

The history of pick and mix

From the sweeties.net wiki

Pick and mix, choosing loose sweets and paying by weight, is so familiar that it is easy to forget it had to start somewhere. Its story runs from the sweet shop jar, through the Woolworths counter, to the Swedish candy wall.

The jar and the quarter

Long before self service, sweets were weighed out from glass jars by the shopkeeper, and the classic British unit was the quarter, a quarter of a pound, 4 ounces or about 113 g: see [what is a quarter of sweets?](#) The Oldest Sweet Shop in Pateley Bridge, North Yorkshire, has sold sweets this way since 1827, and it still weighs traditional boiled sweets out loose: see [the oldest sweet shop in England](#)

Woolworths and pic'n'mix

The pick and mix counter as a high street habit came with Woolworths. Frank Woolworth's American stores introduced cheap weigh out sweets in 1886, and the first British Woolworths, which opened in Church Street, Liverpool, in November 1909, sold twenty English varieties at tuppence a quarter pound. Customers nicknamed the counter pic'n'mix, and in the 1950s Woolworths adopted the name. For a century the sweets were a defining part of the shop, kept at the front of the stores, until Woolworths closed its British stores in January 2009: see [Woolworths pick and mix, the story](#)

In the United States, too, loose sweets were sold for much of the 20th century through Woolworth's five and dime stores, and the chain closed there in the 1990s: see [do Americans have pick and mix?](#)

Sweden and the candy wall

In Sweden, loose sweets, called lösgodis, date back to the 1930s, when Swedish farming became self sufficient in refined sugar and sweets became cheap. In 1984 Sweden's national food agency approved selling them in ordinary larger shops, as long as each variety was kept in its own container and picked with a scoop or a small bucket. The self serve candy wall itself was developed by three Finnish students, educated in Stockholm, in Helsinki in the early 1980s, and it has since spread around the world: see [what is Swedish pick and mix?](#)

Going metric

British pick and mix changed its units in 2000, when selling loose goods by metric weight became compulsory. Imperial units can still be shown alongside, and the change sparked the Metric Martyrs row, in which traders were prosecuted for selling in pounds and ounces: see [why is pick and mix sold by weight?](#)

Pick and mix today

Today pick and mix is sold in supermarkets, sweet shops and online, and it is still priced by weight. We sell every sweet by the 100 g, so you can build a mix of any size.

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Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

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Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



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