

Some Facts to Chew On

Name _____

Word Count: 299

Did you know that chewing gum has been around for more than 900 years? The ancient Greeks chewed gum made of resin and New England Native Americans chewed gum made of sap from spruce trees.

Today, making gum is a huge industry. Gum flavors range from peppermint to hot chili pepper. Most recipes for chewing gum contain some basic ingredients—a gum base, sweeteners, and flavorings. The base gives gum a smooth texture. In earlier times, gum base was made from the sap of a tree found in Mexico and Guatemala. Now, the base is manufactured to keep the costs low.

The sweeteners usually are sugar and corn syrup. In sugar-free gums, artificial sweeteners replace the sugar and corn syrup. For the mint flavoring alone, huge areas of farmland are used for growing mint plants. Other flavorings are manufactured in a lab.

Gum makers like to keep their recipes secret, but the process is about the same. First, the base is prepared. This step takes the longest. The base is melted in a steam cooker. Then it's pumped through a high-speed machine that cleans out any dirt, bark, and other unwanted items.

After this, factory workers mix the gum base, sugar, corn syrup, and flavoring such as spearmint, cinnamon, or peppermint. A batch of gum generally is 20 percent base, 63 percent sugar, 16 percent corn syrup, and 1 percent flavoring.

While the mixture is still warm, workers run it between pairs of rollers coated on both sides with powdered sugar to keep the gum from sticking. The final pair of rollers has knives that cut the gum into sticks. A machine then wraps each stick of gum.

It's evident that Americans enjoy the results of this process. Each of us chews an average of 300 sticks a year.

Number of Errors

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
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Accuracy (%)

Reading Rate (Words Per Minute):

