

How are sugared almonds made?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Sugared almonds, also called Jordan almonds, comfits or koufeta, are almonds coated in a thin, hard shell of sugar, often in pale pastel colours. They are made by hard panning, one of the oldest ways of coating a sweet: see [what is sugar panning?](#)

How they are made

In Sulmona, in the Abruzzo region of Italy, where sugared almonds are a local speciality, the traditional method goes like this:

1. **Prepare the almonds.** The almonds are shelled and skinned.
2. **Load the pans.** They go into large, rounded copper pans, called bassine, which rotate slowly.
3. **Add the syrup.** Sugar syrup is added and the pans turn until it sticks perfectly to the almonds.
4. **Repeat.** It takes many layers of sugar to reach the right thickness, so the step is repeated again and again.
5. **Finish.** The almonds are smoothed to give them a neat, shiny look, then coloured and dried.

In hard panning, each layer of sugar syrup crystallises on the centre as it dries, and the layers can be extremely thin. That is why it takes so long. At Confetti Mario Pelino, founded in Sulmona in 1783, it still takes about four days to make a fully coated almond.

What the best makers leave out

Sulmona makers say a high quality sugared almond should contain no starch or other thickeners in its shell. A 2010 account of the Pelino museum notes that its almonds contain no cornflour or starch. One industry guide to hard panning, by contrast, advises sealing nuts first with a mixture of gum arabic and wheat flour, to stop the almond's oil seeping into the coating during storage. Panned sweets can be finished with a polish of beeswax, paraffin oil or carnauba wax, or with shellac: see [glazing agents explained](#)

Why they come in fives

The bittersweet taste of sugar coated almonds has been thought to represent life since the time of ancient Rome, and in Italy and Greece they are given to wedding guests. They are often packed in groups of five, standing for happiness, health, long life, wealth and fertility. An unverified legend credits a Roman confectioner called Julius Dragatus with serving honey covered almonds at weddings and births. Once sugar became more readily available in the 15th century, the almonds were coated in sugar instead.

Around Europe

- **Verdun**, in north east France, is known for its dragées de Verdun, and some believe the word Jordan is a corruption of the town's name. Others think it comes from the French jardin, garden.
- **Portugal** gives sugared almonds, amêndoas de Páscoa, at Easter rather than chocolate eggs.
- **Sulmona** is known for confetti made into decorative arrangements, a craft the town's Poor Clare nuns practised from the 15th century.

Allergens

Sugared almonds are made with almonds, a tree nut and one of the 14 allergens, and some coatings use wheat flour: see [which sweets contain nuts?](#)

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