

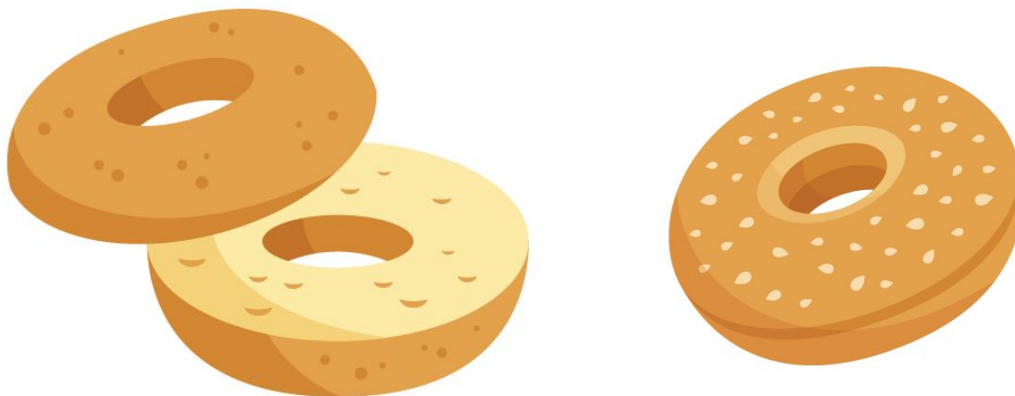
Bagel Emoji Proposal

Submitted by: **Melanie Broder, Tim Barkey, Robin Thomas, Steve Ustin, Jeffrey Ustin, Greg Linzner, Mabel Palomino, Jeffrey Lawrence, Jennifer 8. Lee**

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Abstract

This proposal requests the addition of the BAGEL (alt: *beigel*) to the Unicode emoji character library, or alternatively RING-SHAPED BREAD. A bagel can be described as a “savory, ring-shaped bread,” but a mere clinical description would detract from the BAGEL’s cultural significance. The bagel is a globally recognized comfort food and snack, with a multicultural backstory. It would not be bending the truth to say the bagel is a pop culture icon.



We are offering two versions of a BAGEL emoji; one that emphasizes the slicing, which makes it more visually distinct from DONUT, and another that maintains its ring shape, which makes it a more general use case for other cultures.

Introduction

The bagel has been a popular breakfast food and snack in America for over 100 years. It is a savory, thick ring of dough that, when made properly, is boiled before baked, giving the bagel a crisp, shiny golden exterior and chewy inside. Its versatility and deliciousness has led to its spread all over the world, with fiery debates over who makes

the “best” and “most authentic” version. Bagels are served at holiday meals, sports tailgates, office meetings, baby showers, road races, and weekend brunches.

The bagel (orig. Yiddish *beigen*, “to bend”) has a colorful and disputed history, with several myths surrounding its origins. Common knowledge credits the Jewish community in New York for popularizing and Americanizing a once marginal ethnic bakery item. In fact, bagels have a more diverse community of bakers to thank for its success over time.

The first mention of the bagel appears in a 1610 community law written by Jewish elders in Krakow, Poland decreeing that bagels be given to women after childbirth as a symbol of long life and good luck. However, in the same city, a close cousin of the bagel, a ring-shaped Polish bread called *obwarzanek*, dates back to 1394¹. The *obwarzanek* itself was said to be a cousin of the pretzel, brought to Poland by German immigrants. Other countries have their own versions of ringed bread. In Italy, bakers have produced *taralli* and *ciambelle* for as long as bagels have existed; in western China, people eat *girde nan*; in Turkey they sell *simit* on the streets; people in Finland dine on *vesirinkeli* for breakfast; and in other parts of Eastern Europe, they snack on golden-brown *bublik*. Eastern Europe in particular is underrepresented in emoji cuisine, and the bagel could be an opportunity for identification.

One explanation for the global proliferation of ring-shaped breads is that the structure is portable. Easy to string up or stack on a wooden pole, bagels were once carried through the streets by hawkers and orphan children. The sturdy exterior makes the bagel a good travelling food. It pairs well with and is often served alongside warm liquids such as broth or coffee.

The bagel arrived in America thus as a comforting street food, reminding immigrants of their homelands. It was sold by multiple vendors in New York’s Lower East Side alongside traditional Jewish items like herring, pastrami, latkes, and challah bread. When entrepreneurial immigrants realized the bagel’s potential outside of Jewish circles (especially on Sundays), sellers stopped making associations with other Jewish foods, and started marketing it as a breakfast item. Now, bagels appear alongside pancakes, bacon and eggs - all of which appear in the emoji lexicon - on breakfast menus.

Though similar in appearance to the doughnut, the bagel could not be more of a contrast in terms of taste and symbolism. In a *New York Times* op-ed, writer William

¹ Fiegl, Amanda. “A Brief History of the Bagel.” *Smithsonian Magazine*. 17 December 2008. <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/a-brief-history-of-the-bagel-49555497/>

Safire makes the distinction clear when he says, “Doughnuts are sweet and crumbly, with over 10 grams of fat; bagels are chewy and low in fat. Doughnuts are fun, with sugary smiles, sales peaking at Halloween; bagels are serious, ethnic and harder to digest.”² Though one could argue that doughnuts have reached an elevated, artisanal status in the early 21st century, appearing on wedding cakes and in upscale shops, doughnuts are a playful treat. Bagels, on the other hand, are considered hearty, practical, and cost-efficient. Even though fun flavor variations including green tea, blueberry, and french toast have been produced, the bagel sustains a reputation as humble immigrant fare.

Which has made it appealing to newer American immigrants. The famed shop Absolute Bagels in New York is owned and operated by Thai immigrants and always has been. The famed bagel chain H&H is owned by a Puerto Rican family³.

One of the proposed designs is unmistakably American, because international versions do not slice bagels equatorially for use in a sandwich. A more global usage would be the uncut bagel, which looks more like its multicultural counterparts. One argument for the sliced bagel would be its popularity in American-style brunches around the world. Bagels with lox are considered a novelty and delicacy everywhere from [Tokyo](#) to [Buenos Aires](#).

The bagel and lox sandwich is another food typically associated with American Jews, but in reality, is more of a cultural mashup. As food writer Heather Smith points out, “It was food as collage —pickled Italian flower buds and Scandinavian-style fish heaped over English-style cheese. It had traveled as far as the salmon, and become something entirely new in the journey. What could you be homesick for when you ate it? Unless it was homesickness for the melting pot itself.”⁴ The bagel occupies a unique space in the collective imagination, as a symbol of cultural exchange, while retaining its original ethnic identity.

The bagel’s winding history points to its unique place in the hearts of American Jews. Eating bagels is a way to honor one’s heritage while still feeling fully assimilated into

² Safire, William. “Essay; Bagels vs. Doughnuts.” *The New York Times*. 25 Oct 1999.
<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/25/opinion/essay-bagels-vs-doughnuts.html>

³ Nathan, Joan. “A Short History of the Bagel.” *Slate*. 12 Nov 2008.
http://www.slate.com/articles/life/food/2008/11/a_short_history_of_the_bagel.html

⁴ Smith, Heather. “A Fish and Bread Journey: The Natural and Social History of Bagels and Lox.” *Meatpaper*. 15 Jul 2012.
<http://meatpaper.com/wordpress/2012/07/a-fish-and-bread-journey-the-natural-and-social-history-of-bagels-and-lox/>

secular life. It is in this symbol that Americans find home, rather than more overtly religious signs such as the Star of David or the Torah scrolls. This particular brand of Judaism pervades popular culture, from the books of Philip Roth to the comedy of Jerry Seinfeld to the songs of Leonard Cohen. American Jews as a whole are not identified so much by religious rituals, but by their struggle for acceptance, followed by bonding over what makes them different, and ultimately the validation of those differences.

Lastly, the circular shape lends to a variety of symbolic interpretations and meanings. The bagel is often eaten by Jews to break the Yom Kippur fast, as a symbol of a new year and restarting the readings of the Torah. A bagel can also represent the number “0,” as in tennis, when a player wins a set 6-0, shutting out the opponent. Bagels are so beloved as a breakfast food that dating app Coffee Meets Bagel, created in 2012, was named because of the casual, yet perfect pairing.

Names

CLDR short name

Recommended name: bagel

CLDR keywords

Recommended keywords: round bread, beigel, simit, bublik, girde

Selection Factors Inclusion

Compatibility

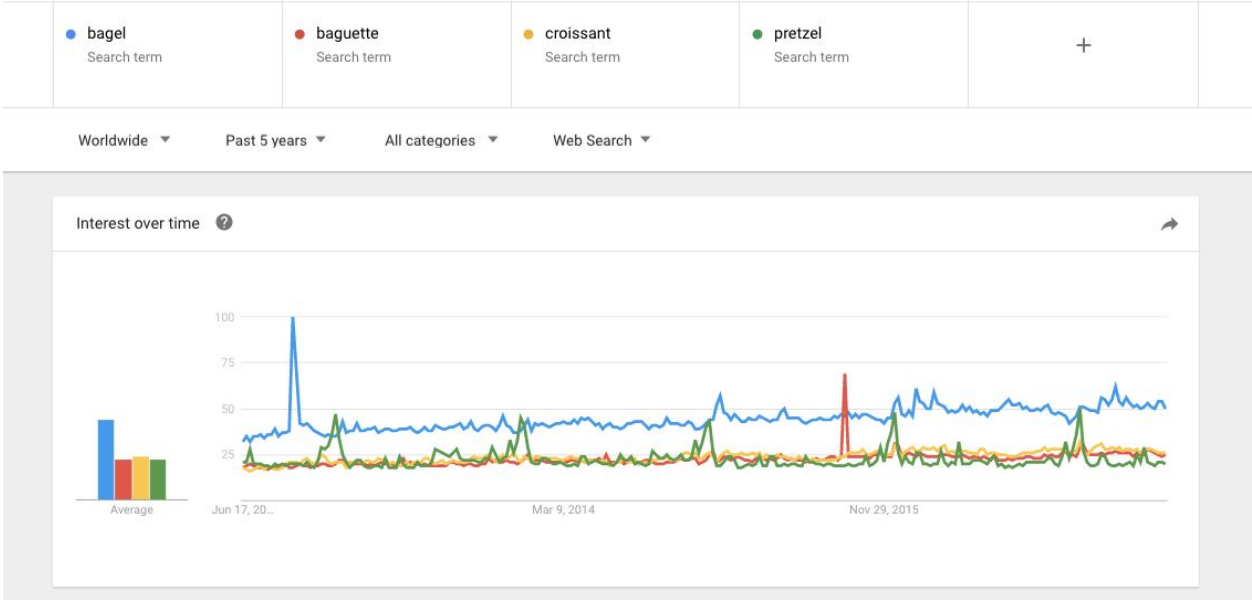
Line, a Japanese messaging app, has three emoji/stickers that are of bagels. There is an app you can download called Eatmojis by Delish⁵ which has a bagel image among other characters, but this is a separate keyboard from the native one to devices. However, we are proposing the bagel as a completely new symbol on the major platforms (iOS, Android, Windows).

⁵ <https://makesnaps.com/get/delish>.

Expected Usage Level

Frequency

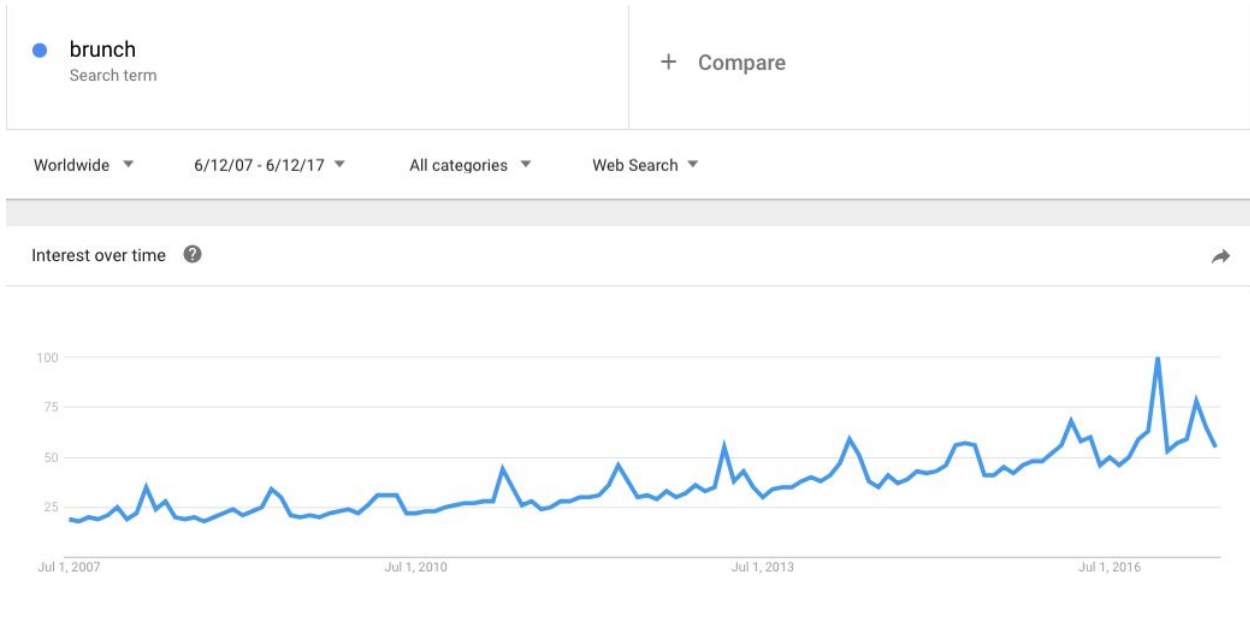
We expect bagel usage to be extremely high, especially as compared to other bread emojis. The following Google trends data from the last five years compares the bagel with the existing emoji characters baguette, croissant, and pretzel.



Source: Google Trends, 2017

Bagel is now, and has always been (excluding occasional spikes) more popular than each of the other terms, often twice as popular.

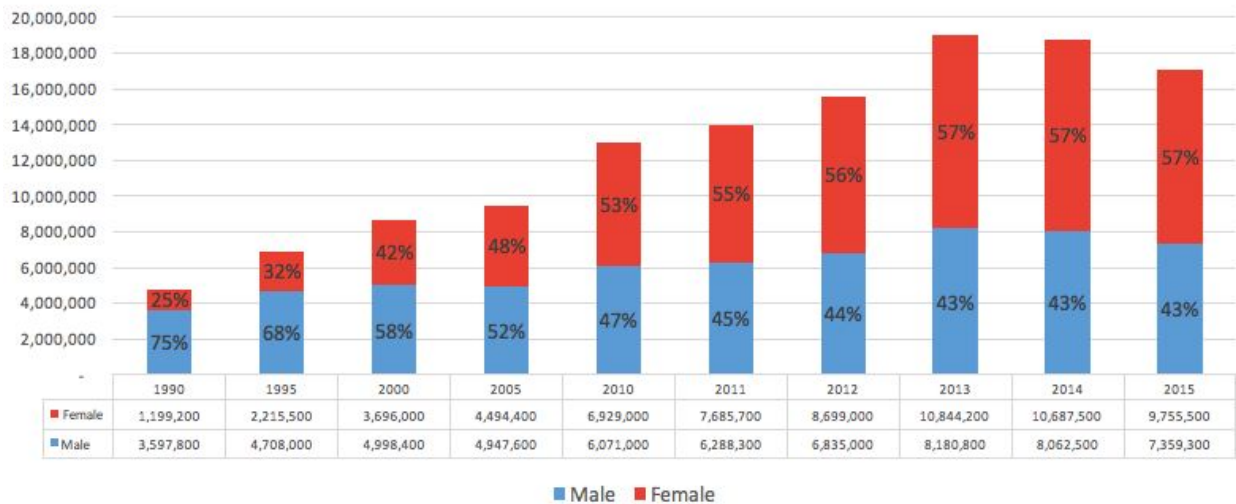
The bagel emoji will likely see increased frequency on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, when bagels are offered as office breakfasts or weekend brunches, coupled with mimosas and coffee. In fact, “brunch” has risen in global popularity over the last decade, and shows no sign of slowing down.



Source: Google Trends, 2017

Additionally, we can see the bagel emoji catching on among endurance athletes, many of whom “carbo-load” before major events such as marathons and triathlons. Bagels represent the kind of glucose-dense, bland foods that athletes are encouraged to consume for optimal performance. The Boston Marathon, arguably the most elite footrace in the world, serves bagels to runners before they start. The New York Road Runners association hands out bagels at distance events from the 5k to the half-marathon. Road races are growing in popularity too, as evidenced by the steady increase in participation over the last twenty-five years.

U.S. Running Event Finishers 1990-2015



Source: Running USA 2017

Bagel usage will also be high near Jewish holidays and festivities (of which there are many throughout the year).

Additionally, the #bagel hashtag appears on Instagram with 1.1M posts, a figure similar to the 1.3M posts associated with #croissant⁶.

Tennis fans will also find a chance to use the bagel during tournaments throughout the year, especially the four grand slam events.

Multiple Usages

We foresee the bagel used in at least the following contexts, if not more:

- The BAGEL emoji, if presented in unsliced form, could easily be used to represent related foods including SIMIT, VESIRINKELI, BUBLIK, GIRDE, CIAMBELLE, and TARALLI.
- It would also find favor with the tennis crowd and may even be used in conjunction with the TENNIS emoji.
- On Jewish holidays, bagels will be used to represent the festive meal and well wishes for long life, along with CLINKING GLASSES
- Bagels will be used to celebrate brunch next to HOT BEVERAGE, AVOCADO, BACON, and COOKING emojis, if not more.
- Bagels will be used with PIZZA emoji. Pizza bagels are a popular kids' and late night snack.
- The bagel will be used with other bread emojis to represent carbo-loading or carbohydrates in general.
- The bagel will be used to represent the number "0", as the word bagel is also widely used in tennis where it is a colloquial term for winning or losing a set 6–0. There was even a Golden Bagel Award 2 from 2004-2014 awarded the player who achieved the most bagels in a season. Roger Federer currently holds the all-time record for most bagels in a single season with 18 going into the Tennis Masters Cup, and a total of 19 in 2006.
- It will also be used to represent "bae goals," a popular term among Millennials and Gen Z-ers.

⁶ Source: <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/bagel/> and <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/croissant/>.

- We can also see the bagel being used with the LOCK emoji to represent bagels and lox.

Image Distinctiveness

The most similar emoji in appearance to the bagel is the doughnut. Though both ring shapes, the bagel image is distinct in showing its closer relation to savory or neutral breads, with its pale color and sprinkling of sesame seeds on top. The bagel would appear within the prepared foods category, while the doughnut appears alongside desserts.

Completeness

The BAGEL represents one of the other major categories of shapes of baked bread, which so far include BAGUETTE, CROISSANT, PRETZEL and leavened loaf BREAD. Another major missing category is FLATBREAD, which would cover Middle Eastern, pita, Indian chapati and naan, tortilla, Turkish yufka, Chinese Bing and others.

Frequently Requested

There is a [petition](#) on Change.org requesting inclusion of the bagel emoji. It has 216 supporters.

Additionally, the bagel emoji is mentioned on Twitter frequently. In just the last week, it was mentioned 30 times by 27 different users⁷. A small sample of [“bagel emoji” mentions](#):

⁷ Source: <http://keyhole.co/>



Source, Twitter, June 2017

Selection Factors Exclusion

Overly Specific

The bagel is not overly specific, as the ring-shaped bread is a widely known and consumed food around the world. It can be paired with a variety of toppings, dips and spreads, giving it versatility. It is at the very least no more specific than ethnic foods already represented in the emoji lexicon, including Mexican, Italian, and Japanese foods.

Open Ended

While we'd hardly argue against including a wider array of ethnic foods in the emoji keyboard, the bagel is an urgent and unique request because of its importance to the Jewish community, a group only represented in emoji by a Star of David, which is overtly religious and not indicative of the more secular culture that many Jews identify with surrounding food and social gatherings. The bagel is also distinct within the breakfast category, and deserves a place among the food items it often shares space on menus with, including pancakes, eggs, bacon, and croissants.

Already Representable

The closest comparable existing emoji is the doughnut. The doughnut emoji is not a sufficient replacement for the bagel because it would be absurd to put frosting and sprinkles on a bagel. Bagels are never served in this manner. Bagels and doughnuts have many opposing qualities, including savory vs. sweet, whimsical vs. practical, meal vs. dessert, indulgence vs. nourishment, children vs. adults, and couch potatoes vs. athletes. If the doughnut is Homer Simpson, the bagel is Michael Phelps.

Transient

The bagel has existed longer than computers, microwaves, airplanes, automobiles, telescopes, and champagne. It is championed by the Jewish people, who have existed for nearly four thousand years⁸, despite considerable efforts to oppress, enslave, and murder practitioners. The last 100 years have been the most prosperous years for the bagel, and its growth shows no signs of slowing.

Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities

The bagel falls under none of these categories, and is not trademarked by any single brand.

⁸ Haim Zalman Dimitrovsky, Georges Vajda and others. "Judaism." Encyclopædia Britannica. 20 Apr 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Judaism>

Sort location

Category: food-prepared

After BAGUETTE bread and before PRETZEL. Alternate location would be after PRETZEL and before PANCAKE. We think first location would be better so as to show a satisfying visual evolution in shape, from the straight baguette, to the looped bagel, to the convoluted pretzel. Alternate location would pair two American breakfast foods, the bagel and pancake stack.

Other Character Properties

The other character properties are suggested to be defined as follows.

General Category: So

Canonical Combining Class: 0

Bidirectional Class: ON

Decomposition Type: Decomposition Mapping:

Numeric Type:

Numeric Value:

Bidirectional Mirrored: N Unicode 1 Name:

ISO Comment:

Simple Uppercase Mapping: Simple Lowercase Mapping: Simple Titlecase Mapping:

Melanie Broder (melanie.broder@gmail.com) is a writer and bagel aficionado. A former New Yorker of Jewish descent, she witnessed the universal desire for bagels firsthand as a college student, when neighborhood shop Absolute Bagels drew diverse crowds week in and week out.

Jennifer 8. Lee (jenny@emojicon.co) is a co-founder of Emojination, whose motto is “Emoji by the People, for the People” and Emojicon, a celebration of all things Emoji. She has championed the dumpling and hijab emojis. She was surprised to discover bagel-shaped breads sold in markets in Kashgar, Xinjiang along the Silk Road, and that is when she realized how pervasive the bagel was as a food item. In Beijing, where a Chinese American has opened up a bagel shop serving expats, the Chinese employees of the company prepare the bagels in a way they are comfortable with: they chop up the bagels into pieces and stir-fry them.

Tim Barkey

Robin Thomas

Tim Barkey (Tim.Barkey@grupobimbo.com) is the Marketing Director for New York Bakery Company, the UK's largest bagel maker.

Robin Thomas (Robin.Thomas@thisisnow.com) is a Business Director for Now, New York Bakery Company's creative agency of record and a bagel aficionado who can usually be found making themed bagel creations (an american football on a pitch for the Superbowl) or pairing weird and wonderful combinations in a relentless search for the perfect bagel.

Remco Graham (Remco.Graham@thisisnow.com) is a multi-award winning creative and is ECD and Partner at Now, New York Bakery Company's creative agency of record. Overseeing all creative output, Remco focuses on showcasing and further integrating the humble bagel into the lives of people from all walks of life.

Steve Ustin (sustin@westernbagel.com) is President/CEO of Western Bagel and son of the Founder, David Ustin. Steve has been at Western Bagel for over 50 years. He oversees all facets of the bagel business out in the headquarters located in Los Angeles.

Jeffrey Ustin (justin@westernbagel.com) Son of the President/CEO, Jeffrey Ustin is the Vice President and has been with the company for over 25 years. During those 25 years, Jeff is learning all facets of the business.

Greg Linzner (greg@westernbagel.com) is the Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Western Bagel. Greg has been working in the bagel business for 25 years, and graduated from the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California.

Mabel Palomino (mabel@westernbagel.com) is part of the Sales & Marketing team at Western Bagel. Mabel has been with the company for 11 years, and works with several departments on a daily basis. Her bagel expertise comes from having worked retail at Western Bagel for 2 years, and from her 9 years of working with larger Western Bagel customers and their unique requests

Jeffrey Lawrence (jlaw@westernbagel.com) is the head of eCommerce and other digital marketing at Western Bagel. He graduated from California State University Sacramento from the Epsilon Phi Chapter of international communication and business.