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The Pineapple: The Princess of Fruit and the Symbol of Hospitality, Exhibit Website

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The Pineapple, "Princess of Fruits" and Symbol of Hospitality



A Special Exhibit at:

The Universal Orlando Foundation Library
At the Rosen College of Hospitality Management

With Assistance from:

The Orange County Regional History Center
and the UCF Libraries Special Collections Department



Please Note: This page was originally created for a small exhibit which ran August 15th - October 14th, 2005 in the Universal Orlando Foundation Library at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. The exhibit is long gone, but the information presented below is still useful (also see the sources listed in the bibliography below), so read on to learn more about the pineapple, the symbol of hospitality!

The Pineapple

Come to the Library to see the exhibit that pays tribute to the pineapple, the princess of fruits and the symbol of hospitality.

Since colonial times, the warm and welcoming pineapple has, quite literally, been put on a pedestal in America. It has been used again and again as a motif in architecture, in furniture, in textiles, in illumination, and, of course, in food!



Ceramic pineapple pieces from the exhibit

We hope you enjoy learning about the fascinating story of the pineapple!

A Curious History



*Christopher Columbus and native Americans.
Image from the [Florida Memory Project](#).*

The pineapple (scientific name *Ananas comosus*) originated centuries ago in South America, probably near present-day Brazil and Paraguay, and indigenous peoples had spread the fruit throughout Central America long before European explorers arrived.

A fateful interaction with Christopher Columbus propelled the pineapple into the European (and eventually the American) consciousness. Columbus and his crew “discovered” the pineapple in Guadeloupe in 1493 on their second (less famous) voyage to the New World. They called it the *piña*, due to its resemblance to a pinecone, and brought the “exotic” fruit back to Spain.

Later explorers were equally enchanted. Sir Walter Raleigh, for example, wrote of “the great abundance of *Pinas*, the princesse of fruits that grow vnder the Sun” in his 1595 travelogue *Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empyre of Guiana*.

It took some time for Europeans to learn to grow the prized pineapple, which thrives in tropical climates, but by the mid-1600s it was being produced in “hot-houses” in Holland and England. Soon thereafter, the pineapple was introduced to Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world.

Symbol of Hospitality

American colonists began importing the pineapple from the Caribbean in the 17th century. Due to its seemingly exotic qualities and rareness, the pineapple soon became a symbol of hospitality in early America. Because trade routes between America and Caribbean islands were often slow and perilous, it was considered a significant achievement for a host to procure a ripe pineapple for guests. Similarly, some accounts tell of New England sea captains who, upon returning from trade routes in the Caribbean or Pacific, would place a pineapple outside their homes as a symbol of a safe return.



Pineapple centerpiece from the exhibit

Due to its association with warmth and friendliness, pineapples in America were often used as the “crowning” piece in large displays of food. Similarly, the pineapple symbol was used frequently in the 18th and 19th centuries to decorate bed posts, tablecloths, napkins—anything associated with welcoming guests. Today, the pineapple remains a fitting symbol for the hospitality industry, and pineapple-themed products still abound. From lamps to candle holders to salt and pepper shakers and beyond, the pineapple motif says “Welcome!”

The Pineapple Business in America



*Florida pineapple farm.
Image from the [Florida Memory Project](#).*

In America, commercial production of pineapples began in earnest in Florida in the late 19th century. In fact, for a short time, Florida was among the world's most prolific producer's of pineapple. However, by the 1930s, pineapple production in Florida began to fall off, largely due to changes in climate and increased competition from central America and Hawaii.

According to some sources, pineapples were introduced to Hawaii as early as the 16th century. But pineapples weren't canned in Hawaii until

about 1885, and the American territory did not become world famous for its pineapples until Jim Dole founded his highly successful Hawaiian Pineapple Company in 1901. Remarkably, by the 1920s, the pineapple was Hawaii's largest industry, and, until recently, Hawaii was the world's largest producer of canned pineapples.

Gradually, much of the world's pineapple production has shifted to central America and Asia, where the fruit can be produced more cheaply.

Although pineapples are no longer a uniquely American product, the symbol of hospitality still looms large in both Florida and Hawaii, for the most important industry in both states today is... the hospitality and tourism business!

For More Information

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- o - Tim Bottorff, Reference Librarian (now Head Librarian)

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