

Cut Rock and Letter Rock

Many papers begin with defining the subject matter from some well respected source, such as Webster's Dictionary (Unabridged, the long version, or Abridged, the modern shorter version) or the Encyclopedia Britannica. Since we are discussing hard candy and Britain was an early start for the confectionery business as we know it today, allow me to say that confections are listed in the Encyclopedia Britannica between "concrete" and the "Confederacy." Think about that. A thinking person might conclude before going any further, that confections, of which hard candies are a part and cut rock is a sub-species, can be a very hard substance by design—like concrete—and, like the Confederacy, good hard candy will never die!

The history of candy goes back to long before ancient Egyptian recipes found written on papyrus, dated to 2000 BC, recipes with nuts and fruits coated, and later cooked, with honey. In those days, sweets were afforded only by, and for, the royalty...typically made by hard-

working slaves. One could draw a conclusion as to a historical link for the terminology regarding wages and working conditions! Certainly not at *my* place of employment!

CUT ROCK

Cut rock is a hard candy product made with a picture in the middle such that the cross section shows a representation of a flower or some other image or design. It is limited only by imagination and further limited by the skill of the candymaker to assemble all the component parts—most any picture can be captured in an edible form. The product may be imitated in other types of candy such as salt water taffy or caramel-like candies (Figure 1). Letter rock, also referred to as sea-side rock, is a similar product taken further down the road of difficulty in that the image, on the face of the piece, also contains a name spelled out in letters. For the purpose of this presentation, both products will be discussed, though I prefer to think that "pictures are worth a thousand words." Our candy makers may conclude the "words" can be more difficult!

Cut rock is made up of several different color and/or texture combinations, all of which have an effect on the finished piece and the picture inside. As with all things, what is inside is what counts. What this presentation will discuss is the "how" of what it is that counts, the inside, the picture.

The basic hard candy recipe of 50 percent sugar and 50 percent corn

syrup cooked to about 300°F (295°F for some others), is the basic building block from which we are working. The cooked batch is separated into parts to be colored or flavored, or both. Or, if you are making several batches of the same piece, as we do, you would color, flavor and stage those components until needed. Of course, you are storing the candy under a heat source of some kind and you are very aware of how long it can be kept and still be usable when ready to use.

Now, let's go back, for an instant, to the very basic education we were exposed to before we went to school. During toddlerhood, we were encouraged to play with toys of different shapes, blocks made of wood, shaped as cylinders, oblongs, triangles, etc. Clay was another material we were fascinated with as kids. Hot, malleable hard candy can be both of those things for a short period of time in order to produce cut rock, or any other piece for that matter. For the sake of simplicity, allow me to describe the three-dimensional pieces named with the two-dimensional nomenclature—that way neither you nor I will be too confused by what shape I'm talking about! Try to envision those shapes, colored as the blocks from our childhood.

One method to explain the way the cut rock picture is laid out is to try to mentally picture a simple design such as a bull's-eye rotated 90 degrees (sideways) and break it down into the shapes (cylinders, rectangles, etc.). Let's start with a cylinder. Now add a rectangular mass to wrap around it, and a jacket to hold it all together, and what do we get? A bull's-eye! How about the American flag, waving in a breeze, with all 50 stars? Not today!

How about a jellyroll?

This time we'll use two elongated rectangular masses of candy. It usually is more effective if we use at least two different colors! Now, just roll

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