

The Mars rennet U turn

From the sweeties.net wiki

In May 2007, Britain's vegetarians discovered that some Mars chocolate bars they had been eating were about to become off limits. Within days, they had made one of the world's biggest food companies change its mind.

What Mars changed

Masterfoods, the company then trading as Mars in the UK, announced that from 1 May 2007 it would use whey made with animal rennet in many of its British products. Rennet is used to curdle milk when making cheese, and whey is the liquid left behind. Animal rennet comes from the stomach lining of calves, a by product of veal. Mars had been using whey made with rennet from microorganisms, which vegetarians can eat.

The switch affected Mars bars, Twix, Snickers, Maltesers, Bounty, Minstrels and Milky Way. Overnight, all of them would have become unsuitable for vegetarians.

The backlash

The Vegetarian Society, speaking for what it said were three million vegetarians in the UK, asked people to tell Mars what they thought. They did. Masterfoods received more than 6,000 emails, phone calls and text messages. The row generated extensive press coverage.

The climbdown

It took about a week. By 21 May 2007 the company had reversed the decision and gone back to its vegetarian recipe. Its spokeswoman, Fiona Dawson, said: "We realise we've made a mistake and we're terribly sorry about that." Mars switched to all vegetarian sources for its UK products.

Why it still matters

The episode is a good lesson in why ingredient lists matter. Whey, rennet, gelatine, carmine and shellac all sound harmless, but each can decide whether a sweet is suitable for vegetarians, vegans or people who eat halal. Recipes change more often than packets do, so it always pays to read the label. We explain what to look for in [how to read a sweet label](#) and [our guide to vegetarian sweets](#).

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