A Tour of the Breakfast Cereal Aisle

Physically and historically
Quote from an unnamed German

“Cereal here is total garbage. It is either like eating sugar or eating air. Where is my muesli?”
“Cereal here is total garbage. It is either like eating sugar or eating air. Where is my muesli?”
Why care?

- Over 5000 different brands; 2.7 billion boxes sold annually in the US
- Variety: express yourself
- Who doesn’t want a 5 min breakfast for like 50 cents?
Humble Beginnings
The breakfast landscape of 1854

- Ferdinand Schumacher
  - “The Oatmeal King”
  - Operates a hand oat grinder in his store
    - Feeding horse food to humans! Cheap!
    - Opens his own oat mill
  - Goes on to create German Mills, which later becomes Quaker Oats
From oats to granula - 1863

- James Caleb Jackson
  - A religious doctor from New York
  - Invents granula - dry bran and graham grain nuggets
    - Need to soak in milk overnight
  - Not very good....
From oats to granola - 1877

- John Harvey Kellogg
  - A religious doctor from Michigan
    - Proponent of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church
    - Founder of the Battle Creek Sanitarium
    - Promote healthy living: vegetarianism, no alcohol, no tobacco, no coffee, no tea, no sex
  - Runs a health resort in Battle Creek Michigan
    - Invents granola
    - Later and by accident, corn flakes for his patients
    - Meant to promote “good living”
Post vs Kellogg

● Charles Post
  ○ A patient at Battle Creek, loves corn flakes.
    ■ “Hey John, how do you make these?”
  ○ Starts making and selling his own cereal: Grape-nuts

● William Keith Kellogg
  ○ Upset at his brother, he leaves the sanitarium
  ○ Starts marketing cornflakes to the public as Kellogg’s
  ○ Gets rich; becomes renowned Arabian horse breeder
Battle Creek, Michigan

- The Cereal Capital of the World
- Headquarters of Kellogg’s and Post (and many other competitors)
Cereal gets popular

- Cereal was fast to prepare and didn’t spoil quickly
  - Less expensive than 1900s bougie breakfast:
    - Sausage, ham, eggs, pancakes, oysters
  - Tastier than 1900s commoner breakfast:
    - Porridge or oatmeal
  - Heavy protein diets for breakfast caused health problems
Cereal gets popular

- William Keith Kellogg: marketing king
  - Buys the world’s biggest billboard in 1912
  - Adds mail order prizes to cereal boxes
    - Muffin tins, measuring cups
    - Jungleland books
    - WW2 memorabilia
Cereal advertising explodes
Marketing booms for kids

- Sugary crap and mascots!
Better prizes and games
So. Many. Commercials.

https://youtu.be/j7SAuD2v0kM?t=2m34s
CEREAL BOX PSYCHOLOGY

WHY IS CAP’N CRUNCH LOOKING DOWN AT MY CHILD?

According to a study of 65 types of cereal in 10 grocery stores...

The average adult's cereal is placed twice as high as children's cereal.

But children's characters look down at a 9.6° angle

Adult characters look straight ahead...

Eye contact increases brand trust by 16%

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Post 2000s

- Due to health backlash, cereal becomes “healthy”
  - Start pitching whole grains and fibre
Varieties of cereals and techniques
Most cereals start in the same way

- Cook a bunch of your favourite grain (corn, wheat, oats, etc)
Various shapes and textures

- Oven baked, pressure cooked, boiled
Various flavours and add-ons

- Dried fruit, nuts, sugar, more sugar, etc.
So now that you’re sold…
what should you buy?
A good cereal

- Taste (not too sweet)
- Texture
- Complexity
- Combination with milk (residue, effects, sogginess)
- Hand edibility
- Health: can you eat it daily and function?
The definitive* tier list of modern breakfast cereals

*Opinions are extremely biased. Use at your own risk.
Garbage Tier
French toast crunch

- Tastes nothing like the real thing
- Too crunchy, not easy to chew
- Terrible leftover residue
Cookie crisp

- Please just eat a cookie instead....
Lucky charms

- The marshmallows are all the flavour
  - But even they suck!
- If run out of marshmallows, game over
Low Tier
Cinnamon toast crunch

- Their claim to fame: “the taste you can see”
- Dominated by cinnamon, floating in the bowl
- Soggy ones are gross
Frosted mini wheats

- Bundles of shredded wheat with half frosting
- Why half???
- Totally doesn't work with milk
Chex mix

- I’ve never had it, but it originated from a racist cult leader who outlawed watermelon
- Claimed to give mind control powers
Normie Tier
All the super plain and tasteless ones

- Cheerios, corn flakes, alpha bits, rice krispies
- Good for baking...
Raisin bran

- Cereal your parents would eat
- Flakes are a just bit too light and bland
Froot loops

- Middle of the road in every way possible
- Note: tastes nothing like fruit
Good Tier
Frosted flakes

- Light and airy, not too sweet
- Best cereal mascot of all time
Special K

- The best crunch and flakes
- Great variety of flavours
- Too expensive for its own good
Honey bunches of oats

- If only the flakes were a bit better....
- Bunch of honey >> sugar
Great Tier
Reese’s Puffs

- Half peanut butter, half chocolate
- The taste of Reese’s cups without the overwhelming flavour
Oatmeal crisp

- So close to there, all the flavours are great
- Prob the best handheld cereal
GOAT Tier
Honey Nut Cheerios

- Great ring shapes, no spillage, easy to chew
- Lightly sweetened with a touch of honey
- The most purchased cereal annually in the US
Cereal is cool!
Advanced cereal bowl

- Milk and cereal are mixed at this end of the bowl.
- "Material" durable for long life.
- Milk is below the shelf.
- Cereal sits on the shelf.
- The shelf is fully removable for washing.
Cereal popup bar in Vancouver!

Things To Do In Van

Vancouver Is Set To Open Its First-Ever "Cereal Bar"

Saturday Mornings are planning to open up Vancouver's very first "Cereal Cafe".
Cereal popup bar in Vancouver!

Vancouver Is Set To Open Its First "Cereal Bar"

Saturday Mornings are planning to open up Vancouver's first cereal bar in the next month! What will you add to your bowl?