

It's clear to me that one of the keys to my father's success as the head of the Frito Company was his ability to take advantage of opportunities provided by social change. My father was always thinking ahead and always ahead of the curve.

The general atmosphere in the U.S. at the end of the 1940s and throughout the 1950s was conducive to success for Fritos and the Frito Company. During the 1940s, women were filling in for men, doing their jobs, in a national war effort. During that time, because so many women were working outside of the home, food manufacturers began marketing time-saving products such as frozen orange juice, Spam, cake mixes, and flavored instant rice mixes. The Frito Company was no exception. One ad campaign during that time said: "Just add Fritos...and Presto!" The next line said, "Three Easy-to-Fix Recipes!" (The recipes were for Frito tuna salad, Frito loaf, and Frito crackling bread.)

The ad goes on to tout the versatility of Fritos: "They're good for breakfast, lunch, snack-time and dinner!" (The recipe for Fritos for breakfast is to serve Fritos with cream.) The ad also tells shoppers they can "write the Frito Company for a copy of their big recipe book that gives hundreds of ways to vary your war-time meals."

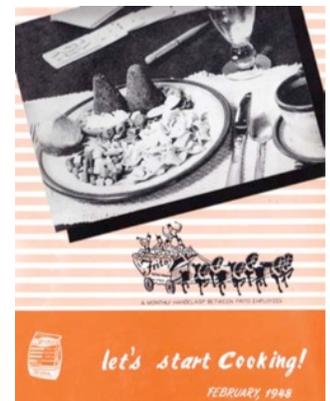
After the war ended, food manufacturers scrambled to convince shoppers that they still wanted and needed time-saving products – that they still didn't have enough time to use fresh ingredients or make home-cooked meals. Food editors featured the sort X of recipes that women were supposed to want, such as "Mock Jambalaya" made with instant rice, canned shrimp and Vienna sausages, and "Chipped Beef De Luxe" made from chipped beef, olives, white sauce, mayonnaise, and angostura bitters. Women appreciated this continued reprieve from spending hours in the kitchen making things from scratch.

The Cooking with Fritos campaign took advantage of the general attitude toward cooking among women during the era when Fritos became popular. Fritos made it possible to save time and cut corners. Instead of measuring out cornmeal or flour, oil, and salt, housewives could simply open a bag of Fritos and toss some into the recipe. This was one of several factors that helped Fritos become a staple in virtually every well-stocked pantry in America during the 1950s and 1960s. Fritos also showed up in lunchboxes everywhere, packaged in small stay-fresh bags – because of my father's emphasis on quality control, the Frito Company was constantly updating their bags.

Changes in the way groceries were sold and food was served in restaurants also contributed to Fritos' success. Whereas before the Depression, groceries were dispensed from behind the counter, the popularization of supermarkets starting in the early 1940s, meant customers now helped themselves. Counter-service-style restaurants also started to become popular during the 1940s and '50s. My father took advantage of these new ways of shopping and dining out by suggesting the idea for the clip rack to the company's engineering department (headed by my Uncle Earl, who patented the clip rack along with Wid Gunderson, a company engineer). The clip rack made it possible for customers to get to bags of Fritos quickly and easily. Through personal contact with owners and managers, Fritos salesmen worked at getting Fritos-laden clip racks positioned in snack food aisles in grocery stores and on countertops by cash registers in barbecue joints and similar restaurants as well as in gas stations (which later developed into convenience stores), where impulse buyers and hungry travelers would see them.



Cover of an early "Cooking with Fritos" campaign recipe book, reproduced for employees in the Frito Bandwagon



These salmon croquettes are breaded with Fritos



Employees decorating the Frito truck with flower garlands for the San Antonio parade

Fritos Chili Pie

Fritos Chili Pie, still one of the better-known Frito recipes and a traditional comfort food in the Southwest, is not a pie *per se*. The Frito pie simply consists of Fritos corn chips, chili, onions, and cheese. Any variations in the recipe usually involve the placement and texture of the Fritos and even the vessel in which the "pie" is made. Sometimes it's prepared as a casserole, but sometimes it's prepared directly in a cardboard boat or, especially in the past when the bags were sturdier, in the Fritos bags themselves.



My mother made this recipe for the family and I still make it for Thanksgiving.

Fritos Squash

Ingredients

5 yellow summer squash
1/2 medium-size onion, chopped
4 oz. Fritos

White Sauce

1/2 cup milk
1 tablespoon butter
1 tablespoon white flour

Sauté chopped onion in small amount of butter or margarine. Slice and steam squash in small amount of water and season to taste. Spread layer of squash and chopped onion in casserole and cover with a layer of equal mixture of breadcrumbs and crushed Fritos. Repeat this procedure, making four layers.

Make white sauce, using 1/2 cup milk, 1 tablespoon butter, and 1 tablespoon flour. Pour white sauce over the squash mixture and allow to penetrate. Cover top with layer of whole Fritos. Bake in a medium hot oven (375 degrees) for 20-30 minutes.

Serves six.

Fritos Chocolate Crunchies

Surprisingly, I have found a number of recipes in our family archives that use Fritos as an ingredient in desserts. Although I find it hard to believe that this concept works, I have tried some of the recipes, such as Fritos Chocolate Crunchies, and find them to be quite good. Here's the recipe for Fritos Chocolate Crunchies:



Shortly after Dad's death, the Frito Company executives assembled in honor of my mother and in memory of my father. At the assembly they presented the following resolution:

"When Charles Elmer Doolin organized The Frito Company in 1932 it employed four people, making a single product, in a single make-shift plant with sales at an annual rate of about one thousand dollars. Twenty-seven years later, the company and its related enterprises had grown to include twenty-one plants in eleven states and to employ three thousand five hundred people making and distributing Fritos, potato chips, and a number of other products throughout the nation and in foreign countries with sales at an annual rate of sixty million dollars. These simple figures themselves represent a surpassing tribute to Charles Elmer Doolin. They are the tangible evidence of his vision, courage, and faith, as well as his ability to set a course and to guide himself and others on the path to achievement. Of equal importance was the love for him by his fellow man, his employees and business associates, earned not by worldly accomplishments alone but by qualities of character."