

About the upper Amazon River, the Amazon rainforest, Iquitos Peru, and Dawn on the Amazon Tours and Cruises.

Black Breakfast Spreads Battle It Out in Iquitos Café

by Captain Bill

Black Breakfast Spreads Battle It Out in Iquitos Café

Few visitors to Iquitos' miss a walk along the town's historic malecon, a walkway which is increasingly known by the endearing epithet 'Gourmet Alley'. Where else in the world can you order heart-of-palm salad, with freshly caught catfish ceviche, washed down with exotic camu-camu juice or excellent locally brewed Iquitenana beer? Recently, however, an unusual taste-test was held in La Noche, a bar-restaurant facing the river, which had little to do with Amazonian cuisine. UK-born 'Mad Mick' Collis met Australian-born traveller [Glen Short](#) for breakfast, and noted with interest that he spread Vegemite on his buttered toast from a yellow tube, squeezing out something that looked like black toothpaste. Mick, co-incidentally, had just been delivered, via his daughter who visited during the [Great Amazon Raft Race](#), a large jar of Marmite, and produced it from his bag.



“I was raised on Vegemite and it's black Ambrosia” reminisced Glen.

“Marmite is to a Brit what spinach is to Popeye” countered Mick.

“No, a great Australian invention which is the secret to Aussies' outstanding successes on the sporting field! Just recently the factory shipped its one billionth jar!” asserted Glen.*

“Oh, just ’ave a look at that...” said Mick, “it put hairs on the chest of many a red-blooded Englishman!”

“Ha! A poor British version of a vitamin-rich Aussie staple!” scoffed Glen.

“What do you mean, ‘Ha!’? Yours is an inferior imitation of the British product!” scorned Mick.

It seemed an impartial opinion could be in order. Just then Bill Harrison, hailing from the USA, wandered in.

“Whats that?” he asked Bill.



“The second best thing since – or rather on – sliced bread, after this!” answered a proud Aussie, offering his almost empty tube of Vegemite. An indignant Mick disputed his comparison, and suggested a blind taste test, to which Bill agreed.

Bill was given a sample with what both factions agreed was the best way to have it: thinly spread on fresh, buttered toast. Many a taste-test has been ruined by spreading the paste too thickly, like peanut butter. When it comes to yeast extracts, a little goes a long way. Glen’s 145g tube had lasted him three months, though he admitted he didn’t eat it everyday, and even hid it when other Aussies were at the table, lest they help themselves to his limited supply.

Both products are made from yeast extract; both have similar yellow and red colours in their labelling; some say the product contained within is also similar in taste (though aficionados would strongly disagree). And both are definitely an acquired taste. Unbeknownst to many, there is a third yeast product, called ‘Cenovis’ which is popular in Switzerland.



Bill gingerly nibbled at the toast samples, seemingly savouring every last crumb. His verdict? While both were similar in fragrance, they had distinctive flavours and even more distinctive textures. Intriguingly, Bill recalls being given something very similar in his rations when he was a US serviceman. And which was better? Ah, here is Bill's honest and diplomatic reply:

“Both are very, very good. Now, please, can I have some more?”

*A subsequent investigation on wikipedia later revealed that Vegemite was indeed invented by an Australian in the early 1920s, but he was trying to recreate Marmite, whose shipments to Australia had been disrupted in WW1. Furthermore, it has been owned by an American company, Kraft, for more than 70 years.

Guest post by Glen David Short, author, actor, world traveler, and Vegemite aficionado.

[Vegemite, Wikipedia](#)

[Marmite, Wikipedia](#)

{ 31 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }



[1](#) Brian Johnson December 11, 2008 at 2:30 pm

What a good article, obviously written by an educated Australian, good work Glenn.

Now to the point in question, which is the better product Marmite or Vegemite ?

Facts, Marmite was produced in England for over 60 years before Vegemite was born, it was the staple for young, growing kids in England and Australia. That was until the 1st World war when supplies of Marmite dried up and us colonials were forced to replicate the black nectar. We did it, we produced Vegemite, which without doubt is a far superior spread than the old Marmite. we admit it, we took a good product and made it GREAT !

Now Glenn, are you stupid ? You asked an American Bill Harrison to do a “blind taste test”. Glenn, an American ? don't you know Americans have no culture or taste, can they produce a quality beer or manufacture a good motor car that everyone wants to buy, Hell No !

I completely reject Bill Harrison's verdict as he is obviously just not qualified to rule on such a subject. Good article though.



[2](#) Kevin Mayo December 11, 2008 at 3:04 pm

I just had a cheese and marmite combo omg tasted so goooooooooooooood.



[3](#) Malcolm Thomas December 11, 2008 at 3:05 pm

God is God, Life is Life, and Marmite is Marmite.



[4](#) Bill Clark December 11, 2008 at 3:15 pm

We Kiwis prefer Marmite, superior by far to the Vegemite inhaled by our less cultured Australian cousins ☐



[5](#) Gringa Linda December 11, 2008 at 3:44 pm

Hey yall – wow – is this what I'm missing not having breakfast at Miriam's (La Noche) on the Boulevard? Great photos – I “mite” want some!



[6](#) Aaron December 11, 2008 at 4:03 pm

what about promite?



[7](#) Marina Varone December 11, 2008 at 6:41 pm

Vegemite of course – Aussie, Aussie, Aussie!!



[8](#) george December 11, 2008 at 8:52 pm

never heard the words “cultured: and “Kiwi” used in the same sentence ! What would they know, they produce only sub-standard sportsmen and half their population has bolted to Queensland!

BUT SERIOUSLY, Vegemite and Marmite are like chalk and cheese- it’s not possible to like both. I grew up on Marmite but acquired the taste for Vegemite when I came to Australia. Both have their attributes but I think Marmite is a little too sweet

Always remember Gerald at the Yellow Rose of Texas finding a serve for us when we’d been travelling without a taste of it for 4 months!

George



[9](#) Tim December 12, 2008 at 10:11 am

Surprised there is any need to debate it. Vegemite is a reasonable imitation, but lacking in real substance or bite. It is OK in emergencies. In fact I occasionally have some just to remind myself how brilliant Marmite really is. Marmite is and always will be the superior product.



[10](#) Cathy December 12, 2008 at 12:05 pm

My mate – Marmite!

There is a humungous unopened jar, lovingly brought back from the UK this summer, sitting dumpily and darkly on my pantry shelf. What’s more delightful than spread v. thinly on toast with a nice hot cup of tea? – even in a Peruvian summer. Mind you, every one I’ve tried it on here would obviously like to spit it out, but they’re too polite to do so.



[11](#) Penny December 12, 2008 at 12:28 pm

While I am not a huge fan of the taste of Vegemite, I am raising my kids on it – which they love of course, being good Aussie kids!!! I am currently waiting on

my next two jars to arrive from Aust and we are savouring every last bit of the current jar. Maybe Vegemite did originate from Marmite, but if it came from the UK then its obvious it would need some perfecting, which we Aussies definately know how to do, ie Beer, BBQs, B&S Balls – need I say more?
Proudly supporting the Aussie invasion on Peru – go Vegemite!!!!!!



[12](#) Samuel Brown December 12, 2008 at 2:39 pm

neither, they both smell like baby-diaper bin. what about nutella or peanut butter, now those are some spreads to talk about.



[13](#) Freda Yancy Wolf December 12, 2008 at 2:41 pm

THEY ARE BOTH DISGUSTING, not the Aussies and Brits, but the Marmite and Vegemite.

Saludos,
Freda (US



[14](#) Teresa White December 12, 2008 at 2:56 pm

Im an imposter... pretending to like this horrible product just to get on this blog... ITS HORRIBLE ! i would rather eat the soles off flyer dyers sandles. to those of u who dont know im.. they would b pretty bad, but not as bad as marm.... uuh cant even say it !



[15](#) ed hudson December 12, 2008 at 11:28 pm

Have lived around 30yrs in NZ surrounded by the 2 stuffs but never thought about tasting either,2 sons the same. Must have been happy with alternatives.

My only contact with either was when I went to Saudi Arabia & called a friend who worked where I was going for any urgent request. Yes Yes Marmite (or was it Vegemite ??) so bought & delivered 6 jars.

Best regards GLEN & MIKE.

Good to see BILL HARRISON tasting,when I am next on the Boulevard I will buy Bills Beer for at least a night as thanks for his excellent Hotel Tip in Bs As where I stayed.

MIKE when I come back to IQT could bring you some MARMITE or do you want to change to VEGEMITE,or maybe stay safe & bring OXO.

Ed Hudson



[16](#) A kiwi December 13, 2008 at 4:44 pm

I have to side with the Aussie on this one, Vegemite is far superior, but whats up with that underarm bowling shit?



[17](#) Bill Harrison December 14, 2008 at 8:10 am

Please tell me it was'nt an Ausie that said americans don't have (culture),May I remind of your roots!!!!!!

As far as my abaility to participate in a blind taste test for marmite,and vegemite,I think the only person that would object to it,Would be a person that only wants opinions favorable to himself.



[18](#) Martha Macuase December 14, 2008 at 9:51 am

You know Glen boy tried that taste test with me, and both failed. Regardless of culture, brand or taste,the stuff tastes like a spread of salty shit.
Martha



[19](#) Peter Loynes December 14, 2008 at 10:25 am

Can't believe this war still raging – even in a delightful backwater like Iquitos!

Like Dennis Lillee's metal bat, the Aussie's keep coming up with poor substitutes but...at least they try!



[20](#) [Bill](#) December 14, 2008 at 10:47 pm

Mike shared Marmite with me. I spread a thin layer on buttered toast, then scrapped most of that off and made the thinnest layer possible. That helped, but left a bad after taste. I had tried it in the past but always with too much spread. It is an acquired taste that I will probably not acquire. To be fair I will have to try Vegemite, spread very thin, before I make a final judgement.

Bill Grimes



[21](#) Richard Ball December 15, 2008 at 10:31 am

I am a POM and proud of it. I have lived in Elizabeth Vale, Adelaide since 1964. Elizabeth Vale is considered a pom enclave, this is where my parents came when they emigrated from England.

We love Marmite here and will not touch that other stuff. When our limited supplies run out we would rather go without than eat that cheap copy.

Some people have said this blog is trivial, that the difference between Marmite and Vegemite is not worth talking about. They say its not a matter of life and death. F*****g right ! its far more important than that.

I WOULD FIGHT FOR MY MATE MARMITE !



[22](#) Joan Baxter December 15, 2008 at 11:34 am

Looks like serious warfare folks! Sorry I can't pour oil on troubled waters but both are hard to taste through the several tons of salt in each. Must be a real taste in there somewhere, but just can't stomach finding out where?!



[23](#) Ryan Adem December 16, 2008 at 6:48 pm

Vegemite rules OK



[24](#) GEORGE SHARP December 17, 2008 at 10:26 am

To put the record straight 'vegemite' is a health product which was developed by a New-Zealand company called 'Sanitarium', and exported to both the afore mentioned destinations. They have probably tried to copy it, and then claim it as their own.....Auzzie ingenuity at work I guess.



[25](#) Anne December 17, 2008 at 11:16 pm

Having lived outside of the UK for 20 years in various countries marmite is one of the only items, along with loose Yorkshire tea and digestive biscuits, that I bring from home. Marmite and tea out of a teapot define being British! If you don't like marmite you are a lost cause AND if you can't taste the difference between it and the inferior vegemite you have lost some tastebuds somewhere along the way! By the way, my dad grew up where they made marmite – it is the byproduct of the English Bass's beer brewing industry.



[26](#) Glen December 31, 2008 at 5:57 pm

Asians are warming to the Black Ambrosia. From the diary of a Thai student, published in the Bangkok Post:

“Also, they have some strange food they call vegemite. This one is very Australian. It looks like chocolate but the taste is completely different. It’s very salty. I’m very sure if you have to try it, you would say that it’s yuck. But for me I do love it so much. I have it every morning. So, I guess I am becoming more Australian every day!”

<http://www.bangkokpost.com/education/site2003/grfb2503.htm>



[27](#) Prudence December 14, 2009 at 4:06 pm

Vegemite.



[28](#) Glen November 28, 2010 at 8:00 pm

Be a good (chocolate soldier)x
Be a good Vegemite soldier:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yA98MujNeM&playnext=1&list=PL790393676EE0D729&index=50>



[29](#) Glen February 16, 2011 at 8:43 am

New milder version of Vegemite launched; experts calls it ‘un-Australian’:

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/taste-jars-so-kraft-bows-to-wimpy-little-vegemites-20110216-1awmv.html>



[30](#) Glen May 25, 2011 at 2:15 am

Denmark bans Marmite

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/foodanddrinknews/8533896/Marmite-made-illegal-in-Denmark.html>



[31](#) Glen September 23, 2012 at 11:37 pm

True story of the man who invented Vegemite:

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/spreading-the-story-of-an-aussie-inventor-20120923-26f3r.html>

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