

How are sweets flavoured?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Flavour is what makes a sweet taste of pear, mint or strawberry rather than just sugar. Sweet makers draw on four main sources:

- **Flavourings**, made to taste of a particular fruit or food.
- **Essential oils**, such as peppermint oil in mints and aniseed oil in aniseed balls.
- **Fruit esters**, strongly fruity compounds such as the ones in pear drops.
- **Fruit juices and extracts**, used in some jellies and pastilles. Rowntree's Fruit Pastilles, for example, list concentrated fruit juice among their ingredients.

When the flavour goes in

Flavours are often added late. In caramel making, vanilla and other flavourings go in only once the cooking is done, because adding them earlier would burn them off at the high temperatures. The machinery maker Loynds describes adding liquid flavours and colours by syringe to the hot boiled sugar on the slab, then folding them in. At Uncle Joe's in Wigan, peppermint oil is sprinkled onto the melted candy and worked in by hand: see [how are mint balls made?](#)

Esters: the pear drop secret

Esters are compounds that smell strongly of fruit. The pear drop's flavour comes from two of them: isoamyl acetate, which tastes of banana, and ethyl acetate, which tastes of pear. Both are used in many pear and banana flavoured sweets. Bubblegum flavour is also a blend, often including esters: see [how are pear drops made?](#) and [how is bubblegum made?](#)

Natural, nature identical and artificial

Flavourings can be natural, taken from plant or animal sources; nature identical, made to be chemically the same as a natural substance; or artificial, made from chemicals and not found in nature. Because natural extracts can be scarce or expensive, many commercial flavourings are nature identical. Vanilla is a good example: synthetic vanillin is now used more often than natural vanilla extract, and it has been made from clove oil, from wood pulp waste and from petrochemicals.

What natural means on a label

In the UK, flavourings are governed by rules that came from the EU Flavouring Regulation of 2008 and became UK law in 2021. A flavouring can be called natural only if it is made only from flavouring

preparations and natural flavouring substances. A named natural flavouring, such as natural strawberry flavouring, must come at least 95 per cent from strawberries. If less of it comes from the fruit, but the fruit is still easy to recognise, it can be called natural strawberry flavouring with other natural flavourings. A plain natural flavouring can come from a mix of sources: see [how to read a sweet label](#)

Sweet, sour and salty

Under the same rules, substances that have only a sweet, sour or salty taste are not counted as flavourings. That is why the acids that make sweets sharp, such as citric and malic acid, appear on labels as ingredients in their own right: see [what is citric acid in sweets?](#) and [what is malic acid in sweets?](#)

Earn rewards on [sweeties.net](#)

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



[sweeties.net](#) · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@sweeties.net · 3-click cancel at [sweeties.net/cancel/](#)