

The History of the Hot Dog Cart

As you set out to embark on your new career as a Hot Dog Cart Operator it would be interesting to consider the history and development of the Hot Dog cart.

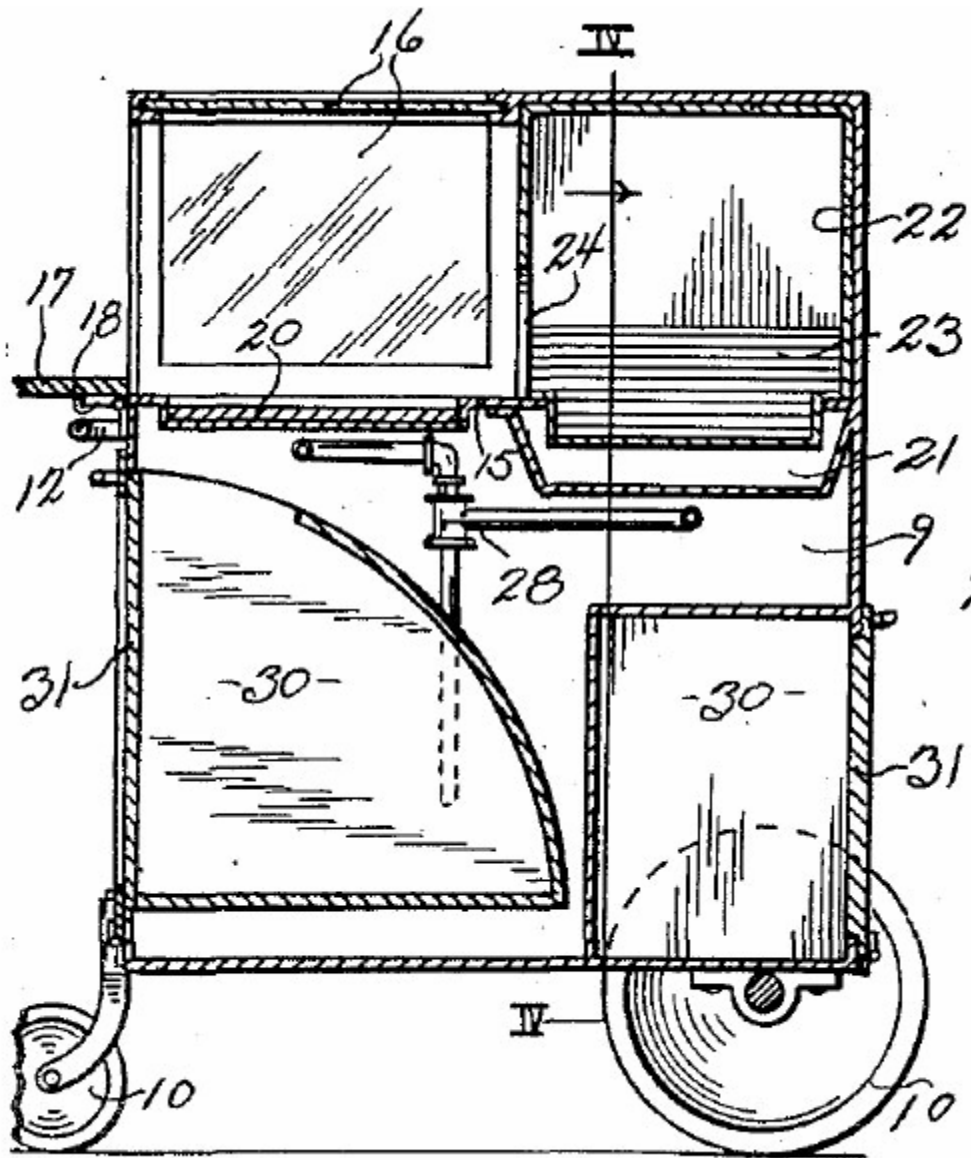
To begin with we are going to discuss the origins of the hot dog's precursor the sausage. The earliest known mention of the term sausage was in Homer's *Odyssey* in 850 B.C. Also of note is that in 424 B.C., Aristophanes' play *The Knights* is about a sausage-vendor who is elected leader. So sausage vending appears to be an ancient profession.

As far as the birth of what is now refer to as the hot dog is widely disputed. For example in 1987, the city of Frankfurt celebrated the 500th anniversary of the hot dog in their city. But the citizens of Wien (the German term for Vienna) adamantly contest that claim. They point to the fact that the term wiener was coined in Wien, Austria in 1805. But instead of getting involved in that hotly contested debate, let us consider how the origins of the modern day hot dog cart evolved in North America.

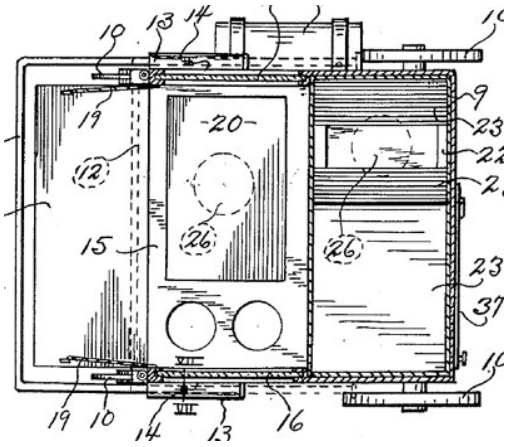
Around 1870, German immigrant Charles Feltman opened the first Coney Island hot dog stand by selling warm dachshund sausages in a milk roll. As far as the portable carts that we know today, in the mid-1890s sausage vendors would sell their products outside of student dorms at eastern universities. The portable carts that they used were commonly referred to as "dog wagons", and are often cited as the precursor to what is now know as the modern day hot dog cart. It is also of note that many of the student newspaper made reference to the term hot dog (which also disputes claims that the term hot dog got it's origins from the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition).

As far as what we now know as the modern day hot dog cart, in 1936 Oscar Mayer rolled out the first hot dog street vending cart and called it the "Wiener Mobile". The cart also featured Meinhart Raabe (now known as Little Oscar).

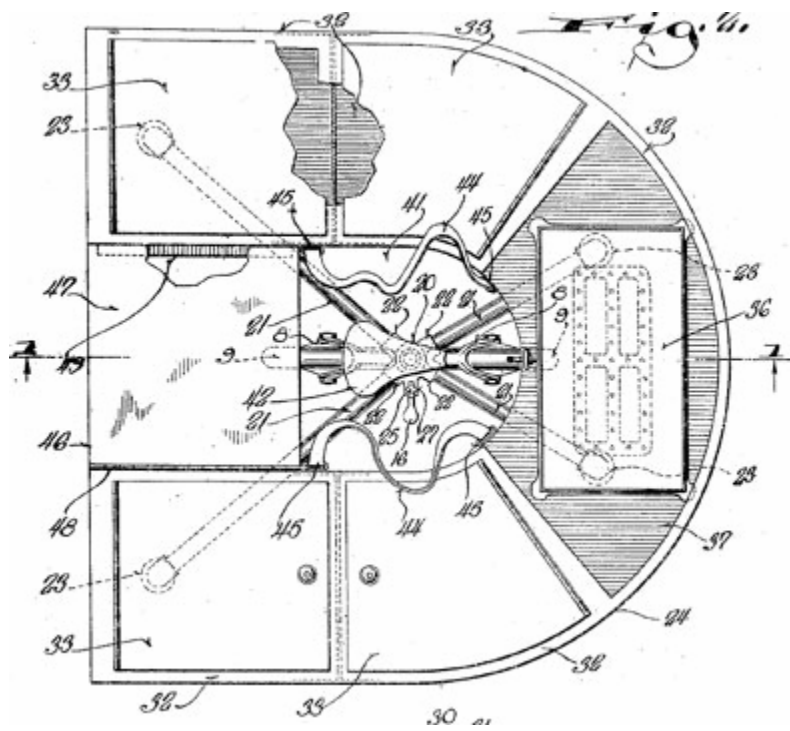
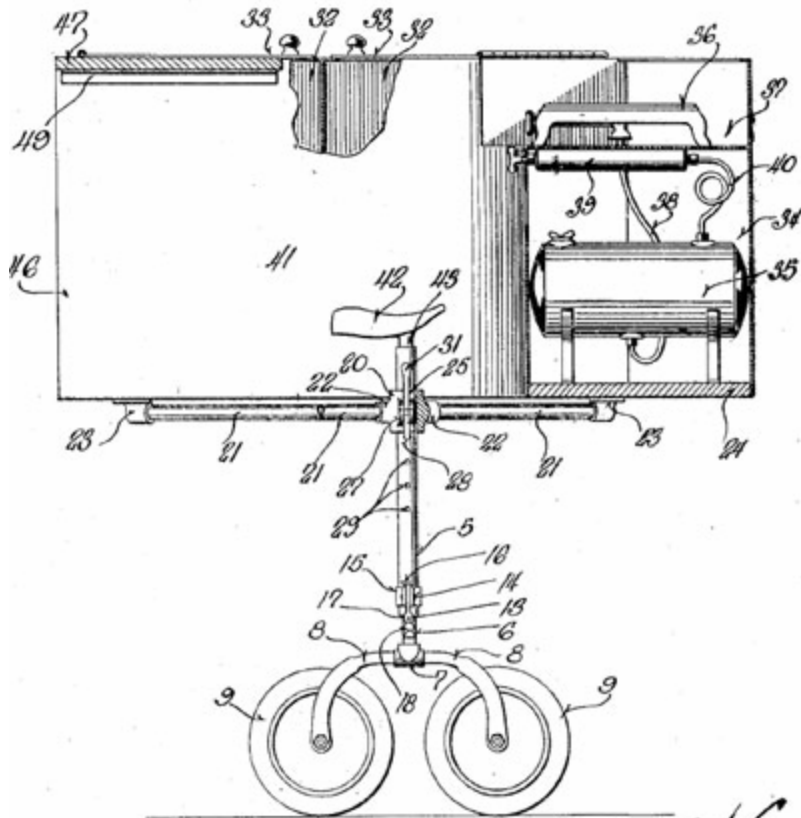
It is of interest to note that the first patent for hot dog carts predates the "Wiener Mobile". In 1926, Frances E. Coffey came up with blue prints for what is remarkably similar in design to the modern hot dog vending cart. The cart had provisions for an ice box, cooking plate, steam table, and several storage bins.



The view here shows the layout of the cart burners and hot plate.



Also predating Francis E. Coffey's patent, in 1924 there was a patent for a design for a device called the Peddlers Stand. It was like a bicycle with pedals. It is not entirely clear if this was specifically designed for hot dog vending. Also the having to balance on the pedals while trying to cook doesn't appear to be the most practical design.



Ever since it's introduction to North America in the 1800's, there is no disputing the hot dog's place in popular food culture. According to estimates from the American Hot Dog Council, 20 billion hot dogs a year are consumed in the United States alone.

Approximately 15% (or 3 billion of those) are sold by Hot Dog Carts. So you are not only entering into a tradition that is more than a century old, but you are also embarking on a time proven successful business model selling one of North America's most popular food items. Enjoy being apart of history.