

Toffee

From the sweeties.net wiki

Toffee is an English sweet with a long British history. At its simplest it is sugar, or treacle, boiled with butter. What happens next decides whether you get a brittle slab that has to be smashed with a hammer, or a chewy toffee that clings to your teeth.

What toffee is

Toffee is made by boiling sugar or molasses with butter, and occasionally a little flour, until the temperature reaches what sweet makers call the hard crack stage, about 149 to 154°C. Along the way the sugar caramelises, which gives toffee its colour and flavour. Nuts or raisins are sometimes stirred in.

Where the word comes from

No one knows for sure where the word toffee came from. The Oxford English Dictionary first finds it in print in 1825, and treats it as a variant of taffy, recorded from 1817. Both started out as English dialect words. The food writer Harold McGee suggested it came from a Creole word for a mixture of sugar and molasses, though he did not say which Creole language.

Hard toffee and chewy toffee

Old British toffee was hard. It was poured into trays, set into slabs and broken up in the shop with a small toffee hammer: see [slab toffee and the toffee hammer](#). Treacle toffee, dark and bitter sweet, is eaten around Halloween and Bonfire Night: see [treacle toffee](#).

Softer, chewier toffee owes a great deal to Halifax. In 1890 Violet Mackintosh blended traditional brittle English butterscotch with soft American caramel, and the result, sold as Mackintosh's Celebrated Toffee, was so successful that it is credited with changing what the British meant by toffee. Before that, the word could mean almost any sugar or boiled sweet. See [John Mackintosh, the toffee king of Halifax](#).

Toffee's relations

Toffee has a big family. Butterscotch uses the same basic ingredients but is boiled only to the soft crack stage: see [butterscotch](#). Fudge and Scottish tablet add milk or cream and are boiled to a lower temperature; tablet is left to crystallise into a firm, grainy bar. Honeycomb, or cinder toffee, is toffee made to foam up with bicarbonate of soda. And in the United States, English toffee means a very buttery toffee, often made with almonds, which in Britain is sometimes sold as butter crunch.

Britain's toffee makers

Toffee has been made all over Britain, and many towns had their own. There was Harrogate toffee, first made to take away the taste of the spa waters, Walker's Nonsuch in Stoke on Trent, Riley's toffee rolls in

Halifax, Blue Bird toffee near Birmingham, and Moffat toffee from Dumfriesshire, which is really a boiled sweet with a tangy centre. For a guide to them all, see [old fashioned toffee](#).

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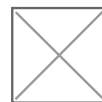
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