38 Sweet Facts About Candy - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep. 32)

List Show
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Hi, I'm John Green, welcome to my salon. This is mental_floss.

1. Did you know how many licks it takes to get to the center of a Tootsie Pop? Well, you're about to! According to a licking machine at Purdue University - and yes, I did say "licking machine" - it's 364. But we don't actually have time to lick a Tootsie Pop ourselves, because we have to get through like a ton of candy facts today! Alright, let's do it.

(intro music)

2. The next time you get one fo those Mystery Flavored Dum-Dums with the question marks all over the wrapper, rest assured, you're not going to get like some weird puke-flavored lollipop. It is, in fact, just what happens when one flavor ends on the production line and another one starts; there's a brief moment of sort of flavor-mingling. Mystery flavor!

3. If you've been investing money in cologne that makes you smell like a lumberjack or a professional surfer, you're doing it wrong, because according to a study conducted by the Smell and Taste Research Foundation in Chicago, the scent that women find most arousing is Good & Plenty candy mixed with cucumber.

4. The 17 old people watching this video may remember that red M&M's were taking out of the rotation in 1976 because consumers were freaking out over the die amaranth, which was a suspected carcinogen. M&M's didn't actually have that dye - better known as Red #2 - but it made consumers feel better to open a bag and find orange candies instead of red ones. But then the red M&M made its way back into the package 11 years later, because while people are afraid of carcinogens, they apparently aren't afraid of zombie M&M's.

5. Whatever, I don't eat the red ones. M&M obviously isn't hurting for brand recognition, but the Mars company was no doubt kicking themselves after saying no to a pretty big product placement back in 1982. *E.T.,* instead of having an out-of-this-world fascination with Reese's pieces, was originally slated to love M&M's, but for whatever reason, Mars turned it down, and now, history belongs to Hershey's.

6. If you love Nerds candy - and you do if you love justice - you would have adored Nerds breakfast cereal, or possibly it would have made you throw up in your mouth a little bit. In the 80's - I remember this, I had some - Ralston made Nerds cereal with either orange or grape-flavored tangy cereal on one side of the box, and strawberry of cherry-flavored cereal on the other. It was disgusting.

7. Now, of course, tangy breakfast cereal seems destined to fail, but then again, so does Cheerios mixed with circus peanuts candy, which is what inspired one of the greatest breakfast cereals of all time - Lucky Charms.

8. During World War II, the U.S. Army challenged the Hershey company to do something a little unusual for a candy company: produce a chocolate bar that didn't taste very good. The Army wanted a ration bar for soldiers that would provide energy, but that tasted bad enough that soldiers wouldn't, like, choose to munch on it. Hershey responded with Field Ration D, which according to most soldier accounts, was indeed pretty gross.

9. More disgusting candy: the Vegetable Sandwich Bar, a health bar fmor the 1920's that actually contained cabbage, celery, peppers, and tomatoes. Its main claim to fame was that it aided digestion, and did not constipate, which is, you know, that's what I look for in my candy.

10. And now, let me dispel a myth that is still widely held, despite being ludicrous. If you swallow chewing gum, it is not going to spend years in your digestive system. Gum will, in fact, just go right through you like anything else, and then come out as poop. It's not that big of a deal!

11. Another urban legend, of course, is the pop rocks myth. The idea that if you drink coca-cola and eat pop rocks, all of that gas would just, boom! No, it won't, you'll just burp. Stop freaking out! Also, that did not kill Mikey from the Life cereal commercials, he is alive!

12. One more myth from your childhood dispelled - finding a star of American Indian on your Tootsie Pop wrapper - yeah, that does not earn you a free sucker. You're just going to have to get those 364 licks somewhere else.

13. A half-charming, half-disturbing fact about Tootsie, by the way: the original recipe called for the leftover Tootsie Rolls from the previous day to be incorporated into the next day's batch, which is a process that the company still uses! Now, I don't want to speculate, but I believe that means that in theory, that there is a little bit of the original Tootsie Roll, from like the early 1900s, in every Tootsie Roll that you eat today!

14. If Brach's laid out the candy corn kernels that it sells each year, end-to-end, they would wrap around the Earth 4.25 times. I could eat those.

15. Neccos cranks out 750 millions candy buttons each year, which is particularly impressive, when you consider that no one likes them.

16. And in the U.K. alone, Cadbury sells over 200 million cream eggs each year, more than 3 for every person who lives there. Including babies!

17. 3 Musketeers was not so named because the inventor was a big Alexandre Dumas fan; when the bar came out in 1932, it was actually three separate bars, in a trio of flavors - strawberry, vanilla, and chocolate. The company eventually decided to cut the three-flavored shtick, and stick with one - you know, chocolate. The good one.

18. Opal Fruits kind of sounds like a brand of those hard candies that are stuck together in a giant clump in that dish on your grandma's coffee table, but in fact, it's what Starbursts were called when they first came out in 1960.

19. Okay, one more from the early-flavor files. Lifesavers were just pepp-o-mint-flavored when they first came out in 1913, but shortly thereafter, mint-lovers could freshen their breath with wint-o-green, cl-o-ve, lic-o-rice, cinn-o-mon, vi-o-let, choc-o-late, malt-o-milk... (sighs) O's.

20. Alright, so name origins: Pez comes from the first flavor it ever came in: Pfefferminz. German for peppermint. Don't be a prop, don't be a prop, please have pfefferminz in you - yeah! Mark, you actually put pfefferminz in there!

21. Milky Ways, you'll be surprised to learn, are not named after the galaxy. They're actually named after a milkshake that was a big deal back in the 20's, when the candy bar first came out. There was a date on the package, 4-13-2007, that I thought maybe was just like a celebration of something that I don't remember fmor history, but... I think actually it was the day on which these went bad. You;re going back up on the wall, Rapunzel. Oh... you're not a candy, you're a punishment.

22. You know Mary Janes, those hard, gross candies that no one

actually likes? They're named after the creator's aunt - they must have had a difficult relationship.

23. The Reese in Reese's peanut butter cups if Harry Burnett Reese, a former Hershey employee who created his famous candy in the 1920's.

24. Toblerone is a mash-up of the inventor's name - Theodor Tobler - and torrone, the Italian word for "honey and almond nougat".

25. Milk Duds isn't just a clever name, they're actually duds; rather than get frustrated when they discovered that their machine couldn't produce perfectly-round milk chocolate covered lumps of caramel, its producers decided to capitalize on the imperfection, and named them duds.

26. Leo Herschfield named his candy creation after his daughter Clara, but don't spend too long worrying why you haven't had a Clara bar recently; his daughter's nickname was "Tootsie". Sorry, Clara.

27. The Charleston Chew is named after - you guessed it! - the Charleston dance, which Meredith will now demonstrate. (Turn to Meredith, who shakes her head.)

28. Alright, this one is important - Fruit Stripes' zebra mascot is named "yipes".

29. Remember the Junior Mint episode of Seinfeld, when Kramer drops a chocolate-dipped mint into the open body cavity of a patient? You're going to feel totally cheated when I tell you this; the candy that fell from the viewing gallery was not an actual Junior Mint. Since a single Junior Mint was too small to show up well on a camera, a peppermint patty was used instead.

30. The far-right American political organization, the John Birch Society, was actually founded by Robert Welch, Jr., one of the brothers who ran the company that invented Junior Mints.

31. Necco wafers, those little disks, beloved by people who ate chalk and paste as children, were so popular in the 1930's that Admiral Byrd bought two and a half tons of them to the South Pole for his men to enjoy during their two-year stay there. Union soldiers also enjoyed Necco wafers during the Civil War, but you know, they were making coffee out of dirt, so...

32. During the Great Depression, Goo Goo Clusters were marketed as "a nourishing lunch for a nickel". You know, peanuts, chocolate, marshmallows... it's basically just a food pyramid.

33. It's a well-known fact that Ronald Reagan developed a bit of a jelly-bean addiction when he gave up smoking. In fact, Jelly Belly created a blueberry flavor, just for Reagan's inauguration, so he could have red, white, and blue jelly beans. Reagan's favorite flavor wasn't any of the patriotic colors, however, he liked licorice.

34. President Nixon had a sweet tooth of his own, by the way. It wasn't uncommon to find him eating a Milky Way for breakfast. You know, that's why he had such a nice body.

35. Andes Mints do not trace their cool, pepperminty roots to the mountains of South America; they were originally made by Andrew Kanelos, who called them Andy's Candies. He reportedly changed the spelling when he discovered that men didn't like to give their wives and girlfriends boxes of candy with another man's name on it.

36. In 1953, it took 27 painstaking hours to make a single, sugar-coated Peep; now, 60 years later, they've got it down to 6 minutes per Peep. By the way, I can eat 12 of those in 4 minutes. Most people are Peeps purists, by the way; the best selling color is still yellow. Oh, that is made of plastic, in and by itself. Mark, I'm disappointed in you.

37. While watching a couple of teammates amuse each other trying to spit tobacco juice onto each other's cleats, minor league pitchers Bob Nelson and Jim Bouton decided that a less disgusting chew option was in order. A subsidiary of Wrigley's started producing their invention, Big League Chew, in 1980.

38. And lastly, we come to the Baby Ruth candy bar, which was neither invented by, nor inspired by, any baseball player, and certainly not the baseball player you're thinking about. Or... at least that's what the Curtis candy company would have you believe. Inspired by the success of Curtis' Baby Ruth candy bar, the Babe himself decided to start his own candy company, the George H. Ruth candy company, intended to make something called the Babe Ruth Home Run bar. Worried that the actual Babe Ruth candy would eclipse their own, the people at Curtis sued Ruth to prevent him from using his own name on a candy bar. Their candy wasn't named after Babe Ruth, they said, it was named after President Grover Cleveland's daughter, Ruth, who was a baby! No, she wasn't, she had died 17 years before the Baby Ruth was invented. In case you're wondering if corporations had always had sort of a leg up in American history, Curtis won that lawsuit and successfully prevented Babe Ruth from selling his Babe Ruth Home Run bar. The Babe was, of course, disappointed, and responded by saying, "Well, I ain't eating your damn candy no more."

Thanks for watching mental_floss here on YouTube, which is made with the help of these nice people; every week, we endeavor to answer to answer one of your mind-blowing questions. This week's comes from Nicole Barbeese, who asks, "How long would it take to watch all the videos on YouTube?"

Well, Nicole, that is a terrible idea. For one thing, you're going to have to watch a lot of bad videos, and then also, there's going to a ton of therapy necessary afterwards. Our friends at YouTube tell us that every day, there's more than 864,000 minutes of content uploaded, which means that if that keeps pace, it will take you significantly longer than forever to watch all of those videos.

So I guess that now would be a good time to thank you for choosing to watch us. If you have a mind-blowing question of your own, please leave it in the comments; thanks again for watching, and as we say in my hometown, Don't Forget To Be Awesome.