English articles

It's useful to read articles in English, even if you don't understand every word - it will help you increase your vocabulary and keep up to date with things happening in English-speaking countries!

*This page will be updated on **Mondays**. The first article is aimed at a B1 and upwards level and the second article is aimed at a B2 and upwards level*

Articles of the week

The day London went 'barmy.' An East End boy remembers the end of World War II in Europe

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LONDON (AP) — John Goldsmith was too young to fight in World War II, but he remembers the rationing, the blackouts and the bombs that devastated his neighborhood in east London. And he remembers the party when peace returned to Europe.

Church bells rang across the city, bonfires were lit and conga lines snaked through Piccadilly Circus as people filled the streets to celebrate the Allied victory over Nazi Germany. For a 14-year-old boy, May 8, 1945, also brought something else: an end to the tedium of wartime rules and restrictions.

“Well, it was such a contrast. Suddenly, freedom! Mucking about. Doing all sorts of things that were frowned upon as not being the right thing to do,” Goldsmith, now 94, said.

“But now, for instance, all these wonderful pictures of Piccadilly and places like that. Buses covered with people standing on the roof just going barmy — not necessarily due to drink or anything of that nature. But definitely, they were letting their hair down,” he added with a giggle.

Victory in Europe Day was a moment of relief for a city scarred by bombing raids and rocket attacks that killed an estimated 30,000 civilians throughout the war and didn't end until just a few weeks earlier. But it was also a time to look forward to the safe return of husbands, sons, brothers — and sisters — who were serving abroad, and to hope that lives put on hold in 1939 might soon return to normal.

While D-Day was all about the troops who landed on the beaches of northern France to begin the liberation of Europe, V-E Day was a moment for the public, for everyone who sacrificed for the common good.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who had inspired Britain during its darkest days, caught the mood of the nation when he announced the victory at 3 p.m. on May 8.

“My dear friends, this is your hour,” he said. “This is not victory of a party or of any class. It's a victory of the great British nation as a whole.”

That's a message Goldsmith wants people to remember before the World War II generation fades from the scene. A retired architect and amateur artist, he has long regaled his family with stories of his boyhood in the Bow neighborhood of east London. After a bit of prodding from his wife, Margaret, he recently began sketching the scenes so others could see what he lived through.

“The soldiers, the airmen, the sailors can't operate without the people supporting them and backing them,” Goldsmith said. “So if we the people don't contribute, the armored elements will collapse. So it's so important that V-E Day should be … the people's day.”

While Londoners had been anticipating the end of the fighting in Europe for weeks, the announcement was like the cork popping out of a giant bottle of champagne in a city that had lived in the shadow of war for six years.

The East Enders paid a heavy price

Nowhere was the relief felt more deeply than in the East End, where thousands of homes, schools and businesses were reduced to rubble as Nazi bombers pounded docks and warehouses along the River Thames during the onslaught that became known as The Blitz. When Buckingham Palace was bombed on Sept. 13, 1940, Queen Elizabeth reportedly told a policeman she was glad, because “it makes me feel I can look the East End in the face.”

Goldsmith's drawings capture the day The Blitz began, with Nazi bombers filling the air and fires turning the night sky a molten volcanic red behind the docks. There's also the time a cricket match was suspended as one of the flying bombs known as “doodlebugs” soared overhead, and the ghostly image of a rent collector emerging from a cloud of dust after a V-2 rocket, a type of long-range ballistic missile, obliterated a block of houses.

The last V-2 to hit London destroyed an apartment building less than two miles from his home on March 27, 1945.

Eighty years later, Goldsmith holds back tears when he remembers the moment he heard that the Nazis had surrendered.

He and his friends were playing street soccer using a tennis ball — soccer balls being scarce after six years of war — when a young boy ran out of the nearby dairy and shouted simply, “It's over!”

“I have to be very careful now, because I could break up,'' Goldsmith said, pausing to collect himself. “But that was the point when you realized: 'I didn't have to worry anymore.'”

People had seen the end coming, but didn't dare to believe it could be true.

A wave of joy

In an era before television, Londoners flocked to the cinema to watch the weekly newsreels that charted the Allied advance toward Berlin. Goldsmith, who was just 8 when the war broke out, tracked the progress of the troops through the newspaper, carefully clipping the headlines and maps. By early 1945, he realized the surrender of the Third Reich was near.

When the news finally came, it unleashed a wave of joy that lasted for days.

Goldsmith remembers climbing the steps of St. John's Church in Bethnal Green to see over the crowds that lined the streets as King George VI and Queen Elizabeth drove through East London to celebrate with the locals.

There were street parties and bonfires. Everyone contributed what they could with food still in short supply.

“The favorite table from the lounge was brought out in the center of the street and linked with all the other personal possessions covered up with cloth and that sort of thing,” Goldsmith remembered. “Food was magicked from somewhere, and kids gorged themselves on all sorts of cakes.”

How bugs and beet juice could play roles in the race to replace artificial dyes in food

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

ST. LOUIS (AP) — As pressure grows to get artificial colors out of the U.S. food supply, the shift may well start at Abby Tampow's laboratory desk.

On an April afternoon, the scientist hovered over tiny dishes of red dye, each a slightly different ruby hue. Her task? To match the synthetic shade used for years in a commercial bottled raspberry vinaigrette — but by using only natural ingredients.

“With this red, it needs a little more orange,” Tampow said, mixing a slurry of purplish black carrot juice with a bit of beta-carotene, an orange-red color made from algae.

Tampow is part of the team at Sensient Technologies Corp., one of the world's largest dyemakers, that is rushing to help the salad dressing manufacturer — along with thousands of other American businesses — meet demands to overhaul colors used to brighten products from cereals to sports drinks.

“Most of our customers have decided that this is finally the time when they're going to make that switch to a natural color,” said Dave Gebhardt, Sensient's senior technical director. He joined a recent tour of the Sensient Colors factory in a north St. Louis neighborhood.

Last week, U.S. health officials announced plans to persuade food companies to voluntarily eliminate petroleum-based artificial dyes by the end of 2026.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. called them “poisonous compounds” that endanger children's health and development, citing limited evidence of potential health risks.

The federal push follows a flurry of state laws and a January decision to ban the artificial dye known as Red 3 — found in cakes, candies and some medications — because of cancer risks in lab animals. Social media influencers and ordinary consumers have ramped up calls for artificial colors to be removed from foods.

A change to natural colors may not be fast

The FDA allows about three dozen color additives, including eight remaining synthetic dyes. But making the change from the petroleum-based dyes to colors derived from vegetables, fruits, flowers and even insects won't be easy, fast or cheap, said Monica Giusti, an Ohio State University food color expert.

“Study after study has shown that if all companies were to remove synthetic colors from their formulations, the supply of the natural alternatives would not be enough,” Giusti said. “We are not really ready.”

It can take six months to a year to convert a single product from a synthetic dye to a natural one. And it could require three to four years to build up the supply of botanical products necessary for an industrywide shift, Sensient officials said.

“It's not like there's 150 million pounds of beet juice sitting around waiting on the off chance the whole market may convert,” said Paul Manning, the company's chief executive. “Tens of millions of pounds of these products need to be grown, pulled out of the ground, extracted.”

To make natural dyes, Sensient works with farmers and producers around the world to harvest the raw materials, which typically arrive at the plant as bulk concentrates. They're processed and blended into liquids, granules or powders and then sent to food companies to be added to final products.

Natural dyes are harder to make and use than artificial colors. They are less consistent in color, less stable and subject to changes related to acidity, heat and light, Manning said. Blue is especially difficult. There aren't many natural sources of the color and those that exist can be hard to maintain during processing.

Also, a natural color costs about 10 times more to make than the synthetic version, Manning estimated.

“How do you get that same vividness, that same performance, that same level of safety in that product as you would in a synthetic product?” he said. “There's a lot of complexity associated with that.”

The insects that could make 'Barbie pink' naturally

Companies have long used the Red 3 synthetic dye to create what Sensient officials describe as “the Barbie pink.”

To create that color with a natural source might require the use of cochineal, an insect about the size of a peppercorn.

The female insects release a vibrant red pigment, carminic acid, in their bodies and eggs. The bugs live only on prickly pear cactuses in Peru and elsewhere. About 70,000 cochineal insects are needed to produce 1 kilogram, about 2.2 pounds, of dye.

“It's interesting how the most exotic colors are found in the most exotic places,” said Norb Norbrega, who travels the world scouting new hues for Sensient.

Artificial dyes are used widely in U.S. foods. About 1 in 5 food products in the U.S. contains added colors, whether natural or synthetic, Manning estimated. Many contain multiple colors.

FDA requires a sample of each batch of synthetic colors to be submitted for testing and certification. Color additives derived from plant, animal or mineral sources are exempt, but have been evaluated by the agency.

Health advocates have long called for the removal of artificial dyes from foods, citing mixed studies indicating they can cause neurobehavioral problems, including hyperactivity and attention issues, in some children.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration says that the approved dyes are safe when used according to regulations and that “most children have no adverse effects when consuming foods containing color additives.”

But critics note that added colors are a key component of ultraprocessed foods, which account for more than 70% of the U.S. diet and have been associated with a host of chronic health problems, including heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

“I am all for getting artificial food dyes out of the food supply,” said Marion Nestle, a food policy expert. “They are strictly cosmetic, have no health or safety purpose, are markers of ultraprocessed foods and may be harmful to some children.”

The cautionary tale of Trix cereal

Color is powerful driver of consumer behavior and changes can backfire, Giusti noted. In 2016, food

giant General Mills removed artificial dyes from Trix cereal after requests from consumers, switching to natural sources including turmeric, strawberries and radishes.

But the cereal lost its neon colors, resulting in more muted hues — and a consumer backlash. Trix fans said they missed the bright colors and familiar taste of the cereal. In 2017, the company switched back.

“When it's a product you already love, that you're used to consuming, and it changes slightly, then it may not really be the same experience,” Giusti said. “Announcing a regulatory change is one step, but then the implementation is another thing.”

Kennedy, the health secretary, said U.S. officials have an “understanding” with food companies to phase out artificial colors. Industry officials told The Associated Press that there is no formal agreement.

However, several companies have said they plan to accelerate a shift to natural colors in some of their products.

PepsiCo CEO Ramon Laguarta said most of its products are already free of artificial colors, and that its Lays and Tostitos brands will phase them out by the end of this year. He said the company plans to phase out artificial colors — or at least offer consumers a natural alternative — over the next few years.

Representatives for General Mills said they're “committed to continuing the conversation” with the administration. WK Kellogg officials said they are reformulating cereals used in the nation's school lunch programs to eliminate the artificial dyes and will halt any new products containing them starting next January.

Sensient officials wouldn't confirm which companies are seeking help making the switch, but they said they're ready for the surge.

“Now that there's a date, there's the timeline,” Manning said. “It certainly requires action.”

Dee-Ann Durbin contributed reporting from Detroit.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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