



ORIGINS OF THE BLACK HAT.

Black in the context of the "Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award", has no connection with the Long established European custom of wearing black as a sign of mourning.

To understand the origin of the Black Hat is to understand that the Romans in the 7th century, when in England, organised the many different little kingdoms into a single church order. In doing so they helped to create the unity of England. In the 11th century the Normans conquerors arrived in England and set about building castles, churches and monasteries throughout the land, using the cheapest building materials possible - the stones from nearby quarries. Many of these monasteries offered food and rest to many a weary traveller - for a price - thus sowing the seed of what was to become the catering industry with professional cooks being employed.

In the 14th century the introduction of brick-making and laying revolutionised the building and design of all types and sizes of dwellings and structures.

It brought about the building of fireplaces, ovens and chimneys. It allowed the temperature of ovens to be controlled by the use of flu plates and controlled draught into the chimney. The humble brick has played a very important part in the history of English cookery.

In the 15th century the English Worshipful Company of Cooks was chartered in the year 1482, although it had been founded nearly 50 years prior to the charter. It is both the oldest and most senior of all British professional cooks organisation and is still in existence.

The Worshipful Company of Cooks is incorporated in the Cookery and Food Association U.K., which was founded in 1855 and enrolled by

Special Authority of the Lords of the Treasury in 1891.

It is under the Patronage of:

Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

The Queen Mother.

Her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal.

It is interesting to note that it was a strict rule of the Worshipful Company of Cooks that no girl should be apprenticed.

In the 18th century cooks either didn't wear a hat, or wore a shapeless white cap pulled into a variety of styles to suit the whim of the wearer.

Although it is known that cooks in some monasteries wore the old or discarded black skull caps of the monks during the later part of the

17th century, it is now generally accepted that the black cap originated in a London Hotel in the mid 19th century.

The black skull cap headgear for an English Master Craftsman or Professional Cook originated in the 1840's at the famous Reform Club

And was a black velvet cap from which a tassel dangled. It was several years later when the flamboyant and brilliant culinary artist, Alexis Soyer became Maitre Chef des Cuisines of the Reform Club that the black cap became famous through the publicity that Soyer attracted by wearing a tall vivid red chef's hat until the black skull cap took his fancy.

Soyer worked with Florence Nightingale in the Crimea to improve the standard of food for the wounded British soldiers in military hospitals. Generations of British army cooks even up to 1960's

will have fond memories of the "Soyer Boiler" a vital piece of field kitchen equipment. The Worshipful Company of Cooks fostered the

wearing of the black skull cap but only by selected top class cooks. In England the black skull cap is still worn by the Master Cook

[being the equivalent of the French Maitre Chef de Cuisine or the American Executive Chef] at the famous English -style restaurant "Simpson's In the Strand". The Black Cap Master Cook would stand in front of the customers with his hot trolley carving juicy slices of red sirloin beef.

.It is traditional at London's Guild Hall when Royalty is present for English Black Cap Cooks to enter the hall and carve the huge Barons [saddles] of beef.

And since 1980 the tradition continues in Australia- our version: The Sidney Taylor Memorial Black Hat Award - is the traditional tall Chef's hat entirely in Black.

It is presented by the recipient's peers, in this case the full Committee of the Guild now the Australian Culinary Federation to the Master Cook who may not be necessarily be the Head Chef, and is held by the member until a worthy successor is found.

The awardee is entitled to continue to wear the Black Hat as a holder of the highest recognition given by his or her counterparts.

Recipients of this award.

[Vale] Sidney Taylor.

[Vale] Alexander Chenevier.

[Vale]Aelfryn Bailey.

Ernst Stuhler.

John Miller.

[Vale]Claudio Magris.

George Hill.



John Miller



Claudio Magris



Black hats. Ernst Stuhler. George Hill. And John Miller.

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<http://www.austculinary.com.au/vic/arcvvic/blackhatarticle.html> 25/04/2006