

How are mint balls made?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Uncle Joe's Mint Balls have been made in Wigan by William Santus and Co since 1898, when Ellen Santus made the first ones in the kitchen of a Victorian terraced house. Production moved to a factory near Wigan Wallgate station in 1919, and the company says the sweets are still made in the same careful way, over gas fires and by hand: see [Uncle Joe's Mint Balls](#)

Three ingredients

Mint balls are made from just three things: pure brown cane sugar, cream of tartar and peppermint oil. The firm uses cream of tartar rather than glucose. Cream of tartar is an acid, and as the syrup boils it splits a little of the sugar into glucose and fructose, which helps stop the sugar crystallising: see [what is invert sugar?](#)

Step by step

A 2021 factory tour write up by the blog The British Candy Connoisseur describes the process:

1. **Boil.** The sugar and cream of tartar are melted into a sweet, sticky, caramel like syrup in large copper pans, boiled over open gas fires.
2. **Turn out.** The hot syrup is poured onto steel tables, which have been in use since the factory was built.
3. **Add the mint.** Peppermint oil is sprinkled onto the melted candy and worked in by hand.
4. **Fold and cool.** Workers fold the candy over to remove air bubbles, and leave it to cool for about ten minutes. Each batch, about 8 to 11 kg of mint balls, is turned round in about fifteen minutes.
5. **Roll.** The mix goes onto a rolling machine that spins it towards a tapered end, drawing it out into a long rope.
6. **Press.** The rope is punched and pressed into balls, with Uncle on one side and Joe's on the other.
7. **Cool and pack.** The balls spin on a two tiered wheel to cool, then go to the packing machine. A high speed wrapping machine bought from Italy can wrap up to 2,000 sweets a minute.

Not quite balls

Despite the name, the mints are not truly round but oblate spheroids, a little flattened. In 2011 about 160,000 were being made a day, around 35 million a year, and a 2021 report put the total at 33 million a year.

A family firm

The business has stayed in the family, and it is now run by the brothers John and Antony Winnard, great nephews of William Santus. The makers say the mint balls contain no artificial additives or colours, are gluten free and are suitable for vegetarians and vegans: see [a guide to vegan sweets](#)

Hard mint cousins

Mint balls belong to the same family of hard boiled mints as humbugs, which are pulled and striped, and mint imperials, which are coated in a pan: see [how are humbugs made?](#) and [mint imperials](#)

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