101 in Rockaway Beach and built the cafe, opening for business in early 2016.

You can’t miss The Original Pronto Pup building. Kitsch—delightful, unadulterated kitsch—abounds. On the roof sits The Largest Pronto Pup in the World. As you enter, you’ll see the world’s first Riding Mechanical Pronto Pup.

Inside, employees (with “soda jerk” hats from the ‘40s) sell six varieties of pups: the original, a veggie version, a Zucchini Pup (deep-fried zucchini), a Pickle Pup, a Cheesy Pup and a Spicy Pup (chorizo instead of a wiener). On a recent sunny day, I sampled them all with help from a few friends. My group of taste testers came away with a collective thumbs up. The veggie version does a decent job of corndog imitation. We all enjoyed

the Zucchi and the Cheesy varieties. The consensus was that the Pickle Pup appeals to those who really like their pickles (I found it too juicy) and that the Spicy Pup caters to the chorizo crowd (of which I'm not a member).

The original, however, is still the best. The wiener and its savory deep-fried coating are a uniformly perfect temperature at first bite. For a native Oregonian like myself, the experience is little like time traveling: I'm a kid, at the beach, enjoying a Pronto Pup. I'll be back.

The Original Pronto Pup (originalprontopup.com) is located at 602 S. Highway 101, Rockaway Beach, Oregon. 🐶



Pronto Pup Trivia

- >> When Pronto Pups were originally sold, only mustard was offered as a condiment. Pronto Pup purists have since lightened up: Feel free to dip them in ketchup.
- >> What's the difference between a corndog and a Pronto Pup? Corndogs are really any wiener in a coating that includes corn meal. Although invented first, Pronto Pups are a subset of corndogs. If you aren't using authentic Pronto Pup mix, hand dipping and deep frying them, they aren't Pronto Pups. Period.
- >> What's in a Pronto Pup—that is, besides the wiener? It's a proprietary recipe. But corn meal, sugar and eggs are among the ingredients.

