

Henri Nestlé, Daniel Peter and the first milk chocolate

From the sweeties.net wiki

Milk chocolate, the kind most of us grew up on, was invented in Vevey, a town on Lake Geneva in Switzerland. It took two neighbours to do it: a chocolate maker called Daniel Peter and a baby food maker called Henri Nestlé.

Why milk chocolate was hard

People had drunk chocolate with milk since the 17th century. In 1687 the Irish physician Hans Sloane brought a milk chocolate drink to London after seeing it drunk in Jamaica. But a bar of milk chocolate was another matter. Milk is mostly water, and water will not mix with cocoa butter, which is a fat. Early attempts made an oily, milky mess, and a milk chocolate made with steam power in Dresden in 1839 did not catch on. When Fry's and Lindt began making eating chocolate in the 1840s, it was all dark.

The candle maker

Daniel Peter was born in 1836 in Moudon, in the canton of Vaud, the son of a butcher. In 1856 he set up a candle making business in Vevey, Frères Peter. But cheap paraffin lamps were arriving, fewer people wanted candles, and he began making chocolate instead. In 1863 he married Fanny Louise Cailler, daughter of the chocolate maker François Louis Cailler.

Peter tried to add milk to chocolate, but the water in the milk made the chocolate go mouldy.

The baby food maker

Henri Nestlé was born Heinrich Nestle in Frankfurt in 1814, the eleventh of fourteen children. He trained with a pharmacist, moved to Switzerland in the 1830s, settled in French speaking Vevey and changed his name to fit in. He tried his hand at many things: rapeseed, lamp oil, liqueurs, rum, absinthe, vinegar, mineral water, lemonade, gas lighting and fertiliser.

He and his wife had no children, but he knew how many babies died young. By 1867 he had created a baby food made from cow's milk, grain and sugar, sold as Farine Lactée Henri Nestlé, Henri Nestlé's milk flour, which soon sold across Europe. Nestlé also had a way of taking the water out of milk.

Milk chocolate at last

Peter needed exactly that. After seven years of work, in 1875 he combined cocoa with condensed milk made by Nestlé, his neighbour and friend, and made a solid milk chocolate. At first it was meant for making chocolate drinks. Eating milk chocolate took another decade: in 1887 Peter launched Gala Peter, named

from the Greek word for milk, the first brand of milk chocolate for eating.

Milk made chocolate less bitter, and because it used less cocoa it was cheaper to make. Soon the recipe leaked to nearby rivals, Cailler and Kohler. In 1896 Peter wrote that "almost all manufacturers in Switzerland, if not all, have tried to copy me". By 1911, chocolate made to Peter's recipe accounted for half of all the chocolate eaten in the world. Britain fought back in 1905 with Cadbury Dairy Milk, which by the 1920s was the best selling chocolate in the UK.

How Nestlé got the chocolate

Henri Nestlé sold his business in 1875, and the new owners kept his name. He died in 1890. Peter merged his firm with the chocolate maker Kohler in 1904, and in 1911 with Cailler, the business of his wife's family. In 1929 Nestlé bought Peter, Cailler, Kohler, by then the largest chocolate company in Switzerland. Nestlé went on to create white chocolate as the Milkybar in the 1930s, and in 1988 bought Rowntree Mackintosh, owner of KitKat, Rolo, Smarties and Aero: see [when Nestlé bought Rowntree](#).

The nest comes from the family. In the Swabian dialect of German, Nestle means a little bird's nest, and the family coat of arms showed three young birds in a nest being fed by their mother. Henri Nestlé himself began using a nest logo.

The baby milk row

Henri Nestlé's baby food led, a century later, to a long running consumer boycott. In 1974 the British charity War on Want published a booklet called The Baby Killer, criticising how infant formula was marketed in poor countries. Campaigners argued that mothers there often lacked clean water to mix it safely, and that free samples in hospitals could interfere with mothers' own milk, leaving families having to buy formula. Nestlé sued the publishers of a German version, called Nestlé Kills Babies. It won the case, but the defendants were fined only 300 Swiss francs, and the judge said Nestlé must fundamentally change its publicity methods. Time magazine called the result a moral victory for the defendants.

A boycott of Nestlé began in the United States on 4 July 1977 and spread to Europe, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. In 1981 the World Health Organization adopted an international code limiting the marketing of breast milk substitutes. The boycott was suspended in 1984 after Nestlé agreed to follow the code, then relaunched in 1989 after campaigners said formula companies were flooding hospitals in poor countries with free and cheap supplies. In 1999 Britain's Advertising Standards Authority ruled that Nestlé could not support its claim that it marketed formula ethically and responsibly. A 2018 study published by the US National Bureau of Economic Research estimated that about 10.9 million infant deaths between 1960 and 2015 were linked to Nestlé formula being used by mothers in poorer countries without clean water.

Nestlé says it follows the World Health Organization code as put into law by governments, reports on compliance every year and runs a whistleblowing scheme, and that many of the allegations are unsubstantiated or out of date. The boycott is still going.

Cocoa and child labour

In 2021 the United States Supreme Court ruled against a case brought against Nestlé USA and the cocoa trader Cargill by six men from Mali, who said they had been trafficked as children and enslaved on cocoa farms in Ivory Coast. The court did not rule on what had happened on the farms: it ruled, by eight votes to

one, that the claim could not go ahead under the American law used, because nearly all the conduct complained of had taken place in Ivory Coast, not the United States. See [child labour and the cocoa trade](#).

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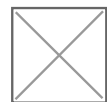
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