

How are humbugs made?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Humbugs are traditional boiled sweets, usually flavoured with peppermint and striped in two colours, often black and white, and there are records of them from as early as the 1820s. A clear boiled sweet is cooked, flavoured and left to set, but a humbug is worked after cooking, and that work is what gives it its stripes and its look: see [humbugs](#).

The method

1. **Cook.** A mixture of sugar, glycerine, colour and flavouring is heated to about 145°C, close to the hard crack stage used for boiled sweets: see [how are boiled sweets made?](#)
2. **Pour out.** The hot mixture is poured out of the pan.
3. **Pull.** It is stretched and folded many times over.
4. **Stripe.** A smaller piece of coloured mixture is folded into the main batch.
5. **Roll and cut.** The mixture is rolled into a long, thin cylinder and sliced into segments.

Why glycerine?

Glycerine, also called glycerol, is a sweet tasting, syrupy liquid that attracts water. In food it is used as a humectant, which helps hold on to moisture, and as a sweetener.

Why pull the sugar?

Stretching a sugar mass and folding it back on itself traps tiny air bubbles. That lowers its density and makes it opaque rather than glassy, the same trick that makes chews light. Seaside rock is pulled for the same reason: the batch comes off the pulling machine as aerated white toffee, ready to be wrapped around the letters: see [how is seaside rock made?](#)

Stripes all the way through

The stripes are folded into the batch before it is rolled out, so they run the whole length of the rope and every slice carries them. Candy canes and seaside rock are built on the same idea, with coloured candy laid into a thick rod that is then rolled thin: see [how do they get the stripes in candy canes?](#)

Two shapes

Humbugs are sold in two main forms: cylinders with rounded ends, each wrapped in a twist of cellophane, or, more traditionally, tetrahedrons, the four sided pyramid shape, loose in a bag. The bullseye is a close

cousin with red and white or black and white stripes, known in the UK as Black Bullets: see [bullseyes](#).

A lozenge was made differently

Not every Victorian mint was boiled. Peppermint lozenges were made by mixing peppermint oil into a base of sugar, water and gum, working it into a paste, drying it on boards and cutting it into lozenge shapes.

Sugar was expensive, and replacing some of it with cheaper substitutes was common. In Bradford in 1858, a sweet maker who used powdered gypsum was sold arsenic trioxide by mistake, and the lozenges, sold by a stallholder known as Humbug Billy, killed around 20 people: see [the Bradford sweets poisoning of 1858](#)

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