

Treacle toffee

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Treacle toffee, also known as bonfire toffee, Plot toffee or Tom Trot, is a hard, brittle toffee with a strong taste of black treacle. In the United Kingdom it is eaten around Halloween and Guy Fawkes Night, and from about 1830 to 1900 it was popular in Yorkshire.

Many names

In Scotland treacle toffee is called claggum, with less sweet versions known as clack. In Wales it is loshin du, or taffi triog. In the 1890s it was sometimes known as Tom Trot.

What is in it

The key ingredient is black treacle. It is less sweet than sugar and slightly bitter, and it gives the toffee its dark colour and deep flavour. Recipes usually include butter or margarine, sugar and sometimes a little white vinegar. The mixture is boiled while being stirred constantly, then poured into buttered tins to set. Some cooks add almond, lemon or peppermint flavouring, or even a pinch of cayenne pepper for a kick. Cheaper versions without enough treacle may use food colouring to make them dark.

A homemade tradition

Treacle came into use in Britain in the 1660s, first for gingerbread, and a toffee made with it followed. For a long time treacle was considered medicinal and was expensive. From about 1830 to 1900, bonfire toffee was very popular in Yorkshire, and it was usually made at home. In the 1890s and early 1900s black treacle often cost more than sugar, so shop bought treacle toffee was too dear for many families. Even in the 1960s, it was common for older people in a neighbourhood to make bonfire toffee to hand out to children on Guy Fawkes Night.

Broken with a hammer

By the mid 1950s bonfire toffee was often made in large sheets, with pieces broken off with a toffee hammer. You can still buy it in sheets to break at home, or as a lolly on a stick with the foil tray it was made in still attached. See [slab toffee and the toffee hammer](#).

A Welsh Christmas treat too

In Wales, treacle toffee also belongs to Christmas. After plygain, an early morning service of carols held between three and six in the morning, people traditionally stayed up to decorate the house, play cards and make toffee.

Handle with care

Treacle toffee is very hard, so take it easy on your teeth, and keep it away from young children who could choke on hard pieces. For more Bonfire Night treats, see [Bonfire Night sweets](#).

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