

How do they get the stripes in candy canes?

From the sweeties.net wiki

The stripes on a candy cane are part of the candy itself. They are made from coloured candy while everything is still warm and soft, then stretched and twisted so that the colour spirals all the way along the cane. It is the same kind of craft that puts the letters inside a stick of seaside rock.

Caneworking

The method is called caneworking, and it was first used to make patterns in glass. In glass canework, thin coloured rods are gathered into a bigger rod, and the whole thing is rolled out to a tiny diameter, with the pattern kept intact all the way through. The glass beads and ornaments known as millefiori are made this way. Making candy canes by hand works in exactly the same way, and the process is known as candy caning.

For a candy cane, that means rods of coloured candy combined with a larger rod of warm white candy, usually peppermint flavoured. As the whole thing is rolled thinner and thinner, the stripes shrink with it but keep their place. Twisting the rope as it is stretched turns straight stripes into a spiral, and the rope is cut into lengths and bent into a crook while it is still soft enough to shape.

Seaside rock uses the same idea. Its letters start out about the size of a thumbprint and are shrunk down as the huge boiling of rock is stretched into thin sticks: see [how do they get the letters in rock?](#)

Striped before they were canes

Striped sweets are older than the candy cane. A recipe for straight peppermint candy sticks, white with coloured stripes, was published in *The Complete Confectioner, Pastry Cook, and Baker* in 1844. The earliest known mention of a candy cane comes in a short story of 1866, and by 1874 candy canes were being linked with Christmas. In 1882 a magazine described tall, twisted candy canes hung on a Christmas tree.

A popular story says candy canes were invented in 1670 by the choirmaster of Cologne Cathedral, who asked a sweet maker to bend sugar sticks into shepherds' crooks to keep children quiet. The story is probably not true: references to it do not appear before the middle of the 20th century.

From hand to machine

Like other stick candy, the first canes were made by hand. In the early 1920s the Bunte Brothers, confectioners in Chicago, filed one of the earliest patents for a machine to make candy canes.

In 1919, in Albany, Georgia, Robert McCormack began making candy canes for local children, and his company, later known as Bobs Candies, grew into one of the world's leading candy cane makers. The work was slow: canes had to be bent by hand as they came off the line, and more than 20 per cent often broke.

The answer came from McCormack's brother in law, Gregory Harding Keller, who had spent his summers working in the factory while training for the priesthood in Rome. In 1957, by then an ordained Roman Catholic priest, Keller patented the Keller Machine, which automated the twisting of soft candy into spiral stripes and cut it into precise lengths.

Hard like rock

A candy cane is a stick of hard boiled sugar, like rock, which is why it snaps rather than bends once it has cooled: see [what are boiled sweets?](#)

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