

November 2022



Dear Club Members,

The name of your fibre this month, "Bring on the Branston" will probably be somewhat confusing if you're outside the UK. For those of us who are Brits however it will make perfect sense (though the advertising campaign is actually Bring Out the Branston, but in our house that became Bring On the Branston). Branston Pickle is a commercially available chutney, it was first made in the village of Branston, near Burton-on-Trent Staffordshire in 1922. Production has now moved to Suffolk, and we eat over 17 million jars of it a year.

It's made from assorted diced vegetables, swede (rutabaga), carrots, onions and cauliflower pickled in a sauce made from vinegar, tomato, apple and spices that has a thick consistency. We put it on sandwiches, serve it with cold meats and cheese, and weirdly (imo!) have it with salad. If someone offers you a cheese and pickle sandwich it's implicitly understood that the pickle in question is probably Branston or a similar cheaper replica.

Branston was developed by food company Crosse and Blackwell, who made jams and pickles. In the early 1920's they were outgrowing their existing factory in Soho London, and moved to Burton on Trent, purchasing a disused 150 acre site from the government, as it was no longer needed following the end of World War I. They pledged to turn it in to the largest and best equipped food preserving plant in the British Empire.

To go with the factory site they also invested in housing for the workers they would need. A large lodge house was turned in a residence for single female workers, and they built 26 houses for the factory foremen.

The pickle was supposedly developed in Branston Lodge by 3 women, Mrs Graham and her two daughters Miss Evelyn and Miss Ermentrude, and went in to production shortly after. The basic recipe has remained unchanged ever since. It went in to production at the Branston factory where two thirds of the 600 employees were women. Two years later however the Branston factory had become too expensive to run, most of the ingredients were coming from London markets, and much of the stock was being shipped back to London for sale on export markets. Production moved back to a London factory, and the Branston site was sold in 1927 and the factory now used to make artificial silk.

Now you might not think there would be a link between last months fibre and this months, but there is. Annie Besant was a great campaigner for Indian independence, and the British love of pickle is largely thanks to the time that many British people spent in India during the time of the British Empire. Branston Pickle is in essence a form of chutney, chutney derives from from Hindi चटनी *chaṭnī*, deriving from चाटना *chāṭnā* 'to lick' or 'to eat with appetite'.

In Indian cuisine it usually refers to a fresh or lightly pickled form of a dipping sauce or vegetable based condiment. British style chutneys were developed by those who went back home and wished to recreate the flavours they'd eaten during their time abroad, but using English orchard fruits, many recipes use apples as a base, and they're very popular as a way of using up a glut at

harvest time, particularly using fruit that won't store unless preserved in some way. This also means the British version is usually heavily cooked, and uses sugar and vinegar to act as preservatives.

You'll see many recipes that supposedly allow you to make your own Branston at home, but to be honest none of them quite have the same texture and taste as the mass made version... even those of us who make our own different forms of chutneys will often have a jar of Branston in the fridge!

The colours this month are inspired by the colours that have been used on the labels for almost as long as it's been on sale. The dark coloured pickle and the bright yellow branding that make the jar instantly recognisable. The fibres used also tell something of the story, Burton on Trent isn't a million miles away from Shropshire, so I've used that breed of British wool, and there's also some Shetland in homage of the many Scottish people who had to leave these shores for better employment prospects in the British Empire. India has contributed our recycled Sari Silk and also the Peduncle Silk.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label
week

25% Shropshire

12.5% Peduncle Silk

12.5% Sari Silk

50% Shetland

Further Reading-

Branston in Burton-on-Trent

<http://www.burton-on-trent.org.uk/category/surviving/branston-depot/branston-pickle>

<https://professionalmoron.com/2021/08/12/branston-pickle-history/>

<https://www.staffordshire-live.co.uk/news/history/branston-pickle-burton-depot-297760>

An Americans view of Branston pickle

<https://www.epicurious.com/expert-advice/branston-pickle-will-change-your-sandwich-game-article>

A history of chutney-

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chutney>

<https://www.thebetterindia.com/256876/indian-food-recipes-history-chutney-map-origin-mughal-cuisine-shah-jahan-zero-waste-cooking-ana79/>

(includes some authentic Indian Chutney recipes)