

Title:

Gum 101: Some Facts To Chew On

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Summary:

Chewing gum has an unique place in American culture.

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Article Body:

Chewing gum has an unique place in American culture. It's been used for a variety of purposes-from keeping astronauts healthy to freshening breath to helping people avoid eating fatty snacks-and one gum maker says if you stacked all the pieces of gum that it's sold, the stack would stretch halfway to the moon.

The most popular type of gum-sugarless gum-has been around since 1960. It was an instant hit when first introduced. Today, people can find sugarless gum in a rainbow of flavors and, sugarless gum that helps whiten your teeth. So where do all these gummy ideas come from? The answer may surprise you.

Lots of the gum that's chewed today is developed at the Cadbury Schweppes Americas Confectionery New Jersey-based Science & Technology Center. Cadbury Schweppes Americas Confectionery is part of Cadbury Schweppes (NYSE: CSG), the world's largest confectionery company and beverage industry leader. The Science & Technology Center employees develop such favorite gums as Dentyne and Bubblicious. One of the company's latest creations, Trident Splash™, is the first sugar free gum with a liquid center. It comes in peppermint with vanilla and strawberry with lime flavors-and according to its makers, it helps clean people's teeth if chewed after eating.

As popular as the gum may be, it was far from simple to create. Dr. Barbara Raphael, head of the Cadbury Schweppes Americas Confectionery Science & Technology Center, says gum formulas are actually very complex and that it takes up to 70 ingredients to create a great tasting gum (a far cry from some early varieties of gum made from tree resin and powdered sugar).

"High quality, long lasting gum requires a complex flavor system. We start with

a characteristic flavor-a taste that we are all familiar with-and then go from there," Dr. Raphael explains. Often, she says, her team works with what are known as "top notes" when creating a new gum.

The process of adding top notes has to do with adding specific flavors not usually associated with the base flavor. This is done through a high tech process (as well as some trial and error). For instance, the company's cinnamon gum (called Dentyne Fire) blends warm notes to a base cinnamon flavor. Its powerful peppermint and spearmint gum (called Dentyne Ice) blends cool notes with mint or spearmint base flavors.

Of course, texture is an important part of the chewing gum experience as well. Dr. Raphael says that's why her company uses a variety of ingredients to find just the right feel for its gum. "Ingredients exhibit a wide range of physical characteristics from liquid, soft paste and free flowing granulars, to different types of solids," she explains.

All ingredients must be combined in the proper ratios and correct temperatures and pressures must be met to produce a gum that will meet what Dr. Raphael describes as "consumers' chewing expectations." Not to worry, though, it seems the technology center has that process down to a science. The company manufactures about 65 billion pieces of gum every year for consumers in Canada, the US, and Latin and South America.