

How sweets from abroad came to Britain

From the sweeties.net wiki

Plenty of sweets that feel thoroughly British began life abroad. Sugar itself was an import, traded through Venice in the Middle Ages and later grown on Caribbean plantations worked by enslaved people: see [how sugar came to Britain](#). Here is how some of the sweets made from it arrived.

Old arrivals

- **Sherbet.** The word comes from the Turkish şerbet, from a Persian word and ultimately the Arabic for a drink. Sherbet started as a drink before it became a fizzy powder: see [what is sherbet made of?](#)
- **Liquorice.** In parts of northern England, liquorice is still called Spanish, and there are two old stories to explain why: see [why is liquorice called Spanish?](#)
- **Turkish delight.** In English it was once also known as lumps of delight. Fry's of Bristol launched Fry's Turkish Delight, rose flavoured Turkish delight covered in milk chocolate, in 1914, and sales of Turkish delight rose after the 2005 film of C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in which the White Witch uses it to win over Edmund.

American ideas, made in Britain

In 1932, Forrest Mars, son of the American sweet maker Frank Mars, began making the Mars bar in Slough with a staff of twelve. He modelled it on his father's Milky Way bar, adjusted the recipe for European tastes, and at first advertised it as using Cadbury's chocolate: see [Forrest Mars and the Mars bar](#)

During the Second World War, Rowntree's of York made the American ring shaped Life Savers under licence. When the licence ran out, Rowntree's made its own mint with a hole, and Polo arrived in 1948: see [Polo mints](#)

M&M's themselves were introduced to the United Kingdom in the 1980s, and in the 1990s the M&M's name replaced older Mars brands in Europe, including Treets: see [how Smarties inspired M&M's](#)

From Europe

- **Gummy bears.** Haribo, founded in Bonn, came to Britain in 1972 by buying Dunhill's, a maker of liquorice Pontefract cakes founded in the 18th century: see [Hans Riegel and the gummy bear](#)
- **Self serve sweets.** The self serve candy wall was developed in the early 1980s in Helsinki, and the idea has since spread around Europe and Asia: see [what is Swedish pick and mix?](#) In 2024, Swedish sweets became a social media craze: see [why is Swedish candy so popular?](#)

- **Lollipops and more.** Chupa Chups came from Spain, Toblerone from Switzerland and Ferrero from Italy: see [Enric Bernat, Chupa Chups and Salvador Dalí](#)

The American candy shops of Oxford Street

Not every import has been welcome. In 2022, NBC News reported on more than two dozen American themed sweet shops that had appeared on London's Oxford Street. Westminster City Council was investigating around 30 of them over alleged business rates avoidance totalling £7.9 million, and raids on three shops seized £100,000 of counterfeit Wonka bars, vapes and Rolex watches. NBC reported that the counterfeit Wonka bars contained enough hazelnut to trigger a serious allergic reaction without proper labelling. Staff at one shop, Candy World, told NBC they were not speaking to anyone else.

By November 2022, Time Out reported, the number of shops had fallen from 30 to 21 after raids. The council's leader, Adam Hug, said the businesses were costing London around £8 million through tax evasion and were openly flouting trading standards laws. For why a label matters so much with sweets, see [how to read a sweet label](#)

And the other way

British sweets have travelled too. Opal Fruits went to the United States in 1967, and by 1968 they had been renamed Starburst there: see [Opal Fruits](#). For why British chocolate can be hard to find in America, see [why British Cadbury is hard to buy in America](#)

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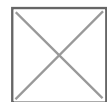
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