

Parma Violets

From the sweeties.net wiki

Parma Violets are small, hard, violet flavoured discs made by the Derbyshire company Swizzels. They have been made since 1946 and are named after the Parma violet, a variety of the flower.

What they are

A Parma Violet is a pressed tablet sweet: a hard disc, curved inwards on both sides, similar to Swizzels' Fizzers but without the fizz. The listed ingredients are sugar, stearic acid, modified starch, glucose syrup and anthocyanin, a natural purple colour found in plants. The taste is sweet and powerfully floral. Some people love it. Others say it tastes like soap.

The great divide

In 2005 The Guardian reported a survey in which Parma Violets came out as the least popular childhood sweet among adults. Yet they are still going strong eighty years after they were first made, with a fiercely loyal following, and Swizzels even sells giant versions and bags of up to 3 kg.

Violet sweets are ancient

Eating violets is much older than the sweet. Violet petals were used in herbal medicine in ancient times, and violet tablets, sugary lozenges flavoured with violets, were being made before 1620. In the 18th century, crushed violet petals, rose water and sugar were combined into an early sweet called flower pastry. In Edwardian times, violet chocolate and violet liqueur were used to settle sickness. Swizzels' Parma Violets are said to have been inspired by a similar aniseed sweet traditionally eaten in India after a spicy meal.

Parma Violets in odd places

The flavour has escaped the sweet shop. To mark the sweet's 70th birthday in 2016, Swizzels released a Parma Violet cheese, made by the Cheshire Cheese Company. In 2019 a Somerset cider maker launched a Parma Violet cider, and bars serve cocktails that copy the taste. In Ian Fleming's James Bond books, the villain Blofeld is fond of violet scented sweets very like Parma Violets, which he sucks to freshen his breath. The indie band Palma Violets took their name from them.

The Swizzels family of sweets

Swizzels began as a market stall in Hackney in the 1920s and moved to a disused textile mill in New Mills, Derbyshire, during the Blitz. It also makes [Love Hearts](#) and Drumstick lollies. Whether you love or hate the Parma Violet, it is a proper piece of British sweet history.

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