Hard Butters and Confectionery Coatings

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ABSTRACT
The art on confectionery coatings and hard butters is reviewed showing the evolution and acceptability of such products over the years. The various types of hard butters are identified, and their application in confectionery coatings is indicated. The practices and the areas of application for the different products are discussed as well as the raw materials used to produce the confectionery fats. Raw material cost of chocolate and hard butters is projected over the years to demonstrate the advantages of hard butters for confectionery coatings.

HARD BUTTERS AND CONFECTIONERY COATINGS
In a climate of soaring cocoa bean and cocoa butter prices, in an era of shortages and profit squeezes, it is appropriate to hold a symposium on hard butters and confectionery coatings. Several years ago on another occasion we projected some figures to illustrate the economic advantages of hard butters over cocoa butter and chocolate in the manufacture of confectionery products. We updated and extended those projections to 1977, and they are reflected in Fig. 1. In the last few years, cocoa bean, cocoa butter and cocoa powder prices have become even higher than ever before. If we were to make a prediction for the future as to prices and availability for cocoa and chocolate products, we would have to say the outlook is not very bright. Supply and demand for these commodities has been very erratic and unpredictable over the years, and it reflects in the fluctuation in the prices for the raw materials. Note the nature of the curves in Fig. 1, reflecting the prices since 1950.

Note the steep slope of the curves since 1973 and especially since 1975. Confectionery coatings developed as an offshoot of the chocolate coatings demands of industry and the high prices of cocoa beans and cocoa butter. We experienced a dramatic situation back in 1953-54 when cocoa butter prices went up over $1.50 per pound. Demands for confectionery coatings reached all time high during those years. Since then, confectionery coatings have held their own and have shown appreciable growth and diversification. The demands become particularly noticeable when cocoa butter prices and availability are a factor. Price gyrations have been experienced more often and more recently as in 1974-75 and again in 1976-77 with cocoa butter prices hitting almost $3.00 per pound. Cocoa beans have reached a price of almost $2.00 per pound, and cocoa powder (12% fat) is presently selling at well over $2.15 per pound.

Confectionery coatings made in the 1930s were cheap replacements for chocolate and were known in the trade as grease coatings. In all honesty they were just that and nothing more than a cursory effort to replace cocoa butter by another fat. As the need persisted, however, the concept of "tailormade" fats became more acceptable and people such as Barsky, (1) Cochrane (2), Gooding (3), Zinzalian (4), and others, patented processes for the manufacture of hard butters with specific physical and chemical properties. Industry stressed the versatility and uniformity of the hard butters as well as their flexibility for all-year use. Since chocolate does not handle too well in summer heat, this advantage of the hard butters became a definite plus factor.

The confectionery industry, for its part, discovered that the confectionery coatings did have a number of advantages as well as economic savings. What chocolate offered was flavor and aroma. If one could capture the flavor and aroma of chocolate in combination with a hard butter, then the confectionery coatings could become an item of true benefit to their industry. Over the years this is what essentially has happened since many firms which have learned to use hard butters have stayed with confectionery coatings even in such periods when the price of chocolate has come down. The confectionery industry has come to accept confectionery coatings with greater ease and easier handling of opportunities.

As the acceptance and use of confectionery coatings grew in volume, it became obvious that the formidable obstacle to their across-the-board use in the candy industry was the Standards of Identity (5) established for chocolate and chocolate products. One could use hard butters and confectionery coatings under the optional ingredient clause, but one could not call such products chocolate. The term "imitation" had a stigma, and the confectionery coatings had to battle the same inferior connotation experienced with such products as margarine and nondairy products. The chocolate standards were not about to be changed from their rigid and narrow definition of the term "chocolate," since the chocolate industry desired to keep the ex-
The versatility of confectionery coatings begins with the versatility that we put into the manufacture of hard butters, the basic fats going into the making of confectionery coatings. Since these fats are tailored fats specifically made to meet certain physical-chemical properties desirable for confectionery use, we have the means and the opportunity to select the proper fat, combine and blend with other specific fats and come up with a composition which has the physical-chemical properties we seek. These things are done by refining, bleaching, deodorizing, fractionating, rearranging, and hydrogenating vegetable oils and by the proper blending of such components to reach the desired melting point, setting point and solid fat indices. When such series of confectionery fats are available ranging from the melting point of cocoa butter up to the melting points of vegetable stearines, we virtually have an entire scale from which we can select and utilize a fat for a specific confectionery need. In areas such as center work, in areas where quick getaway and smooth palatability are desirable, we lean towards selecting hard butters which have higher melting points and can withstand the higher elevated temperatures to which they are going to be subjected. Minor variations within a given product are also feasible as a summer-winter formula variation to insure the slight edge for summer use so that the confectionery coating does not smear or turn soupy as chocolate does.

Basically, there are five categories of hard butters available for use in the confectionery industry: a. hydrogenated fats; b. rearranged fats; c. blends and mixtures of the above; d. pressed fats (nonsolvent fractionation); e. solvent-fractionated fats. Synthesis has always been around, and a number of approaches have been advanced through the years, but the economics have always been against them. Now, in the last twenty years, a variety of types of hard

The term “confectionery coatings” emerged as a terminology and as a more acceptable compromise than “imitation.” The term “candy” could be broadened to include a variety of products and appeared to satisfy most of the people involved. Many of the major chocolate firms which first shunned the confectionery coatings eventually did begin to use them in their line of products. Today it is the exception to the rule when a chocolate or candy manufacturer does not have at least several items in its line which are based on hard butters used in confectionery coatings. As it happened in many other areas, such as with margarine and the nondairy products, so in the confectionery coatings area the industry learned to adapt itself, compromise and live with the situation and, above all else, supply a quality product while making money from the opportunity. As it stands today, the public is better served, and the industry is richer and better equipped to supply good, wholesome, tasty confec-

Minor variations within a given product are also feasible as a summer-winter formula variation to insure the slight edge for summer use so that the confectionery coating does not smear or turn soupy as chocolate does. But unlike chocolate, hard butters have emerged which have become the basis of the confectionery coating. There are the standard hydrogenated vegetable fats which go into such things as biscuits and crackers. There are the hydrogenated vegetable fats rearranged with other vegetable oils to give a broader range of compositions which go into, again, biscuits and crackers and other candy coatings. There are the pressed and specific fats from the melting point of cocoa butter up to the melting points of cocoa butter extenders. The fat base and specific structure of the triglyceride are of critical importance. Now, in the last twenty years, a variety of types of hard greasy and slower getaway in the mouth unless their structural configuration is specific and similar to that of cocoa butter. The structural specificity of cocoa butter is unique, and many efforts have been made over the years to duplicate the structure at commercially feasible costs. Fractionation and fractional crystallization, in one solvent system or another, have been utilized in recent years to bring about problems. Where the fat used is a nonlauric fat, the pressed hard butters must be used with cocoa powders and limited amounts of cocoa butter since the danger of eutectic mixtures may cause consistency problems. Where the fat used is a nonlauric fat, the pressed hard butters must have physical-chemical characteristics not only compatible with cocoa butter, but also which meet the mouth feel and palatability standards we accept for chocolate. In such nonlauric chocolate extenders, waxiness is the primary objection. Limited compatibility with chocolate is probably the next most serious objection. They are, however, very useful products in extending the use of chocolate.

The hydrogenated and rearranged products, the disproportionate products and the blends of such component fats are equally feasible both in the lauric and in the nonlauric group. The lauric group tends to carry a non-

The raw materials which go into the formulation of making confectionery coatings play a very important role in the quality of the finished product. The confectionery industry has to make certain that the raw materials it purchases are free from impurities, contaminant, molds, spores and microbial contaminations. Many of the problems of the industry in the past have been traced to such raw materials. Enzymatic hydrolysis and soupy taste resulting in some lauric fats were common years ago when very little control was maintained over the raw materials coming to the candy factory. Good manufacturing practices and sanitation measures on the premises have also minimized and/or eliminated such problems in recent years. Today it is rare to hear of such situations. Here again, we have learned to cope with a problem and we take advantage of the care, non-

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