A cake with lit candles

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It wasn't until the Middle Ages that beeswax replaced tallow.  It was a marked improvement since beeswax didn't produce a smoky flame or nasty odor when burned.  However, these pure and clean beeswax candles were very expensive and only affordable to the wealthy.

During the 19th century, most major improvements affecting today's candle making occurred.  Joseph Morgan introduced the first continuous-production machine for molded candles in 1834.  Paraffin wax made from oil and coal shale was developed in 1850.  Its lower cost was a great asset, but its low melting point was a threat to its popularity.  With the discovery of stearic acid, paraffin became hard and durable.  By the end of the century, most candles were being manufactured with paraffin and stearic acid.