**Tootsie Rolls were WWII energy bars**

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On February 23, 1896, a candy maker from Austria named Leo Hirschfield opened his shop in New York City. Maybe you've never heard of him, but you’ve definitely heard of his work.

As the story goes, in that shop Hirschfield came up with one of the twentieth century’s iconic candies: the humble Tootsie Roll. Not long after, seeing how popular his creation was, he merged with Stern & Saalberg Co. to produce the candies on a bigger scale.

The wax-paper-wrapped sweet, produced in NYC beginning in 1905, was the first candy to solve two confectionery issues: although it had a chocolaty taste, the penny candy didn’t melt, and it was individually wrapped.

Before A/C and refrigerators, candy-sellers spent the hot summers trying to sell candies like taffy and marshmallows, which could stand some heat without melting. Chocolate, on the other hand, was nothing but a sticky mess in the summer weather. “The genius of Tootsie Roll was to create a summer candy that was a flavor never before seen in summer candies, the flavor of chocolate,” writes “Candy Professor” Samira Kawash, who also authored a book about the history of candy.

The patent associated with the Tootsie Roll-making process describes how Hirschfield achieved that hard-but-not-too-hard texture that still characterizes the Tootsie Roll today. Most pulled candies (which the Tootsie Roll is) are “light and porous” after being made, the patent reads. But the Tootsie Roll was baked at a low temperature for about two hours. Afterwards it would be shaped and packaged. The idea was to give the treat “a peculiar mellow consistency” the patent reads that would help it maintain its shape and not melt.

The Tootsie Roll, whose recipe is basically the same today, wasn’t that chocolaty. But if you had a craving, it was better than anything else on the market. And it was cheap, an important factor in encouraging candy growth. When the Tootsie Pop came along in the early 1930s, writes Retroland, it quickly became a Depression-era favorite.

Then WWII happened. Food historians remember that conflict as a watershed moment in the history of processed food, and the Tootsie Roll (like other nominally chocolate-flavored rations) was right there on the front lines. This gave the candy company an early form of a government contract, writes the Dodge Legal Group, and kept them manufacturing while the war effort shut down many other confectionaries. It also helped cement American affection for the candy.

After the war, the Tootsie Pop had its moment on early television with the iconic advertisement featuring Mr. Owl and friends.

The official Tootsie Roll website says this is 1970 ad was the first to ask the “How Many Licks” question, but by far not the last.

The candy is still around today, even though many other candies invented around the same time have fallen out of style. One such was Bromangelon Jelly Powder. “Jelly desserts were all the rage at the turn of the century,” writes Kawash in a separate piece. “Jell-O is the only one we remember, but around 1900 you could have your pick of such temptations as Jellycon, Tryphora and Bro-Man-Gel-On.”

Based on her investigations, Kawash believes that Hirschfield may have been working for the Stern & Saalberg company well before the invention of his signature candy, and that he also invented Bro-Man-Gel-On/Bromangelon.

A four-syllable name for “Jello”? No wonder it didn’t stick.