

McIlhenny Tabasco Company



Located in the Iberia Parish of Louisiana at Avery Island.

Tabasco is an American product produced by McIlhenny Company. Lane and I toured the plant September 19, 2017

Tabasco sauce was first produced in 1868 by Edmund McIlhenny who moved to Louisiana around 1840.

McIlhenny is one of just a few U.S. companies to have received a royal warrant of appointment that certifies the company as a supplier to Queen Elizabeth II. McIlhenny is one of the 850 companies

around the world that have been officially designated as suppliers to the queen by such warrants. The warrant held is "Supplier of Tabasco Sauce HM The Queen -- Master of the Household -- Granted in 2009".



Production



Originally all peppers used in Tabasco sauce were grown on Avery Island. Today peppers grown on the Island are used to produce seed stock, which is then shipped to foreign growers, primarily in Central and South America. More predictable weather and readily available farmland in these locales allow a constant year-round supply. This ensures the availability of peppers should severe weather or other problems occur at a particular growing location.

Following company tradition, peppers are picked by hand. To ensure ripeness, pickers compare peppers to a little red stick (le petit baton rouge); peppers that match the color of the stick are then introduced into the sauce production process. Peppers are ground into a mash on the day of harvest and placed along with salt in white oak barrels (aging barrels previously used for Jack Daniel's Tennessee whiskey). To prepare the barrel, the inside of the barrel is de-charred (top layer of wood is removed), torched, and cleaned, to minimize the presence of any residual whiskey. The barrels are then used in warehouses on Avery Island for aging the mash.

After aging for up to three years, the mash is strained to remove skins and seeds. The resulting liquid is then mixed with vinegar, stirred occasionally for a month, and then bottled as finished sauce.

Much of the salt used in Tabasco production comes from an Avery Island salt mine, one of the largest in the U.S.

In 2005, Avery Island was hit hard by Hurricane Rita. As a result, the family constructed a 17-foot high levee around the low side of the factory and invested in back-up generators.



Varieties

Several sauces are produced under the Tabasco brand name, including jalapeno-based green, chipotle-based smoked, habanero, garlic, "sweet and spicy", and "Buffalo style" sauces. The habanero, chipotle, and garlic sauces include the tabasco peppers blended with other peppers, whereas the jalapeno variety does not include tabasco peppers. None of these sauces, however, have the three-year aging process the flagship product uses. The brand also produces a selection of Tabasco Chocolate.

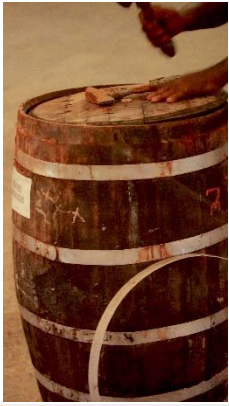


Spiciness

The flagship red variety of Tabasco pepper sauce measures 2,500--5,000 SHU on the Scoville scale. The habanero sauce is considerably hotter, rating above 7,000 Scoville units. The chipotle sauce adds chipotle pepper to the original sauce, measuring 1,500--2,500. The garlic variety, which blends milder peppers in with the tabasco peppers, rates 1,200--1,400 Scovilles, and the green pepper (jalapeno) sauce is even milder at 60--1,200 Scovilles. The Sweet and Spicy sauce is the mildest of all the sauces at only 100--600 Scoville units.

Harvesting and Processing

		
<p>Tabasco growing in field</p>	<p>Tabasco in crates headed to processing</p>	<p>Processing plant</p>
		
<p>Tabasco peppers are salted</p>	<p>The mixture is ground</p>	<p>Pulp is placed into barrels</p>



Lid placed tightly onto barrel containing pulp mix



Lids are then covered in salt



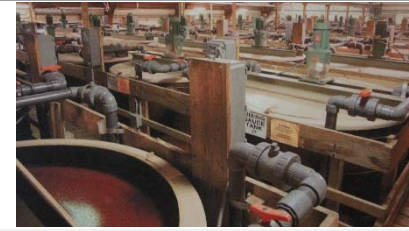
Cured in barrels for up to three years



The pulp mix is strained removing skins and seeds



Mixed with high quality vinegar



Stirred occasionally for thirty days



The mixture is bottled



Labeled

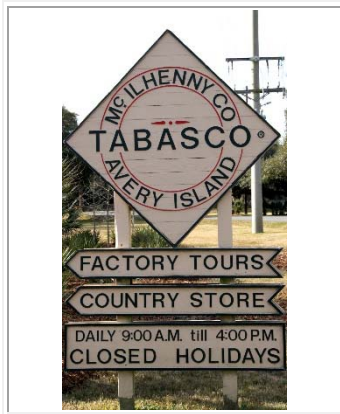


Packaged for sale

Packaging

Tabasco brand pepper sauce is sold in more than 185 countries and territories and is packaged in 22 languages and dialects. The Tabasco bottle is still modeled after the cologne-style bottles used for the first batch of sauce in 1868. As many as 720,000 two-ounce (57 ml) bottles of Tabasco sauce are produced daily at the Tabasco factory on Avery Island. Bottles range from the common two-ounce and five-ounce (59 ml and 148 ml) bottles, up to a one US gallon- (3.8 liter) jug for food service businesses, and down to a 1/8-ounce (3.7 ml) miniature bottle. There are also 0.11-ounce portion control (PC) packets of Tabasco sauce.

One-eighth-ounce bottles of Tabasco, bearing the presidential seal, are served on Air Force One. The US military has included Tabasco sauce in Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MREs) since the 1980s. The British and Canadian armies also issue small bottles of Tabasco sauce in their rations.



At the end of the tour



You can go into the Country Store



Sample and buy from a wide array of products

Uses

McIlhenny Company produces Tabasco brand products that contain pepper seasoning, including popcorn, nuts, olives, mayonnaise, mustard, steak sauce, Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, teriyaki sauce, marinating sauce, barbecue sauce, chili sauce, pepper jelly, and Bloody Mary mix. McIlhenny Company also permits other brands to use and advertise Tabasco sauce as an ingredient in their products (a common marketing practice called "co-branding"), including Spam, Hormel chili, Slim Jim beef sticks, Heinz ketchup, A1 steak sauce, Plochman's mustard, Cheez-It crackers, Lawry's salt, Zapp's potato chips, Heluva Good dip, and Vlasic pickles.

The original red Tabasco sauce has a shelf life of five years when stored in a cool and dry place; other Tabasco flavors have shorter shelf lives.

Tabasco appeared on the menu of NASA's space shuttle program and went into orbit on the shuttles. It was on Skylab and on the International Space Station and is popular with astronauts as a means of countering the bland food they frequently are provided in space.

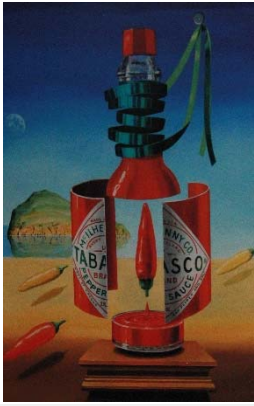
Cookbooks

During the Vietnam War, Brigadier General Walter S. McIlhenny issued The Charlie Ration Cookbook. (Charlie ration was the name for the field meal then given to troops.) This cookbook came wrapped around a two-ounce bottle of Tabasco sauce in a camouflaged, water-resistant container. It instructed troops how to mix C-rations to make such meals as "Combat Canapes" or "Breast of Chicken under Bullets." Soldiers also requested their families to send them Tabasco sauce in "care packages" from home.

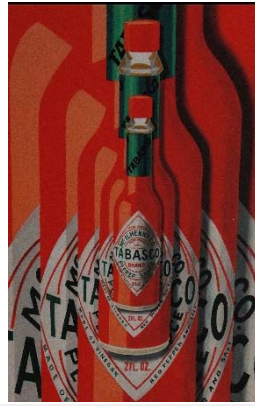
During the 1980s, the U.S. military began to include miniature bottles of Tabasco sauce in its MREs. Eventually, miniature bottles of Tabasco sauce were included in two-thirds of all MRE menus. During the same period, McIlhenny Company issued a new military-oriented cookbook using characters from the comic strip Beetle Bailey. Titled The Unofficial MRE Cookbook, it was offered free of charge to U.S. troops.

In art and culture

The Tabasco bottle is an original design and has remained almost unchanged up to the present. It has appeared in many movies and cartoons, as well as on television. Some appearances date as far back as the Our Gang short Birthday Blues in 1932 and Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times in 1936. The bottle also graced the side of Darrell Waltrip's race car for a brief period. In Back to the Future: Part III, the saloon bartender uses Tabasco as an ingredient for an instant hangover cure he calls "wake-up juice". The scene features a vintage Tabasco bottle with an 1880s' style label.



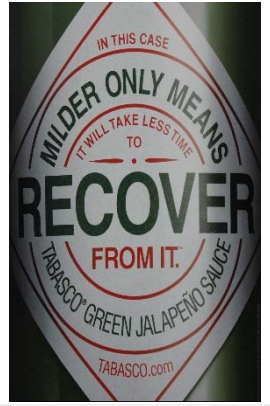
Art on display



Art on display



Models on display



Humor

