

How are sweets made?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Almost every sweet begins with sugar dissolved in water or milk and boiled into a syrup. As it boils, water evaporates and the sugar becomes more concentrated. How far the cooking goes, and what happens afterwards, decides what kind of sweet you get.

The sugar stages

Each boiling temperature matches a particular sugar concentration, so sweet makers use temperature to know when to stop. Higher temperatures give harder, more brittle sweets; lower temperatures give softer ones.

Stage	Temperature	Sugar concentration	Used for
Thread	110 to 112°C	80 per cent	Syrup
Soft ball	112 to 116°C	85 per cent	Fudge
Firm ball	118 to 120°C	87 per cent	Soft caramels
Hard ball	121 to 130°C	90 per cent	Nougat
Soft crack	132 to 143°C	95 per cent	Salt water taffy
Hard crack	146 to 154°C	99 per cent	Toffee
Clear liquid	160°C	100 per cent	Hard sweets
Brown liquid	170°C	100 per cent	Liquid caramel

The names come from the old test, used before thermometers were affordable: a drop of syrup in cold water forms a soft or hard ball, or threads that bend or snap. Above about 171°C, sugar breaks down into simpler sugars and turns into amber caramel.

Glassy or grainy

What happens as the syrup cools matters too. Hard sweets are non crystalline: the sugar sets like glass, with no crystals. Sweets such as fudge and fondant are crystalline: tiny sugar crystals give them a creamy texture that melts in the mouth or is easily chewed. Edinburgh rock, left to turn sugary, is a good example of the difference: see [why does Edinburgh rock crumble?](#)

The main methods

- **Boiling and pulling.** For boiled sweets, rock and humbugs: see [how are boiled sweets made?](#)
- **Starch moulding.** Hot jelly mixtures are poured into shapes stamped in trays of starch, a method mechanised with the starch mogul around 1899: see [what is starch moulding?](#)
- **Panning.** Centres are tumbled in a rotating pan while layers of sugar are built up, as for sugared almonds and aniseed balls: see [what is sugar panning?](#)
- **Whipping.** Air is beaten into a syrup with gelatine or egg white for marshmallows and nougat.

- **Spinning.** Melted sugar is flung through tiny holes to make candy floss: see [how is candy floss made?](#)

From kitchen to factory

Sweet making grew in Britain with the import of sugar in Tudor times, and grew greatly in the 19th century Industrial Revolution. Sweets had been made by hand, at home or in small local businesses. Machines, including steam power, pushed prices down and production up. Factory work was divided by sex: men cooked and ran machines, while women wrapped, packed and hand dipped chocolates, and even the best paid women, the chocolate dippers, earned less than the worst paid male machine operators: see [what happens inside a sweet factory?](#)

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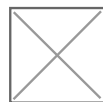
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