Gummi bears were first imported to the United States from Europe, primarily from Germany. Several U.S. companies began to manufacture their own gummies in the mid-1980s. Others joined in, and the popularity of the gummi continued to grow.

Why did gummies become so popular? The starch jelly had for many years been a very common and popular candy in the United States (where corn is grown as a relatively cheap commodity, making starch a low-cost gelling agent). It has a very well-known texture. But gelatin has a very different and distinct texture. Gelatin is very elastic and flexible, hence the term gummi.

The original Gummibär in German means rubber bear. The texture can vary from soft to very firm, depending on the amount and the gel strength of the gelatin used. Gelatin is also very flexible — not only chewy but also easily modified in texture by blending with other stabilizers. It is compatible with many other gelling agents.

**Gelatin has a distinct texture, very elastic and flexible, that is used for gummi bears. Pectin jellies are premium gelled candies, with a high-quality appearance and excellent flavor release.**

Kristi Sufferling
Nitta Gelatin Inc.

**WHAT IS GELATIN?**

Gelatin is a gelling agent used to bind water and dissolved solids into confections such as gummi bears. Gelatin provides the network to form this structure. It provides a texture with a rubbery and elastic mouthfeel.

Gelatin is a protein extracted from collagen. Collagen can come from any animal source. The most common sources are pork and beef skin or bones, although other sources such as fish are used.

Collagen is broken down by either an acidic or alkaline process, which essentially unravels the collagen into soluble protein chains. In the manufacturing process (Figure 1) the raw materials are soaked in a pH-and temperature-appropriate solution. The liquid is drained from the raw material, concentrated, sterilized and dried. Each batch is considered an extraction. This is repeated several times on the same tank of raw material, with several variations. The dried gelatin noodles are then ground to desired mesh size and blended to specification (Figure 2).