

How is chewing gum made?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Gum making is a mix of cooking and engineering. The details, especially the gum base recipe, are closely guarded, but the process follows the same basic steps.

1. Prepare the gum base

The gum base is the part that gives gum its chew. Big gum makers usually make their own; smaller ones buy it in. Before it is used, the base is melted and then strained or filtered to make sure it is clean and smooth.

2. Mix it like dough

The warm gum base goes into a mixer with the other ingredients: sugar or sugar free sweeteners, softeners such as glycerine, flavours and colours. As they are mixed, the whole batch thickens like dough. It is kept warm while it mixes, which helps the long polymer chains in the base loosen up so everything spreads evenly through it.

3. Extrude it

Next the gum dough is pushed through an extruder, a machine that squeezes it through a shaped opening. This smooths the gum and forms it into a continuous rope or sheet, ready to be shaped.

4. Shape it

What happens next depends on the kind of gum:

- **Chunks and cubes**, like many bubble gums, are cut straight off the extruder by a vertical cutter.
- **Sticks, slabs and tabs** are rolled out into thin sheets, dusted with powdered sweetener so they do not stick, and scored or cut into pieces.
- **Pellets**, the pillow shaped pieces, are formed as small cores ready for coating.

5. Condition and coat

Next, the gum is either conditioned by being sprinkled with a powdered sweetener, or coated. Pellet gums are coated in temperature controlled coating pans, where layer after layer of sweetener syrup builds up a hard shell. That layering also lets makers add different flavours to different layers.

6. Wrap it

Finally the gum is wrapped or packed: sticks in wrappers, pellets in blister packs, bottles or boxes. Gum has a very low water content, about three to six percent, so it keeps well. In most countries it does not even need a best before date, although over a long time it can go brittle or lose flavour.

Why the base is a secret

Every gum maker's base recipe is different, and the exact mix of rubbers, resins, waxes and softeners is known to only a few people in each company. It decides how the gum feels, how long it lasts and, for bubble gum, how big a bubble you can blow. For what goes into it, see [what chewing gum is made of](#).

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