Ryvita: the British rye crispbread, from a 1925 import business to Poole

From the crackers.biz wiki

Ryvita began trading on 4 April 1925, when John Edwin Garratt started importing rye crispbread from Scandinavia. It opened a Birmingham bakery in 1932, moved to a new bakery in Poole, Dorset, in 1949 after the Birmingham factory was destroyed in the war, and joined Associated British Foods the same year. The Original crispbread is just wholegrain rye flour, rye flour and salt.

A Scandinavian idea, made in Britain

Ryvita is one of Britain's best known crackers, the thin, crunchy rye slice that has sat in British cupboards for a century. It began as an import. Ryvita's own history says an enterprising Englishman, John Edwin Garratt, saw crispbread abroad and started a venture at home, and that the Ryvita Company started trading on 4 April 1925. Wikipedia records that it first imported rye crispbreads from Scandinavia, before making its own. Finland's best known rye crispbread is Finn Crisp; see Finnish cookies. For Ryvita's rosemary and sea salt thins, see rosemary biscuits and crackers.

A very old kind of bread

Ryvita belongs to a long Scandinavian tradition. Crispbread is a flat, dry bread made mostly from rye flour, traditionally from nothing more than wholemeal rye flour, salt and water, and Wikipedia records that it has been baked in central Sweden since at least the sixth century. Because it holds so little water, it keeps fresh for a very long time, which made it the ideal bread for long northern winters, and later the ideal product for a company importing it by sea. Traditional Swedish crispbread was baked as round, flat loaves with a hole in the middle, so they could be stored on poles near the ceiling; see crispbread.

Birmingham, the war and Poole

In 1932 Ryvita set up a bakery in Birmingham, which its history describes as one of the first packaged goods in the baking field. Ryvita's history adds that the famous Ryvita tin arrived in 1940. Then the war intervened: Wikipedia records that the Birmingham factory was destroyed during the Second World War, and replaced in 1949 by a new production facility in Poole, in Dorset, a port on the south coast.

The same year brought a new owner. Wikipedia says the company was acquired by Associated British Foods in 1949, and Ryvita's history names Garfield Weston as the buyer, a family connection that it says continues today. Ryvita is now run by Jordans Dorset Ryvita, the part of the group that also makes Jordans

cereals, and Wikipedia notes that the company held royal warrants as manufacturers of crispbreads from King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II.

How the range grew

Ryvita's history gives the milestones:

- **1940:** the Ryvita tin.
- **1975:** a brown, Swedish style variety.
- **The 1980s:** Crackerbread.
- **1998:** Fruit Crunch, with currants, honey and sugar.
- **2002:** Ryvita Minis, in four savoury varieties.
- **2008:** the Ryvita Thins flatbread range.
- **2017:** Rye Cakes, made from popped wholegrain rye.

What is in a Ryvita?

The Original is about as simple as a cracker gets. Its Open Food Facts record lists just wholegrain rye flour, rye flour and salt, and the Dark Rye record lists the same three ingredients. The flavoured crispbreads build on that rye base: the Sesame adds rye bran and sesame seeds, the Multigrain adds toasted seeds and grains, and Fruit Crunch adds currants, at 19 per cent, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, oat flakes, sugar and honey.

The Thins are different. The record for Ryvita Thins Multi Seed lists wheat flour at 61 per cent, a mix of millet, brown linseed and golden linseed at 24 per cent, wholegrain rye flour at 10 per cent, rapeseed oil and salt, which makes them a thin, crisp flatbread rather than a classic rye crispbread.

Fibre

Because it is made from wholegrain rye, Ryvita is one of the most fibre rich crackers on our shelf. In our comparison of pack records, Ryvita Sesame had about 18g of fibre per 100g, Ryvita Multigrain 17g and Ryvita Original about 13.3g, well above the legal threshold for a high fibre claim of 6g per 100g. The full comparison is in high fibre biscuits.

Crispbread, Crackerbread and Thins

The three main Ryvita families are quite different. The crispbreads are the rye slices the company was founded on, dense, dry and crunchy, with rye as the main ingredient. Crackerbread, introduced in the 1980s, is a separate range of crackers. The Thins, from 2008, are thin flatbreads made mainly with wheat flour and seeds, closer to a crisp cracker than a crispbread. If you want the classic rye taste, choose the crispbreads; if you want something lighter for dips and snacking, try the Thins.

The Ryvita range on our shelf

We stock nineteen Ryvita products:

- **Crispbreads:** Original, Dark Rye, Multigrain, Sesame, Cracked Black Pepper, Pumpkin Seed and Oat and Fruit Crunch.
- **Crackerbread:** Original and Wholegrain.
- **Thins:** Multi Seed, Rosemary and Sea Salt, Sweet Chilli and Three Cheese.
- **Snack It Thins:** Prawn Cocktail, Smoky BBQ, Sea Salt and Cider Vinegar and Sour Cream and Chive .
- **Sticks:** Salt and Vinegar Multigrain and Sour Cream and Chive.

How to eat Ryvita

Ryvita is sturdy enough to carry almost anything. Classic toppings include cottage cheese, smoked salmon, avocado, hummus and a slice of mature Cheddar; the Fruit Crunch is good with a soft cheese or a little butter and honey. For a cheeseboard, the Multigrain and Sesame hold their own beside oatcakes and water biscuits; see the best crackers for cheese. And for the long story of rye crispbread, from Swedish farmhouses to supermarket shelves, see crispbread.

Diet notes

Rye contains gluten, so Ryvita is not gluten free; see gluten free biscuits. The Original's record lists no animal ingredients and no palm oil, but Fruit Crunch contains honey and some flavoured varieties contain milk, so always check the pack.

Quick facts

Began trading	4 April 1925, founded by John Edwin Garratt
First British bakery	Birmingham, 1932
Poole bakery	Built in 1949, after the Birmingham factory was destroyed in the war
Owner	Associated British Foods since 1949, now as Jordans Dorset Ryvita
Royal warrants	Granted by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II
Original recipe	Wholegrain rye flour, rye flour and salt

Questions people ask

Who makes Ryvita?

Jordans Dorset Ryvita, part of Associated British Foods, which Wikipedia says acquired the company in 1949. Ryvita's own history says Garfield Weston bought it that year.

Where is Ryvita made?

Wikipedia says Ryvita's Birmingham factory was destroyed during the Second World War and replaced in 1949 by a new production facility in Poole, Dorset.

What is Ryvita made of?

The Open Food Facts record for Ryvita Original lists wholegrain rye flour, rye flour and salt, nothing else. Flavoured crispbreads add seeds, bran, fruit or spices.

Is Ryvita gluten free?

No. Rye contains gluten, and the Thins are made mostly with wheat flour, so Ryvita is not suitable for a gluten free diet. See our gluten free guide for alternatives.

Is Ryvita vegan?

The Original, Dark Rye, Sesame and Multigrain records list no animal ingredients. Fruit Crunch contains honey, and some flavoured Thins and snacks contain milk, so check the pack.

When did Ryvita Thins come out?

Ryvita's history dates the Thins flatbread range to 2008, Ryvita Minis to 2002 and Crackerbread to the 1980s.

Sources

1. Ryvita, Wikipedia
2. History of Ryvita, Ryvita
3. Ryvita Original (5010265002836), Open Food Facts
4. Ryvita Fruit Crunch (5050974505358), Open Food Facts
5. Ryvita Thins Multi Seed (5050974000822), Open Food Facts

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