

The history of Christmas sweets

From the sweeties.net wiki

Sweets and Christmas have gone together in Britain for a long time. Some of today's Christmas treats have roots in Georgian and Victorian customs, and others are 20th century inventions.

Twelfth Day windows

Twelfth Day, 6 January, the last day of the Christmas season, was an occasion for sweets too. In 1825 the writer William Hone described confectioners polishing their tall glass jars for Twelfth Day, filled with peppermint drops, sugar sticks, hardbake, brandy balls and bullseyes: see [the history of the sweet shop](#)

The cracker

The Christmas cracker began as a way to sell sweets. The London confectioner Tom Smith sold sugared almonds wrapped in twists of paper, added love notes, and then a bang, and the Oxford English Dictionary records crackers being pulled from 1847. His son Walter later added the paper hats: see [Tom Smith and the Christmas cracker](#)

Victorian sugar toys

In the 18th century, metal moulds began to be used to make shaped sweets of clear boiled sugar, known as barley sugar or clear toy candy. By the 19th century these moulded sweets were a popular Victorian Christmas treat in Germany, England and parts of North America: see [how is barley sugar made?](#)

Candy canes

Straight peppermint sticks, white with coloured stripes, had a published recipe by 1844. The first known candy cane appears in a story of 1866, and by 1874 a magazine was linking candy canes with Christmas. A popular story that they began in Cologne in 1670 does not appear before the mid 20th century: see [how are candy canes made?](#)

On the tree and in the stocking

- **Chocolate coins** are traditionally bought in Britain at Christmas, hung on the tree and put in children's stockings: see [chocolate coins](#)
- **Sugar mice**, little mice of boiled fondant with a string tail, are a traditional British Christmas sweet: see [sugar mice](#)

The chocolate orange

The 20th century added new sweets. Terry's of York launched the Chocolate Orange in 1932, and it was once estimated to be in a tenth of all British Christmas stockings; its marketing is heaviest around Christmas. For ideas for this year's stockings, see [Christmas sweets and stocking fillers](#)

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/](#)