

TUPPERWARE!

TUPPERWARE! WILL BE BROADCAST IN SPRING 2004 ON PBS AS PART OF AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

"The story of the 1950s Tupperware empire is told with wit and authority in this documentary from Laurie Kahn-Leavitt..." GERALD PEARY, THE BOSTON PHOENIX

"Tupperware! uses archival footage to tell the history of the plastic bowls invented by Earl Silas Tupper..." LOREN KING, THE BOSTON GLOBE

"The new documentary reveals much more than plastic trivia as it tears down stereotypes of women in the 1950s." AIDEN FITZGERALD, THE BOSTON SUNDAY HERALD

Tupperware: it's a plastic product, a company, a marketing phenomenon, an enduring icon. A Tupperware party takes place somewhere in the world every 2.5 seconds. Where did it all begin?

TUPPERWARE! tells the remarkable story of Earl Silas Tupper, an ambitious but reclusive small-town inventor, and Brownie Wise, the self-taught saleswoman who built him an empire out of bowls that burped. Brownie was an intuitive marketing genius who trained a small army of Tupperware Ladies to put on Tupperware parties in living rooms across America in the 1950s. She rewarded her sales force with minks and modern appliances at extravagant annual jubilees which the company filmed. Her saleswomen earned thousands, even millions, selling Tupperware. And the experience changed their lives.

The film includes rare footage collected from basements, attics, and back rooms: color home movies taken by Tupperware Ladies and Jubilee footage shot by Tupperware Home Parties, as well as ads and television excerpts from the period. The footage is interwoven with fabulous and funny stories told by Tupperware Ladies who witnessed the company's early years.

For film festivals and USA screenings, contact:

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TUPPERWARE! is a co-production of The Filmmakers Collaborative/Blueberry Hill Productions and *American Experience*/WGBH. Major funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, *American Experience*, Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, J.P. Morgan Chase, and the Lemelson Center of the Smithsonian Institution.

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Biographical notes



LAURIE KAHN-LEAVITT (Director/producer/writer) is interested in telling compelling, visually interesting stories that don't normally find their way to the screen. She is currently a fellow at Harvard University's Warren Center for Studies in American History, where she is working out the structure of a new series of films exploring the history of women in America. This series will focus, in particular, on the lives of extraordinary, ordinary women in the past. It will include women from different time periods, regions, and cultural backgrounds.

Before making **TUPPERWARE!**, Laurie conceived of, wrote, and produced the film *A Midwife's Tale*, based on the diary of 18th century midwife, Martha Ballard and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's Pulitzer Prize-winning book (*A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*). Laurie's film was the opening show of the 10th season of the PBS series **AMERICAN EXPERIENCE** in 1998. It won numerous awards at film festivals, as well as a national Emmy for outstanding non-fiction as part of **AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**'s 10th season. The film is now used in classrooms internationally in courses on women's history, medical history, early American history, obstetrics, and midwifery.

Laurie also conceived of and produced an ambitious and innovative website, DoHistory.org, that immerses its users in the process of piecing together the life of an "ordinary" person in the past. The website has won prizes for both its design and its content since its launch in 2000.

Laurie's independent film company, Blueberry Hill Productions, was founded in 1992. During the 1980s and early 1990s, she worked on many award-winning documentary series, including **AMERICAN EXPERIENCE** (Senior Associate Producer), *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965* (Senior Researcher), and *Frontline Special Report: Crisis in Central America* (Assistant Producer). Before working in film, she worked in radio for NPR's evening news program *All Things Considered*. She has also edited books for MIT Press, written film reviews for the Times Literary Supplement and Time Out, and taught philosophy at Harvard and Tufts.

ROBIN HESSMAN (Co-Producer) is a director/producer of documentary films and educational television. Her Academy Award-winning documentary film, *Portrait of Boy with Dog*, is the story of Gosha, an imaginative 13-year-old street child in Moscow. It has won numerous prizes in international film festivals, and has aired on television in eight countries. During her many years living in Moscow, Robin worked for the Children's Television Workshop as the on-site Producer of *Ulitsa Sezam*, the original Russian language *Sesame Street*. Since returning to the United States in 1999, she has produced pieces for WGBH in Boston and for the History Channel. She has also programmed the Russian film series for Boston's Museum of Fine Arts.

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Biographical notes continued

WILLIAM A. ANDERSON (Editor) has edited over 60 programs in the last twenty years, ranging from dramatic and documentary features to television mini-series and documentaries. His feature films include *Looking for Richard*, directed by Al Pacino, and *A Shock to the System*. His documentaries include *A Brief History of Time* directed by Errol Morris, and over a dozen titles for the PBS series AMERICAN PLAYHOUSE, including the Emmy Award-winning mini-series *Concealed Enemies*. He also was the editor of *A Midwife's Tale*.

PETER STEIN (Director of Photography) has shot numerous feature films and television movies. His feature films include *Missing Pieces*, *After the Rain*, *A Great Wall* and *Reuben, Reuben*. His television credits include *A Good Dissonance*, *Like a Man* and *Private Contentment* for PBS, as well as films for NBC, CBS, ABC and HBO. Stein received Emmy Award nominations for cinematography for *Don't Touch* and *Robbers, Rooftops and Witches*. He teaches film production at New York University. And he worked as the Director of Photography on *A Midwife's Tale*.

KATHY BATES (Narrator) needs no introduction. She has starred in *About Schmidt*, *Primary Colors*, *Titanic*, *Delores Claiborne*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, *Misery*, and *Come Back to the Five and Dime*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean*. Among the many awards she has won are a Best Actress Oscar for her role as a deranged romance novel fan in *Misery*, and an Obie for her role as a weary waitress in *Frankie and Johnny*.

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History of the Project

by producer/writer/director Laurie Kahn-Leavitt

I came across the story of Tupperware's early years in an unpredictable, roundabout way. While researching my last film, *A Midwife's Tale*, which is based on the diary of an 18th century midwife in Maine, I had to think a lot about the things in their lives: their tools, their clothing, their domestic objects, their medical devices. I also had to think through what all of these objects meant to them.

All of this research forced me to see my own world in a different way. Observing the stuff of our modern world, I saw plastic — everywhere: in our cars, our houses, our clothing, our medical devices, our toys, even our weapons. So I decided to make a series of films about the history of plastic, examining its far-reaching but often subtle impact on our culture. I planned to start with the invention of celluloid at the end of the 19th century and work my way through to the invention of polar fleece at the end of the 20th century.

I got a research fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution and immersed myself in the amazing plastic collections at the Smithsonian Archives Center. While there, I read through the Celluloid Corporation papers, the papers of the man who invented Bakelite, the Formica Corporation papers, the DuPont Nylon papers, etc, etc, and I screened every plastics story in the Industry on Parade film collection. But what jumped out at me were the papers of Earl Silas Tupper, the papers of Brownie Wise, and a collection of early Tupperware films given by one of Tupperware's first distributors. The story of Tupperware's early years was a film that was waiting to be made, staring me in the face. The story had drama, the footage and still images were fabulous and funny, and the Tupperware parties would take me into the heart of American culture in the 1950s.

* * * *

Earl Tupper, the self-taught reclusive inventor of Tupperware, and Brownie Wise, the single divorced mom who convinced him to sell Tupperware exclusively at home parties, were an unlikely team. But for seven years in the 1950s, Earl and Brownie did join forces, and together they built a multi-million dollar plastic empire. Tragically (perhaps inevitably) they didn't realize how much they needed each other. In 1958, their relationship imploded. Earl fired Brownie, sold the company, gave up his US citizenship, and bought himself an island in Central America. Brownie headed up five different home party companies that failed to take off, and retired from the business in the mid 1960s.

Earl and Brownie were never ever able to repeat the success they'd had together. But the people Brownie brought into the business and trained to be Tupperware Ladies were able to carry on without the company's founders. Working class women from big cities, the rural countryside, and the suburbs all discovered they could make thousands, even millions, selling bowls that burped. Tupperware offered them opportunities they weren't going to get working in factories, on the farm, or at the five and dime. By selling Tupperware, and promoting other women they brought into the business, our interviewees were able to put their kids through college, pay for homes, and take

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History of the Project continued

business, our interviewees were able to put their kids through college, pay for homes, and take vacations they'd never dreamt of. In a culture that rarely applauded the efforts of working class women, the Tupperware Ladies were showered with praise, prizes and applause.

* * * *

To make this film, we (my co-producer Robin Hessman, my production assistant Julie Golia, and I) pre-interviewed approximately 300 people who were involved in the early years of the company's history. We interviewed relatives of both Earl Tupper and Brownie Wise, spoke with members of the early Tupperware staff, and tracked down hundreds of dealers, managers and distributors who worked out in the field in the late '40s and '50s.

During the research phase of the film, we also looked through hundreds of hours of film we found in a loft space at Tupperware headquarters. We found footage and documents in a cavernous barn at Stanley Park in western Massachusetts. We spent weeks in historical societies and state archives in Georgia, New York, Florida, and Massachusetts. We discovered old Tupperware films and beautiful color home movies in private attics and basements. It was a mammoth task — and it was exciting historical detective work.

After approximately a year of research, we hit the road, interviewing people all over the country with Peter Stein (the talented DP who also shot my last film). We then settled into the editing room with hundreds of hours of footage, thousands of remarkable stills, and dozens of hours of historical audio tape. Editor Bill Anderson embraced the challenge, and thanks to him, months later, we've emerged with a finished film.

As with all films, this one has been a collaborative effort, and I am delighted that I had such a terrific team. Individuals from every conceivable background have generously helped out in the making of this film; it has been a labor of love for all of us.

I hope **TUPPERWARE!** is seen widely by kids, intellectuals, ordinary folks, history classes, history buffs, women's advocates, direct sellers, business people, and Tupperware Ladies. I hope this film makes everyone who sees it laugh, but also leaves them thinking more deeply about the lives of women in the 1950s, which turn out to be far more interesting than our common stereotypes.

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Credits

Producer, Writer, Director

Laurie Kahn-Leavitt

Co-Producer

Robin Hessman

Editor

William A. Anderson

Narrated by

Kathy Bates

Director of Photography

Peter Stein, A.S.C.

Production Assistant,

Assistant Editor

Julie Golia

Intern, Music Researcher

Barbara Dalton Rotundo

Sound Recordist

John Miller

Mixer, Sound Editor

Richard Bock

Colorist, Online Editor

Michael H. Amundsen

Title and Graphic Design

Alison Kennedy

Stills and Title Animation

Bruce Walker

VOICES

Karen MacDonald

as Brownie Wise

Will LeBow

as Earl Tupper

For AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Executive Producer

Mark Samels

Series Editor

Sharon Grimberg

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
HUMANITIES

**AMERICAN
EXPERIENCE**

MASSACHUSETTS
FOUNDATION FOR THE
Humanities
Bringing Ideas to Life

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Download press materials and artwork from: www.thetupperwarefilm.com

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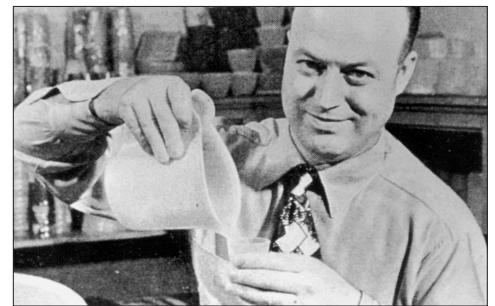
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Brownie Wise tosses a bowl filled with water at a Tupperware Party in the 1950s.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the Smithsonian Archives Center, National Museum of American History



Tupperware's complete line, from a 1950s catalog.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the Smithsonian Archives Center, National Museum of American History



Earl Silas Tupper, inventor of Tupperware, holds one of his original designs.
Photo credit: Courtesy of Tupperware Corporation



Earl Tupper presents Brownie Wise with the keys to a pink Cadillac in front of Tupperware Home Parties' headquarters.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the Smithsonian Archives Center, National Museum of American History



The Tupperware Wish Fairy presents one of Tupperware's top saleswomen with a motorboat at the annual Tupperware Jubilee.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the Smithsonian Archives Center, National Museum of American History

Many women ask questions about Tupperware parties. We'd like to answer.

Why is Tupperware sold only in the home?
The most important reason: Tupperware should be demonstrated. For instance, you must be shown how to use Tupperware's famous airtight seal; the various uses of each kind of container; how to combine and store Tupperware to save precious space in your freezer, refrigerator or pantry. And many, many other tips about these wonderful plastic containers. Without a demonstration, all this couldn't be fully appreciated. . . . And everyone who has ever been to a Tupperware party loves the comfort of buying in a living room. It's the nicest way to shop.

What happens at a Tupperware party?
A Tupperware party is the most relaxed of get-togethers. Old friends meet new friends. They chat. Exchange news. Then comes the party's highlight: a Tupperware demonstration. (As the dealer describes Tupperware and its many uses, guests who already own Tupperware often suggest some special uses they've discovered)

on their own.) You check the pieces you want on your order blank and later go over these choices with the dealer. (All this, while the hostess serves simple refreshments.) All is leisurely. All is fun. No hurry or fuss. It's a friendly party for friendly shopping.

How can you start a Tupperware party?
Your dealer will help make your party an enjoyable experience, both for you and your guests. There's no complicated cooking. Refreshments are light, quick-to-make things like cookies and cake. It takes little time to call and write your friends. It's easy. And very rewarding! You give the girls a chance to discover Tupperware - and you earn some lovely hostess gifts. Interested? Who wouldn't be! Let your dealer show the service the Tupperware plan is known for in 26 countries of the free world. Contact her through the Tupperware distributor for your area, listed under Housewares or Plastics in the Yellow Pages. Or send in the coupon below.

TUPPERWARE Dept. P-5, Orlando, Florida
I want to talk to a dealer about having a Tupperware party.
Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____
Phone No. _____

TUPPERWARE THE NICEST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN TO YOUR KITCHEN!

A Tupperware ad from the 1950s.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the Smithsonian Archives Center, National Museum of American History



The cover of a Tupperware catalog in 1958.
Photo credit: Courtesy of Tupperware Corporation

TUPPERWARE
a story of . . .
PROGRESS

The story of Tupperware is a story of progress. A vital page in the history of American business. Here is an organization that has grown to an impressive record with sound selling methods.

The need of an idea that was to become Tupperware was first met in April 1946, when a group of Tupperware distributors met in Earl's Tupperware City, New York. These men and women concluded that Tupperware was a product that deserved a demonstration - that it should be sold exclusively on the home party plan. They founded Tupperware Home Parties Inc. Show them the company has thrived ever since at the highest and strongest sales organization in the world.

The story of Tupperware shows that the great idea of Tupperware is spreading throughout the world. The development of Earl Tupperware is but a symbol of the growth of Tupperware Home Parties Inc. International. Each dealer, manager and distributor has a share in the progress that is being made in this, their Tupperware World.

THE TUPPERWARE STORY
"The Tupperware Story" is a new book that tells the story of Tupperware from its beginning to the present.

The inside page of a Tupperware brochure in the 1950s. Photo credit: Courtesy of the Smithsonian Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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