

1817

Johann Meyer opens the first candy company in Cincinnati; in 1822, he creates a dessert table for General Lafayette's visit to Cincinnati, using a pyramid of marzipan candy figures illustrating the American Revolution

1871

The Doscher Candy Co. is established by Claus Doscher, who introduces the French Chew in 1896, capitalizing on a Turkish Taffy craze in the U.S.

1884

Six Cincinnati candy barons help found the National Confectioners Association in Chicago

1888

H.D. Smith Co. invents the bubblegum baseball card for the Detroit vs. St. Louis World Series

1894

John H. Putman forms the Putman Candy Co., inventor of Cincinnati's favorite opera cream candy



1898

Goelitz Brothers Confectionary relocates to Cincinnati; it later becomes known for making candy corn

1909

George H. Nuss (formerly of Goelitz Brothers) forms his own company, taking over the buttercream and candy corn market after Goelitz closes its Cincinnati operation

1916

Candy Day, the precursor to Sweetest Day, is established by the National Confectioners Association

1927

Nine wholesale candy manufacturers are operating in Cincinnati

1946

Haggis Candy Co. (at the College Hill Hollywood Theatre) starts the tradition of eating a chocolate mint after a meal of Cincinnati chili

1964

Kroger builds a large candy manufacturing plant in Springdale, OH

1979

Nutrisciences and Cincinnati Reds legend Pete Rose launch the Pete Rose Supercharg'r Energy Bar (a carob-coated crispy peanut butter bar)

1993

Pete Rose and Malley's Chocolates (Cleveland) release the Pete Rose Bar, a chocolate-coated crispy rice candy bar (proceeds went to the University of Cincinnati's Pete Rose Scholarship Fund)



Confections & Chocolate

The sweet history of French Chews, candy corn, and opera creams

From the 1820s to the 1930s, Cincinnati's candy industry helped to satisfy our nation's sweet tooth. Early on, this business was dominated by German and later by Greek immigrants (mainly from Sparta) who arrived after the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). In the 1850s, we had more candy factories than breweries.

Cincinnati confectionary companies introduced a range of tasty treats to the world, many of which are still popular today. Opera cream chocolates, a local holiday favorite, are sweet fondant-filled candies introduced in the 1890s by Robert Hiner Putman. The Mueller Licorice Co., one of only four American producers of black licorice, introduced trading cards and the licorice train, watch, cigar, and cigarette candy shapes. The Doscher Candy Co. created the French Chew (1896), their version of the Turkish Taffy that was popular in France at the time. Candy corn (originally called chicken feed) was invented in Philadelphia, but the Goelitz Co. (the precursor to the Jelly Belly Corp.) produced it here in 1898, before Halloween trick-or-treating was invented in the 1930s. During the Great Depression, Marpo Products created the Marshmallow Cone (literally an ice cream cone filled with marshmallow).

Other sweet firsts came in 1882 when the Cincinnati Red Stockings baseball team offered concessions to breweries and food companies to sell products inside the stadium. The Doscher Brothers Candy Co. became one of the first vendors, selling their French Chews and caramel popcorn fritters decades before the Cracker Jack brand name became synonymous with baseball.

In 1884, the Cincinnati Confectioners Association held a regional meeting to discuss pricing and how to avoid unfair competition. The National Confectioners Association was born, and the group held a conference in Chicago later that year. Cincinnati sent one of the largest contingents to the convention, with members of Reinhart & Newton, Buhr & Pfaff, H.D. Smith, A.J. Doscher, Doscher Brothers, and the Peter Eckert Company. Then, in 1898, the idea of a national candy trust was suggested, and in 1902, the National Candy Company was incorporated as a conglomerate of 14 large candy companies from Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, Minneapolis, Buffalo, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Louisville. This began the decline of our large, regional, independent candy companies.

On October 14, 1916, the Cincinnati Confectioners Association created, organized, and celebrated the first Candy Day. Led by Charles Eisen, president of Dolly Varden Chocolates, the goal was to give orphans and the elderly in care homes and hospitals candy (to encourage sales). It was the largest candy celebration of its kind and became the precursor to Sweetest Day, which is still celebrated in October.

While Cincinnati is known for its pork, beer, and baking history, our contributions and confectionary industry firsts are also notable, from the candy baron's monopoly to the Reds concessions and the creation of Sweetest Day.