

Theodor Tobler and Toblerone

From the sweeties.net wiki

Toblerone is known around the world for its shape: a row of triangular peaks in a triangular box. It was created in Bern, the Swiss capital, more than a century ago.

The Tobler family

Theodor Tobler was born in Bern on 24 January 1876, the son of a confectioner, Johann Jakob Tobler. He left school without graduating, studied commerce in Geneva and Venice, and joined his father's business in 1894. As demand grew, his father turned the confectionery shop into a chocolate factory in 1899, and in 1900 he handed the business over to Theodor. It was a boom time: milk chocolate had not long been invented, and the Swiss chocolate industry was growing fast.

The bar

In 1908 Theodor Tobler and his cousin Emil Baumann, the company's production manager, created a new bar: milk chocolate with honey and almond nougat. Baumann is credited with the recipe, and Tobler with the triangular shape and the packaging. The name joins Tobler with *torrone*, the Italian word for a honey and almond nougat.

In 1909 Tobler applied for a patent for the way it was made, and the Toblerone name was registered as a trademark at the Swiss federal intellectual property office in Bern. Albert Einstein, who worked there as a clerk at the time, may have been involved in the patent. Toblerone became the first patented milk chocolate bar.

Mountain or dancers?

Most people assume the shape comes from the Matterhorn, and for many years the packaging showed its silhouette. But according to Theodor Tobler's sons, it came from a pyramid that dancers formed at the finale of a show he saw at the Folies Bergère in Paris. Another possible inspiration is the triangular packaging of Delta Peter, a drinking chocolate made by Daniel Peter, the inventor of milk chocolate. And look closely at the mountain on the box: hidden in it is the outline of a bear, the symbol of Bern.

Made in Dundee

Toblerone was not only made in Switzerland. From the 1930s until 1969 it was made in Dundee, in Scotland, and it was also made in Bedford, in England.

Tobler leaves

Theodor Tobler left the company in 1933. He was a pacifist and a campaigner for a united Europe, and in 1934 helped found the Europa Union in Basel. He later ran a sweet firm in Bern that tried and failed to make its own chewing gum, and ended up selling Wrigley's gum in Switzerland instead. He died in Bern in 1941.

From Tobler to Mondelez

The Tobler company stayed independent until 1970, when it merged with Suchard, maker of Milka. Jacobs coffee joined in 1982, Kraft Foods bought most of Jacobs Suchard in 1990, and in 2012 Toblerone went to Mondelez International, the company Kraft split off for its snacks, which also owns Cadbury.

Gaps, twin peaks and a flag

In 2016 the bigger bars sold in Britain lost two peaks and gained wider gaps, cutting their weight by about ten per cent for the same box and price. The change went down badly, a member of the Scottish Parliament called for government action, and the next year Poundland launched a rival bar called Twin Peaks. In 2018 the bar went back to its original shape. See [the Toblerone gaps](#).

When Mondelez began making some Toblerone in Bratislava, Slovakia, Swiss rules on what can be called Swiss meant the Matterhorn had to go from the packaging, replaced by a more stylised mountain. In 2025 Mondelez announced an investment of about 65 million Swiss francs in the Bern factory, where about 90 per cent of all Toblerone is made, and said bars made in Bern would now carry the Swiss flag.

Wonka, Partridge and a scandal

The Tobler factory has a small part in film history: the title sequence of *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, in 1971, was filmed inside it. In Britain, the comedy character Alan Partridge's fondness for Toblerone became a running joke. Manchester students know a triangular block of halls on Oxford Road as the Toblerones, and in Switzerland a line of Second World War anti tank defences is called the Toblerone line.

In Sweden, Toblerone even gave its name to a political scandal. In 1995 the politician Mona Sahlin was found to have made personal purchases on her government credit card, including two Toblerone bars. Journalists sympathetic to her tried to play it down as the Toblerone affair, but she was forced to step down as a candidate for prime minister. She returned to politics in 1998.

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