

# Nicolas François Appert Biography

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# Biography

Nicolas Appert gave rise to the food canning industry. Born in Châlons-sur-Marne, France, around 1750, young Appert worked at his father's inn and for a noble family as a chef and wine steward. By 1780 he had set up a confectionery shop in Paris, France.

Appert became interested in **food preservation** when the French government offered a 12,000-franc prize in 1795 to the person who could find a way to keep provisions for Napoleon's armies from spoiling in transit and storage. After years of experimentation Appert devised a method of putting food in glass bottles that were then loosely corked and immersed in boiling water for lengths of time that varied with the particular food; after boiling, the corks were sealed down tightly with wire. In an age before bacteriology, Appert did not comprehend the fact that the heat destroyed **microorganisms** in the food, but he could see that his method--which became known as appertization--preserved the food. Appert later set up his first bottling plant at Massy, south of Paris, in 1804.

The French navy successfully used Appert's products in 1807, and in 1809 Appert was awarded the 12,000-franc prize. A condition of the award was that Appert make public his discovery, which he did in his 1810 work *The Art of Preserving Animal and Vegetable Substances for Several Years*, which gave specific directions for canning over fifty different foods. This volume spread knowledge about canning around the world and launched what would become a vast industry.

In 1812 Appert used his prize money to make his Massy plant into the world's first commercial cannery, which remained in operation until 1933. Appert, who also invented the bouillon cube, was financially ruined in 1814 when his plant was destroyed during the Napoleonic wars. He died in poverty in 1841.