

Goo-ing over Google: the culinary delights of an internet giant

■ **COMPUTERS**
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in London

IT STARTED with two students in a garage and became a \$US200 billion (\$222 billion) giant relied upon by 60 per cent of the world's internet users.

Now, one of the men at the

heart of the Google empire has disclosed the secrets behind its rise from almost nothing 10 years ago to the globe's most popular search engine, the fifth-largest company on the US sharemarket and a global brand worth twice as much as Coca-Cola.

Charlie Ayers has revealed that from the beginning,

Google was based not just on groundbreaking computer technology, but on a revolutionary approach to food in the staff canteen.

He was hired by Sergey Brin and Larry Page, Google's founders, in the belief that like a Napoleonic army, an internet giant marches on its stomach.

As Google's first chef, his mission was to seduce an unruly gaggle of brilliant but wayward computer engineers into wanting to stay at the office. His success, he said, meant Google's rise to the top was fuelled by free beer, barbecues and rum.

It began in 1998, when Page and Brin started Google in a

friend's garage near Stanford University in California. A few months later they recruited Ayers. Now 42, he remembers: "They said: 'We are not going to charge for food here, ever.'

"I said 'That's crazy.' They explained my job was to create this ambience, to build this captivated audience where

people wanted to come in super-early and stay super-late."

"They interviewed me above a bicycle shop. They thought they were going to go global. The way they were playing with children's toys, riding around on scooters, I had no idea they were doing any work."

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