

# What does suitable for vegetarians mean on sweets?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Suitable for vegetarians is a handy line to find on a bag of sweets. The main thing it tells you is that the sweets contain no gelatine, the animal product at the heart of many chewy sweets. But it is worth knowing what the phrase does and does not promise.

## What it should mean

There is no legal definition of vegetarian food in UK law, but food must not be labelled in a misleading way. In 2006 the Food Standards Agency published guidance on the words vegetarian and vegan, drawn up after consulting the Vegetarian Society and the Vegan Society.

The guidance said vegetarian should not be used for foods that are, or are made from, or with the aid of, products derived from animals that have died or been slaughtered. For sweets, that rules out gelatine, which is made from the skin, bones and connective tissue of slaughtered animals: see [what is gelatine made from?](#)

## What vegetarian sweets can still contain

Vegetarianism accepts products from living animals, such as milk, eggs and honey. So a sweet labelled suitable for vegetarians may still contain:

- milk or butter, as in toffee and fudge
- egg white, as in some nougat
- honey
- beeswax, used as a glaze

## Vegetarian is not vegan

Vegan goes further. The same 2006 guidance said vegan should not be used for foods made from or with the aid of animals or animal products, including products from living animals. Vegans avoid milk, eggs, honey and beeswax, and additives made from insects, such as shellac and cochineal: see [what sweets are vegan in the UK?](#)

## The carmine question

Carmine, also called cochineal or E120, is a red colour made from insects. It can make a product unacceptable to vegetarian or vegan consumers, so check the ingredients if it matters to you: see [what is carmine?](#)

## What it does not promise

A vegetarian label is about ingredients, not allergies. It does not mean a sweet is free from milk or eggs, and it is not a guarantee against traces of other ingredients: see [what does may contain mean on sweets?](#)

## An example

Recipes can differ between countries. Starburst, for example, is labelled suitable for vegetarians in the UK, while the American version contains gelatine. So always read the label on the pack you are buying.

We sell vegan gummy bears and vegan fizzy cola bottles in our pick and mix, which are suitable for vegetarians as well as vegans.

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