

Oh, to be a child, standing in the sweets aisle, a world of choice before you. With so many brands and products to choose from, the South African Sweets and Chocolates category offers a cornucopia of treats for local consumers. In fact, the category can sometimes feel over-full, to the point of saturation. And yet new products continue to launch, new players enter the market, and old-favourites (for the most part – we miss you, Chocolate Log) hold firm against a tide of newcomers.

Sweets & Chocolates: South Africa's favourites have stood the test of time

Hard candies and other sweets and sugar confectionery remains integral to this category. Sweet treats such as Wilsons Toffees, Fizz Pops, Chappies, Fizzers, mmmMallows, Sugus, Nut Puffs, Sourballs, Mint Imperials, Jawbreakers, Marshmallow Fish, Liquorice Allsorts, Milk Bottles, Chomp, Sparkles... South Africans love their old favourites, but are also willing to try new brands, flavours and variants. Beacon, producer of some of South Africa's most loved sweets and candies, has been in business for over 100 years.



And who doesn't remember Chappies, one of the most iconic sweets in South Africa. Part of the Cadbury/Mondelez International stable of brands, the bubble gum best known for its "Did You Know?" wrappers (and excellent bubble-blowing) turns 75 this year. Chappies initially came in five flavours: lemon, orange, strawberry, cherry, and pineapple and like many other much-loved South African brands has become part of this country's culture.

Sweet dreams are made of these

Sugar confectionery sees slower growth

According to Marketresearch.com, the sugar confectionery market in South Africa is forecast to reach \$507.97m (in retail prices) by 2025, increasing at a CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of 3.25% per annum for the period 2020-2024.

Highly sensitive to changing consumer preferences, this category has been impacted by rising sugar costs and taxes, as well as emerging consumer preferences for low-sugar products and those that offer added health benefits. That said, South Africans have kept certain brands close to their hearts. One of the factors that makes many of these sweets so enduring is that as individually wrapped candies, they are ideal for lunchboxes, party packs, and desktop treat jars. They are also hugely popular with the informal retail sector.



Dark chocolate truffles
courtesy of www.freepik.com/



Ghee sweets and namkeen combo
courtesy of <https://jiosweet.com/>





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Chocolate – one of life’s little luxuries

Chocolate has seen a slowing in growth, according to Marketresearch.com. Until 2025, the chocolate confectionery market in South Africa is forecast to

reach \$1.03b (in retail prices), thus increasing at a CAGR of 5.98% per annum for the period 2020-2024. This is a decrease, compared to growth of about 10.84% per year registered in 2015-2019.

SweetSailing oval boxes courtesy of <https://www.harborsweets.com/>



Chocolate trends

Premiumisation. It seems premiumisation of chocolate is here to stay. One of South Africa’s most-loved luxury chocolate brands, Lindt chocolate remains a robust player in the local market.

In addition to this, locally produced Paarl-based De Villiers Chocolate offers a gourmet bean-to-bar product that found a national home at Woolworths back in 2018 and has remained a faithful staple ever since. And what good dinner guest could contemplate arriving without a gift of Ferrero Rocher for the hostess? As boutique chocolatiers and gourmet chocolate experiences continue to thrive, so do does the South African love of some great-quality chocolate. This is despite the increasing cost of chocolate, as climate change causes cocoa production to drop, and other environmental and socio-economic factors

cause raw material and production costs to soar. Sustainably, responsibly sourced cocoa is now a question of survival rather than any form of green washing. The Lindt website states, “Our own sustainability program, the Lindt & Sprüngli Farming Program, is in place in all countries we source cocoa beans from. We achieved a 100% traceable and externally verified cocoa bean supply chain.”



Interesting chocolate milestones in South Africa

1870	The first Nestlé products arrive in South Africa.
1897	Cadbury Milk Chocolate is launched in the UK.
1903	The Cadbury brothers bring their milk chocolate products to the South African market.
1905	Cadbury Dairy Milk is launched.
1928	Cadbury Flake is launched In South Africa.
1931	Beacon begins as Durban Confectionery and Spice Works, producing handmade boiled sweets, toffees, cordials and coffee.
1935	Nestlé Aero, the first ever bubbly chocolate is launched.
1936	Durban Confectionery and Spice Works officially becomes Beacon.
1936	Nestlé’s famous Quality Street tin has held a special place in people’s hearts since it was first launched.
1937	Nestlé Smarties are launched.
1938	The original South African Cadbury factory is completed In Port Elizabeth and the first moulded Cadbury chocolate slabs started to roll off the production lines.
1938	Beacon begins producing Beacon chocolate.
1960	Cadbury Crunchie is launched in South Africa.
1960	Cadbury Lunch Bar is launched in South Africa. The iconic Lunch Bar ‘Makhathini’ TV ad was later launched in 1990.
1970	Cadbury Chomp is launched in South Africa.
1990	Beacon becomes part of the Jungle family and is now 100% owned by Tiger Brands.
2012	Cadbury becomes a subsidiary of Mondelez International.



Good for you – good for the environment.

Premium brands have also moved into the low- or no sugar, dairy-free, responsibly sourced arena in order to cater to the growing number of chocolate lovers who are demanding healthier products that are also better for the environment.

Craft chocolate maker Pieter De Villiers was inspired by a range of nut butter chocolates that he discovered during a journey to Italy in 2014. During the Covid lockdown, De Villiers crafted his own delicious nut butter addition to the De Villiers Chocolate stable. These chocolates are dairy-free, contain no artificial preservatives or colourants, and do not contain any palm oil. De Villiers' range of sugar-free chocolate bars are also suitable for lactose and gluten intolerant consumers.

Vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free. Many craft chocolate makers offer dairy-free, sugar-free, and gluten-free options that match traditional chocolate in terms of quality, taste, and mouth feel – important characteristics for these niche chocolate offerings .

While Lindt doesn't offer a specific dairy- or sugar-free option, they say, "For a reduced sugar content, you may try the Excellence 85% Cocoa chocolate bar which has 5g of sugar per serving, or the Excellence 90% Cocoa chocolate bar which has 1.3g of sugar per serving. We also have an Excellence 99% Cocoa chocolate bar." The Excellence bars from 70% Coca upwards are also considered suitable for vegans, so are free of any dairy.



Low calorie candy
courtesy of www.confectionerynews.com/

Sugar confectionery trends

As early adopters of vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, and low- or no sugar products, the move of sweets towards this trend has also been steadily gaining traction for quite some time. Beacon Fizzers and certain flavours of Beacon Sparkles, for instance, have been noted by the Vegan SA website as being vegan-friendly for years. Gelatine-free soft chewing sweets are becoming popular and making their way into own-brand sweets ranges, as well as those of leading brands. Globally these formerly niche ranges are expanding at a rapid rate, and we can expect at least some of these products to reach South African shores. The advent of online shopping has really impacted this category, as retailers can cater for a niche market through their online offering while keeping a small but appealing range in-store. Ensuring that online shopping offers perks and products is a great way to attract consumers who prefer to do their sweet confectionery and chocolate buying online, as well as those looking to satisfy specific dietary needs. **SR**



Thinking outside the (chocolate) box

Although this is an enduringly popular category dominated by global brands, newcomers are arriving on the scene thick and fast. Confectionery producers need to remain relevant and front of mind in order to maintain their standing, and a way to achieve that is to sponsor one of South Africa's most famous sports teams.

Cadbury recently announced a brand partnership with the Springbok rugby team and SA Rugby as the Official Confectionery Supplier to the Springboks. Rian Oberholzer, CEO of SA Rugby, says, "We are delighted to be partnering with such an iconic brand as Cadbury – a name that resonates around the world."

"... Cadbury continuously looks for opportunities to bring fans closer to the action and experiences they crave," explains Lara Sidersky, Mondelez SA Category Lead for Chocolate. "What better way to do this than by uniting two iconic brands such as Cadbury chocolate and local rugby heroes, the Springboks – two fabric-of-the-nation brands." She adds, "We look forward to the excitement this partnership will bring to fans, unlocking more opportunities and experiences that we hope will continue to surprise and delight our audience."

Sources:

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