

# THE PASTY OF MICHIGAN MINERS

## A Streamlined One-Course Meal

Courtesy (in-part) by the Ironwood Area  
Historical Museum



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### Quinn Motel, LLC

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Michigan’s unique contribution to the American palate is the hot pasty, a streamlined one-course dinner you can carry in your pocket without spilling a mouthful. Hours after baking...it is still warm.

Call it a meat pie or whatever but the pasty is an important article of diet throughout the copper and iron regions of the Upper Peninsula.

Pasty ingredients may vary, but the basics include meat, potatoes and onions baked in a half-moon shaped crust sealed by crinkled edges. Its proper seasoning, of course, depends upon the knowledge of the cook and which has much to do with the success of the pasty. Each cook has their own recipe for making a pasty. More likely than not, it is a verbal “hand-me-down” throughout many generations.

Michigan first saw the pasty during the “70’s” (1870) and “80’s” when the sturdy Cornish miners flocked to the Upper Peninsula to sink the shafts for the then infant mining industry. The newcomers had worked underground for generations in the southwestern tip of England and were sorely needed in a country of lumberjacks and fishermen.

The Cornishmen brought with them a dialect. Because of their English origin, they were called “Cousins” and “Union Jacks” but the term soon became “Cousin Jacks.” Their wives, known as “Cousin Jennies,” introduced seed and saffron buns, heavy cake, scald cream, fig duff and other delicacies and served a standard Sunday breakfast of creamed codfish. But their most important kitchen contribution was the pasty, born of necessity many decades before the invention of the dinner pail. Back in Cornwall, the wives baked the pasties in the morning, rolled them in their aprons and hurried down to the mine shafts, often miles from home. In essence, we can all be grateful to the Corning for bringing their version of the pasty to the Lake Superior region.

If you’re looking for a hot pasty made fresh from one of our local establishments, stop by the chamber office for a list. The office is located at 150 N. Lowell Street (in the Old Depot Train Museum).

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