

Chew on This
by Elizabeth Garcia



Why are there so many different kinds of bubble gum?

People have liked **recreational** chewing for centuries. Ancient Europeans, Mayans, and Aztecs chewed tree sap. Today's chewing gum originated in the 1840s. John Curtis, an American, boiled tree resin. He flattened it. He cut it into strips. He coated the strips in cornstarch. That way, they wouldn't stick together. This made the gum easy to package for sale. Unfortunately, the resin tasted bad. It was yucky to chew. He switched to wax. That was better, but not great.

Inventors and companies kept **innovating** new types of gum. They made new ways to package it. In 1871, Thomas Adams got a **patent**. His machine mass produced gum. He modeled his product after a Mexican gum called "chicle." He started the Chiclets brand. It was named after chicle. He sold his gum in New York City subway vending machines.



This is an advertisement from 1905 for Chiclets gum. How did they describe the gum? How much did it cost? What company made the gum and where was it located?

Gum became familiar and appealing. People's **demand** increased. Buyers wanted the product.

Stores wanted to offer it. This encouraged more companies to **supply** new types of gum. They recognized the increasing **market**. Companies raced to create enough **supply** for buyers' growing demand. The **industry** grew.

In the late 1800s, William Wrigley, Jr. invented Juicy Fruit. He also created Wrigley's Spearmint gum. These brands are still popular. Wrigley's **advertising** helped his products stand out. He had unique ways of **marketing** his gum. He sent free **samples** to children celebrating birthdays. He offered samples with common products like soap. Lots of people regularly purchased these products. Many potential new customers tried his gum. His clever marketing succeeded.

Other companies needed to compete with Wrigley. They created more interesting products. They hoped these would grab a buyer's attention.

Walter Diemer was an accountant. He worked for the Fleer Chewing Gum Company. In 1927, he accidentally invented bubble gum. Diemer liked to think up new recipes. One day, he made a gum that was very flexible. He could blow bubbles with it. His company called the product Dubble Bubble.

Diemer also used marketing tricks. He taught salespeople to blow bubbles. Back then, bubble gum was new. People were stunned to see bubble blowing. They needed to learn how! At first, Dubble Bubble was fascinating. It was so unique. It became popular.



Walter Diemer's Dubble Bubble was pink because that was the only food coloring he had available. Since then, most bubble gum has continued to be pink.

Pieces originally sold for a penny. One store sold five pounds in an afternoon. Unfortunately, Diemer never received **royalties**. His company kept all of the money. But he was glad that he'd brought people joy.

Competition continued driving marketing innovation. After World War II, the Topps Company started making bubble gum. They wrapped it in comics. This gum is called Bazooka. It is still sold, today.

Now, there are many types of gum. Sugar free gum won't stick to braces. Some gum freshens breath. Some whitens teeth. Some will turn your

Did You Know?



The Guinness Book of World Records says that **the biggest bubble gum bubble ever was 20 inches in diameter** and blown by an American named Chad Fell in 2004. He won the record while chewing three pieces of Dubble Bubble!

tongue wild colors. Gum comes in many flavors and shapes, too. Companies keep innovating to make their brands stand out.

Without competition, we wouldn't have so many types of gum. Next time you're at a store, pay attention. Notice how some gums are unique. What kind of gum would you invent?



This is one of the original Bazooka bubble gum comic strips from 1954. It features a comic, a special offer, and a fortune.