

Polo mints

From the sweeties.net wiki

Polo is the mint with the hole, and it has been made in Britain for more than 75 years. It was developed by Rowntree's of York, and it is now sold by Nestlé.

Born in York

During the Second World War, Rowntree's made Life Savers, the American ring shaped sweets, under licence. When that wartime licence expired, Rowntree's developed its own ring mint. The peppermint Polo was developed by George Harris, who became Rowntree's chairman in 1941. The mint was first developed in 1939, but the war delayed its launch, and it was first made at the Rowntree's factory in York in 1948. Polo Fruits followed soon after. According to company legend, the name comes from polar, for the cool freshness of the mint.

The mint with the hole

A standard Polo is about 19 millimetres across and 4 millimetres thick, with a hole about 8 millimetres wide. It is white, with the word POLO pressed twice into one flat side, which gave rise to the slogan, the mint with the hole. The main ingredients are sugar, glucose syrup, modified starch, stearic acid from vegetable sources and mint oils. Polos usually come in a tube of 23 mints, wrapped in foil backed paper inside a green and blue wrapper, where the Os in POLO are pictures of the mint itself.

The fight over a hole

When the Trade Marks Act 1994 came in, Nestlé applied to register the shape of the Polo, a plain white ring mint without lettering, as a trademark. Kraft Foods, which owned Life Savers, and Mars UK objected that the shape was not distinctive enough. Nestlé's application was allowed to go ahead only after it narrowed the description to the exact dimensions of a Polo and to mint flavoured compressed sweets. When Kraft applied to register its own ring sweets, Nestlé objected and lost: the court ruled that shoppers could tell a Polo from a Life Saver, because each has its name clearly embossed on it.

Flavours that came and went

Many variations have been tried, and none has been as successful as the original. Spearmint Polos once had turquoise flecks and are now white. There have been Polo Fruits, Sugar Free Polos made with sorbitol, Mini Polos, Polo Gummies, Polo Smoothies, and an Extra Strong Polo, sold as a rival to Trebor's mints and since discontinued in the UK. In the 1980s Rowntree's briefly tried lemon, orange and tropical fruit Polos. Another variety, Polo Holes, was a tube of tiny mints roughly the size of the hole.

Adverts and horses

In the 1980s the voice on Polo's television adverts was Peter Sallis. In 1995 Aardman Animations made an advert showing Polos on a factory line, in which a frightened Polo without a hole tries to escape the hole punching machine.

Horses enjoy the taste of peppermint, and Polo mints are often given to horses as treats: at the launch of Jilly Cooper's 2016 novel Mount!, guests were given Polos to feed to a white stallion.

For another British mint, see [mint imperials](#), and for the company that made Polo, see [when Nestlé bought Rowntree](#).

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