

## Formalin-glazed Candies, Anyone?

Written by Chester Galias

---



*Ever wonder what makes some imported candies so chewy? Well, for some candy manufacturers in China, the secret ingredient for chewiness is the same liquid undertakers use for embalming cadavers: formalin.*

Formalin is a solution of 37% formaldehyde gas dissolved in water. It is also known as formol, methyl aldehyde, or methylene oxide. The words formalin and formaldehyde are sometimes used interchangeably.

Formaldehyde is a toxic, allergenic, and carcinogenic substance. If concentrations of formaldehyde particles go above 0.1 particles per million in the air, it can irritate the eyes and mucous membranes.

If inhaled, formaldehyde can cause headaches, a burning sensation in the throat, difficulty breathing, and can trigger and worsen asthma symptoms.

The US Environmental Protection Agency has classified formaldehyde as a probable human carcinogen after studies were done by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. Evidence showed that formaldehyde can cause nasopharyngeal cancer, which develops in the nasopharynx located between the back of the nasal cavity and the windpipe.

This hazardous substance has found its way into food products sold in Philippine stores, mostly in a few candy products imported from China.

Generations of Filipino sweet toothed, delighted by the milky, chewy, sweet taste of White Rabbit Creamy Candy, were alarmed by news reports that the RP Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) had found trace amounts of formaldehyde in the popular sweet.

Other goodies made in China (Milk Candy, Bairong grape Biscuits, Yong Kang Foods grape

## **Formalin-glazed Candies, Anyone?**

Written by Chester Galias

---

Biscuit) were also flagged for the same reason.

The BFaD issued a public warning advising consumers to refrain from buying the banned goods. BFaD deputy director Joshua ramos asked distributors “to withdraw these products from the market until such time that there will be evidence that they are safe.”

### **But Is It Safe?**

Reacting to international pressure, shanghai Guan Sheng Yuan Food general Factory, maker of White rabbit Creamy Candy, conducted lab tests on their product.

The candy maker said it was firmly standing by the results of Singapore’s Agri-Food and Veterinary authority that their product was safe for consumption despite minute traces of formaldehyde in the samples.

The company insisted the amount of formaldehyde found in White rabbit candies are acceptable according to standards set by the World health Organization. The established tolerable body intake for formaldehyde is 0.15 milligram per kilogram human body weight.

On one side, you have a government doing its job of protecting its citizens; on the other, you have a manufacturer fighting tooth and nail to clear its name and control the damage to a reputation they spent years building.

### **Many Uses of Formaldehyde**

In new zealand, scientists claimed in a local TV show that they had found excessive amounts of formaldehyde in children’s clothing made in China. Formaldehyde resins have reportedly been used in the textile industry since as far back as the 1920s to make garments wrinkle-free and stain-resistant. scientists have yet to determine if formalin-treated clothes pose a threat to human health.

Formalin is a versatile and useful compound. It is widely used for disinfecting and preserving corpses since it has the ability to fix or preserve cells and tissues. It can even serve as a vaccine preservative or applied directly on the skin as a topical treatment for warts.

In the manufacturing industry, formaldehyde is used to produce polymers (or plastics) and other chemicals. Formaldehyde resins are used as permanent adhesives in plywood and carpeting. They are also largely used as a wet-strength resin in sanitary paper products such as facial tissues, table napkins, and roll towels.

In aquaculture, formalin is applied as a bath treatment to kill parasites on fish gills, skins, fins, and also to control fungi on fish eggs.

## Formalin-glazed Candies, Anyone?

Written by Chester Galias

---

Formaldehyde is all around us, even in the air we breath. it is even produced by organisms, including humans, as a byproduct of metabolism. For all we know, the substance may have been an ingredient of Chinese candies since the time we started importing them. if so, then formalin has been on our regular menu for generations now.

The question is, are the formaldehyde traces found in sweets enough to harm our health?

But safe or not, the thought of nibbling on candies glazed with formalin traces, however small, isn't very appetizing.

*Print ed: 10/07*