

Space Dust

From the sweeties.net wiki

Space Dust was a popping candy: a sweet that crackles, pops and fizzes in your mouth. It came from the same American food company as the better known Pop Rocks.

Space Dust and Pop Rocks

The idea of popping candy was first patented by General Foods research chemists Leon Kremzner and William Mitchell in 1961. General Foods test marketed Pop Rocks in Canada in the spring of 1974 and launched them in the United States in 1976. They were an immediate hit, at one point outselling other sweets by as much as ten to one. General Foods also made a similar popping candy in powdered form, called Space Dust, which was later renamed Cosmic Candy.

How popping candy works

Popping candy is not sherbet. Sherbet fizzes because an acid and a base react when they get wet. Popping candy crackles because it is full of tiny bubbles of carbon dioxide gas, trapped under pressure.

According to a 1980 patent, the candy is made by dissolving sugars in water and boiling the mixture until only about 3 per cent water is left. It is cooled a little, then stirred hard while carbon dioxide is pumped in at about 50 times normal air pressure. The mixture is kept under pressure while it cools and sets, trapping the gas bubbles inside. When the pressure is released, the candy shatters into small pieces. When those pieces dissolve in your mouth, the bubbles burst, and you hear and feel the pop.

The exploding stomach myth

Popping candy came with a myth: that eating it and drinking a fizzy drink would make your stomach explode. It is not true. General Foods fought the rumour as early as 1979, writing to schools and parents, taking out advertisements, and sending the inventor out to explain that a packet of Pop Rocks contains less gas than half a can of fizzy drink.

The myth still refused to die, and in the very first episode of the television show *MythBusters*, the presenters tested it by mixing six packets of Pop Rocks and six cans of cola inside a pig's stomach, with acid added to mimic a real stomach. The stomach swelled to three times its size, but it did not burst.

Popping candy today

Sales of Pop Rocks collapsed in the late 1970s, partly because of the safety rumours, and production stopped in 1980, but the candy returned in 1986. Today the Pop Rocks brand is owned and made by the Spanish company Zeta Espacial, which also sells popping candy under other names. Popping candy has also found its way into chocolate bars and even fine dining: the British chef Heston Blumenthal has used it in desserts, both for the sensation and for its 1970s nostalgia.

For fizzy sherbet sweets, see [sherbet dips](#), and for sweets that really did go to space, see [sweets in space](#).

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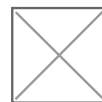
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