



# Origin of the Jelly Bean or, Why Are They Called Beans?

The exact origins of the jelly bean are lost in time, and only a part of its history is known. Most experts believe the soft center is a descendent of a Mid Eastern confection known as Turkish Delight that dates back to pre-Biblical times.

The shell coating is an offspring of a process called panning, first invented in 17th century France to make Jordan Almonds for the Royal Court. The French confectioners began by rocking almonds in a pan filled with sugar and syrup until the almonds were coated with a candy shell. Today, large rotating drums do the heavy work, but it's still called "panning." While machines may do most of the labor, master confectioners apply their true art in the panning process when they add the ingredients to create just-the-right shell.

Somehow the two processes made their way to America. The earliest known appearance of a jelly bean is a 1861 advertisement for William Schrafft of Boston that promoted the sending of jelly beans to soldiers in the Union Army during the Civil War.

Why are they called jelly beans? Candymakers have always made candy into novelty shapes. Shaping candy into things people knew was, and still is, common. In 19th century England, candy mice were a favorite of children during the holidays.

Jelly Belly Candy Company archives 100-year-old product lists showing some of the candies offered by the first generation of Goelitz family candymakers. Candies were commonly made into the shapes of vegetables, such as chestnuts, carrots and turnips, as well as seasonal shapes, such as bunnies for Easter.

The diet of most Americans in the 1800s was dominated by beans and vegetables from their own fields. Some clever candymaker figured out how to make a bean-shaped soft jelly. Perhaps it was the same candymaker who figured out how to put a shell on it so it wouldn't stick. Hence the name "jelly beans." Jelly Belly beans today retain that distinctive shape of a bean.

Jelly beans quickly earned a place among the many glass jars of "penny candy" in general stores where they were sold by weight and taken home in paper bags. It wasn't until 1930s, however, that jelly beans became a part of Easter traditions, probably due to their egg like appearance in nests.

In 1965 the Herman Goelitz Candy Company began reenergizing this traditional candy by pumping up the flavors and their product was a favorite of the Governor of California, Ronald Reagan. Today the humble jelly bean is considered as American as apple pie!

**Jelly Belly Candy Company**  
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