

## I'll Tell You Why Utahns Love Jell-O and Funeral Potatoes

Many people don't know much about LDS culture in Utah, and what they do know doesn't always make sense. Is it true that Mormons love sugar- or do the foods they serve have greater meaning as part of Utah culture?



*Green Jell-O Salad is seen as a delicacy to many in Utah-- and it's not far off from this recipe.*

By CodenameSailorEarth

By Bella Shaw

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A guide to Utah gatherings. If you're running late, grab a Jell-O packet; if you want to be the hit of the party, pick up potatoes and cream of chicken soup the next time you're at the store. Jell-O and Funeral Potatoes are staple dishes in Utah and are accredited to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS). A core value of the church is to be self-reliant and such sufficiency relies on a consistent food supply. With traditionally large families, non-perishable or high-carb-easy-to-prepare meals are favorable as noted in the 30-page [\*Essentials of Home Production and Storage\*](#) booklet published by the LDS church which also suggests at least a year's supply of sustenance stocked per home at all times.

My first memory of eating both Jell-O and Funeral Potatoes was at an LDS wedding as a young child. Due to the exclusive nature of the church and my age, there were not many connections to make to the people around me. However, I remember the joy on the faces of LDS members sitting at my table when I told them I loved the sweet taste of the Jell-O and wanted more potatoes immediately. They told me how the foods were made, and to this day, they remain the main dishes at my non-LDS family functions.

Jell-O is often served by itself or made into Green Jello Salad. This is a combination of green Jell-O with cottage cheese, mayonnaise, cream cheese, evaporated milk, and pineapple. Some people may have stopped reading after cottage cheese, and many more might have been lost at mayonnaise. However, historically Jell-O was meant to be served in a true salad fashion and

from 1940-1970 it was a prized American treat that was easy and cheap to make following [World War II](#).



*1930s Jell-O advertisement “America’s Most Famous Dessert”*



However, Jell-O began to lose its popularity as a sweet and/or savory treat across the country during the rise of the [Jell-O shot](#) and frat house “Jell-O Wrestling” in the 70-80s. Consequently, Jell-O [rebranded and marketed to large families](#) and hired Bill Cosby as a spokesperson. It’s safe to say that, today, Jell-O Brand is happy to be linked to a state known for modesty rather than drunk and slimy fraternity brothers of the 80s. The LDS church welcomed this title as well, and for the next two decades Utahns sought to beat out Iowa as the state with the highest Jell-O consumption. In 1999, Utah BYU students launched the “[Take Back the Title Campaign](#)” and finally claimed the first place title in 2001. Shortly after, Jell-O became [the official Utah state snack](#) and named Bill Cosby an honorary Utah citizen (an unsavory and poorly-aged choice). Utah is now also referred to as “[the Jell-O Belt](#)” as Utahns’ consume twice as much Jell-O annually than the average American and twice as much lime Jell-O [than anyone else on the](#)



[planet](#).

*Jell-O received not one, but four commemorative pins at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.*

By LDS Daily

But Jell-O isn't the only beloved Utahn delicacy; funeral potatoes are a smash (or mashed) hit for Mormons and non-mormons alike. The cheesy-potato dish furthered its notoriety during the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Games, a much more digestible, and familiar dish passed around in Salt Lake hosting communities. Funeral potatoes came as such a pleasant surprise to people tasting the dish from around the world that commemorative Olympic pins were made for both [funeral potatoes](#) and [Jell-O](#) that sell for a pretty penny today! As the official snack of Utah, Jell-O did not need to worry about outsider opinions to make it to pin status.



*Funeral potatoes are best served right out of the pan with a nice, crunchy cornflake crust.*

By Utah State Historical Society

Funeral Potatoes are made with potatoes, cream of chicken soup, sour cream, shredded cheese, fried onions, and corn flakes. But do not be alarmed at the last part; corn flakes only make up the crust and it's delicious. Although the name does originate from its association as an [after-funeral](#)

[food](#), it is typically seen at most Utah events due to its popularity and unique flavor. Like Jell-O, funeral potatoes were easy to make, available in large portions, and affordable. Jenn Rice in her [2017 Food & Wine article](#) claimed funeral potatoes to be, “one of the most oddly satisfying creations that exists in America—nay, the world.” However, not everyone was onboard with the Mormon-originating dish and name. The [New York Times](#) called Walmart’s deal to label frozen versions of the dish as “Funeral Potatoes” a “disturbing” choice and included tweets of many curious customers wondering if they were being threatened.



**Chip Coffey** ✓  
@chipcoffey



You've just gotta yell out loud "WTF?!?!?" when this Walmart ad pops up on your Facebook feed! LMAO

Really?!? FUNERAL POTATOES?!?!?



*A tweet by Chip Coffey wondering how Walmart could partner with a death-wish meal.*

By Chip Coffey

Despite some dubious opinions, Jell-O and Funeral Potatoes run deeper than being favorable Utah dishes to Utah residents. Each food has presented a unique opportunity for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and non-members in Utah to interact with one

another and share cultural values because the dishes are welcome at events not affiliated with the church.

So, do you think you'll look at Jell-O and potatoes again? Are you ready to try Green Jell-O Salad? Even if it has ham?