



*America's Favorite Condiment Museum!*

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## NATIONAL MUSTARD MUSEUM MARKS 25 YEARS OF A CONDIMENT OBSESSION

**MIDDLETON, WI** -- The world's largest collection of mustards and mustard memorabilia began twenty five years ago as a baseball fan's response to a devastating defeat. On October 28, 1986, hours after the Boston Red Sox lost the World Series, transplanted New Englander Barry Levenson went to an all-night grocery on the east side of Madison, Wisconsin, to walk the aisles and confront his sorrow.

As legend has it, as he walked down the condiment aisle and heard a voice coming from the mustards: *"If you collect us, they will come."* He dragged an armful of mustards into his cart and vowed to amass the world's largest collection of mustards. Twenty five years later, he has honored that vow and more.

In 1991, Levenson left a stable and respectable job as a government lawyer to open his "mustard museum," selling exotic mustards and mustard souvenirs to support his ever growing collection. Today, the **National Mustard Museum** holds more than 5,300 mustards from 79 countries, plus hundreds of antique mustard tins, pots, advertisements, and articles from mustard's long history. The museum also sells more than 450 mustards in its gift shop and online store.

Despite being found on dozens of published lists of unusual and bizarre museums, the National Mustard Museum has a serious mission -- to promote the public's appreciation of a healthy and flavorful condiment that dates back centuries. "The mission may be serious but our methods are anything but," says Levenson, whose museum spawned the whimsical mustard college, "POUPON U," complete with collegiate-style gear. Levenson has also been fighting a good-natured war with the "other" condiment and warns visitors, with a deadpan straight face, that "friends don't let friends eat ketchup.

Humor and whimsy aside, Levenson is widely acknowledged as one of the world's leading experts on mustard and serves as the coordinating judge for the annual World-Wide Mustard Competition.

Levenson no longer practices law but teaches food law at the University of Wisconsin Law School. "Food law is such a fascinating area of the law these days and the interaction with students is so much fun."

When asked if there might be a sort of symmetric irony with the formation of the collection twenty-five years ago and this year's anniversary on the heels of another historic collapse by the Red Sox who squandered a ten-game lead in September to the playoffs, Levenson sighed, "I guess it means I will have to collect mustards for at least another twenty-five years."

*For more information, contact Barry Levenson at 608-831-2222 or [curator@mustardmuseum.com](mailto:curator@mustardmuseum.com)*

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