

GREAT BRITISH SWEETS



And How to Make Them at Home

ADELE NOZEDAR



**GREAT
BRITISH
SWEETS**

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Thank You

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About the Book

Great British Sweets is a gloriously indulgent celebration of our Great British love affair with sweet-making and good old-fashioned confectionery.

From **pear drops** to **humbugs**, **honeycomb** confections to **liquorice**, **coconut ice** to **sugar mice**, Nozedar gives us the rich history of these classic sweets along with over 50 easy-to-follow recipes for how to make them at home.

About the Author

Adele Nozedar is an author and photographer. Previously, she was in a cult Indie band, then ran her own indie record label and became A&R Director/General Manager of a major record company.

Her wide-ranging passions are reflected in her books, which include *The Hedgerow Handbook* (2012), *The Signs and Symbols Sourcebook* (2011), *The Secret Language of Birds* (2006), and *The Element Encyclopedia of Native Americans* (2013).

List of Recipes

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Also by Adele Nozedar

The Hedgerow Handbook

A History of Old-fashioned Confections
**GREAT
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and How to Make Them at Home

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 **SQUARE PEG**

This book is for all of you who are ingenious, enterprising, and eccentric,
whether you like sweets or not.

Included in this number are the inestimable Liam, Saoirse and Colm,
who all like sweets very much indeed.

Also embracing these qualities are Eve, Milo, Miranda, Mia, Saskia and
Willa. Ditto.

And my good friend and travelling companion, Lisa, who doesn't eat
sweets at all.

P.S. Tony Hamnet – sorry we missed your party!

INTRODUCTION

This Sugared Isle ...

From the North to the South and the East to the West, we British are never very far from small, sugary objects, generally sparkling with colour, often a miniature work of art, which are deeply loved yet often overlooked. Yes, I'm talking about our Great British Sweets!

Britain 'does' sweets like no other nation on earth. But why? Historically we have had easy access to sugar. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Britain became one of the largest importers of sugar from the West Indies and the Americas and our consumption of the sweet stuff increased to match its availability. But it's not just about the sugar.

I'd argue that the very nature of what it is to be British has a large part – possibly the most important part – to play in our great talent for inventing sweets. All the imagination, ingenuity, eccentricity and – most of all – the sense of humour that are part and parcel of our psyche are essential factors in explaining why Britain leads the way in sweet-making. After all, many of our traditional sweets are made of very few ingredients – in some cases, little more than sugar and flavouring – and yet they are so much more than the sum of their parts; ingenious little pocket-money treats that we think of with such great affection. And think of the names of those sweets: gobstoppers, humbugs, claggum, Yellow Man, nutty nubs, Curly Wurly, jelly babies and flumps ... Who else but us Brits could have invented such quirky and unfathomable names for a foodstuff?

The British love affair with sweets runs deep. In a fashion that can only be considered akin to Marcel Proust and his madeleine moment, sucking

or biting into a childhood favourite can give rise to a fevered rush of nostalgia, throwing some of us back to endless summers, chopper bikes, space hoppers, grazed knees, first sticky kisses and the joy of spending our own pocket money. Sweets are an important part of our culture, our history, and our pride in where we come from and I wanted to find out more about them and why they are so revered.

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I took a map and stuck a small marker on every city, town or village that has a sweet either associated with it or named after it. Before long, much of the map was hidden under a thick sprinkling of bright pink tags. And I decided, with my friend Lisa, to hunt down the inventors and makers of these amazing sweets in order to compile a compendium of some of our greatest British sweets. The subject of confectionery in general is vast, and so it was good to define some parameters in order to be able to narrow the list and assess what would make the cut for this book.

First, the sweet had to be invented in Britain. Secondly, I looked for the sweets that had odd and unexpected stories attached (a good example of this is the humble aniseed ball – who would have considered that it would be tested as a detonation device for a limpet mine?) Thirdly, the sweets had to have withstood the test of time. I realised that the sweets invented more recently by focus groups or marketing experts just didn't hit the mark in quite the same way. The striking result of all this is that there are quite a lot of toffees in the book; all are slightly different, though, according to regional variations such as the availability of certain ingredients – the rich milk in Devon and Cornwall, or oats in Scotland.

Along the way I made some fascinating discoveries. I was surprised to notice that the sweet industry in the UK is incredibly healthy. At a time when we are constantly being told the manufacturing industry is dead, I discovered that the opposite is true, at least as far as confectionery is concerned. And not only that, but the majority of sweet-makers I encountered are actually expanding. Sweet shops, too, are on the rise.

The other exciting thing I learned was that lots of our sweet companies have been going for years and years – hundreds of years in some cases. One sweet maker, Grays of Dudley, is still going strong after five generations, with one member of the founding family describing working for the company as ‘like being on board a ship, everyone working together and pitching in to do whatever needs to be done.’ Sweet makers are also passionate people. I found an Indian confectioner in Scotland, Sunny Pahuja, who saved 150 jobs by investing his life savings in a sweet company that he was passionate about, and I found a young couple in Bridgend, Steve and Freya, who took on the mighty Kraft empire to rescue their famous family name – and won. I discovered that the Quaker families who founded some of our most illustrious confectionery companies were ahead of their time in treating their staff fairly and in paying women the same wages as men. I found another long-established family company who are currently re-jigging their operation to encompass the sixth generation of owners, two little boys aged just seven and ten at the time of writing, who are keen to get going in the business. What a legacy those boys will have!

Finally, it would appear that Great Britain is full of unsung sweetie heroes: people who have made a significant contribution to the sticky pantheon of British confectionery in some way, either inventing and making sweets, inventing equipment to make them, or selling sweets – or all three. Where possible, I have named these people, because they deserve recognition. You can read more about the road trips, and the people I met, on my website www.adelenozedar.com.

...

For the most part I’ve included a recipe for each sweet so that you can make it at home yourself, or else I have devised recipes that use the sweets themselves as an ingredient. Making your own sweets is easy and fun and makes them the proper treat they were always intended to be. It’s time to shine the spotlight on one of our most unique, marvellous and magical inventions; the Great British Sweet!

Disclaimer

I apologise if I have left out your favourite sweet. I know there are bound to be some I will be kicking myself about.

THE SWEET STORE CUPBOARD:



What's in Your Sweets and Why

Whilst I've deliberately made sure that the recipes in this book don't require any rare or difficult ingredients, the following is an explanation of the main ingredients you will need and what they actually do.

SWEET-MAKING SUNDRIES

Baking powder

A combination of bicarbonate of soda plus cream of tartar, baking powder acts as a raising agent in sweets and cakes as well as reacting with boiling sugars, as explained below.

Bicarbonate of soda

Sometimes called baking soda, this is a raising agent used in baking. Now for some school chemistry. Its scientific name is 'sodium bicarbonate' and it is a 'base', which means it's the opposite of an acid substance. The scale of acidity is called the pH scale where a pH of 7 designates neutral. Anything lower is acidic and anything higher is alkaline.

When a recipe involving boiling sugar calls for a dash of bicarbonate of soda, you might notice that it's usually added towards the end of the recipe. The sugars that you are boiling are acid and the heating of sugars contributes to the acidity. Because it is alkaline, the addition of bicarbonate of soda will raise the pH balance of the sugar mixture. When the bicarbonate of soda is added at the end of the boiling process, the sugar dramatically froths up the sides of the pan very quickly as the alkaline reacts with the acid.

Citric acid

At one-time a staple of small groceries and also previously widely available in pharmacies, citric acid is now a bit harder to find on the high street. If you're lucky enough to be travelling in India, stock up on some lovely packets of Blue Bird citric acid, since it's readily available there.