

A Nab Is a Nab Is a Nab

Ask (almost) anyone BY SHERI CASTLE

I AM FROM WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, AND I WAS RAISED on Nabs. When my family visited Charlotte, the scent of Nabs wafting from the Lance factory was a navigational beacon. There are Nabs in my purse and in the center console of my car. Many North Carolinians share my affinity. Earlier this year, when a speaker at SFA's Summer Symposium in Charlotte admitted he'd never heard of Nabs, audible gasps spread through the audience.

What are Nabs? It depends on who you ask.

The straight answer is that they are the nickname given to a rectangular package of four to six cracker sandwiches sealed in cellophane. Some people use the word for all types of sandwich crackers (like calling all soft drinks a Coke), while others reserve the term for the square-shaped, orange variety filled with peanut butter.



KNOW YOUR NABS

1 The word Nabs derives from a National Biscuit Company (Nabisco) product called "Peanut Sandwich Packet" that hit the market in 1924. The sleeve of snack crackers—priced at five cents and sealed for portability—became ubiquitous at filling stations, check-out counters, milk bars, lunch rooms, and newsstands. In 1928, the company updated the name to NAB.

2 Nabs aren't sold anymore. What most people call "Nabs" is technically ToastChee, the flagship cracker-sandwich of the Charlotte-based Lance Inc. brand.

3 Here's how Lance Inc. came to develop

ToastChee: Due to a business deal snafu, the company was stuck with five hundred pounds of Virginia peanuts. Rather than waste them, food distributor Philip Lance roasted the peanuts at home and sold them on the streets of Charlotte for pennies per bag. They were so popular that he set up a commercial roasting operation, which led to making peanut butter. The big bang came when Philip's wife, Mary, and their two daughters, spread peanut butter on saltines and packaged them for sale.

4 With ToastChee in demand, Nabisco opened a regional bakery in Charlotte and started producing packaged crackers.

Given the similarity of the two items, people began to adopt the shorter nickname, Nabs, for both.

5 The original Lance peanut butter crackers were popular with WWI soldiers who trained at Camp Greene in Charlotte.

6 Peanut butter snack crackers were an essential offering on the vending carts or wagons pulled through the textile mills of the Carolina Piedmont. These mobile vending stations, known as dope carts or dope wagons, fueled loom workers with sandwiches, crackers, and soft drinks, nicknamed dopes.

Illustration by Emily Wallace

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A quest for inventive dining yields close, but not quite

BY OSAYI ENDOLYN

HOW DOES A CITY BECOME KNOWN FOR GOOD FOOD? IS THERE an instruction manual lying about in a hospitality group office or urban planning bureau somewhere? I ask because I've been dining in Gainesville, Florida, where I've lived for two years. I accompanied my fiancé, Bruce, who's in a PhD program at the University of Florida (UF). Upon news of his acceptance, my food-oriented friends from major cities looked at me with mitigated grimaces—where would I eat? Friends and colleagues bid me good luck with wistful smiles.

Their trepidation wasn't entirely about Gainesville, a city whose service industry relies heavily on the ebbs and flows of the fifty-some-odd thousand students who flow onto UF's campus each year. They were concerned about Florida. The place where my ecologist friend watched her conference RSVPs plummet, because state scientists told her they weren't allowed to attend events that reference climate change. The land where the Everglades are so

overrun by pythons that rabbits, deer, and even bobcats are dwindling in number. The state where the shooting deaths of young black boys like Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis caused some of my black friends to invoke near-spiritual cautionary missives. And don't get non-Floridians started on the alligator stories, which on social media, always work their way back to a guy on meth.

Still, Gainesville has its charm. You've gotta be where you're at—how can you

Photos by Osayi Endolyn