

Uncle Joe's Mint Balls

From the sweeties.net wiki

Uncle Joe's Mint Balls are hard peppermint sweets made in Wigan, in the north west of England, by William Santus and Co. They have been made there since 1898, which makes them one of the longest running sweets in Britain still made by the same firm in the same town.

Three ingredients

Part of the charm is how simple they are. The ingredients are pure cane sugar, oil of peppermint and cream of tartar, and that is all. The tin describes them as suitable for vegans. Cream of tartar, a by product of wine making, is acidic, and it stops sugar syrups crystallising, which helps sweet makers get a smooth finish.

Not actually balls

Despite the name, Uncle Joe's Mint Balls are not perfectly round. They are oblate spheroids, which is a scientific way of saying slightly squashed balls, a little flatter top and bottom than a true sphere.

From a kitchen to a factory

The first mint balls were made by William Santus's wife, Ellen. In 1919 production moved to a factory near Wigan Wallgate railway station. The sweets are usually sold in a sealed tin decorated with the firm's mascot, a smiling man in a top hat: Uncle Joe himself.

Still going strong

In 2011 the firm was making about 160,000 mint balls a day, which is around 35 million a year. In a world where many old British sweet makers have been bought by international companies, Uncle Joe's is still made in Wigan by the firm that started it. See [who owns the famous British sweet makers now](#).

A proper hard mint

Uncle Joe's belong to the family of hard mints, along with humbugs, bullseyes and Black Bullets. Hard mints have long been sucked slowly after meals and on cold days, and the strong peppermint gives a warming, clearing kick. Their northern neighbours include [Kendal Mint Cake](#) from Cumbria and [Fox's Glacier Mints](#). For a crisp white peppermint in our own pick and mix, try [SW040](#).

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