





Amsterdam sour candies

When we talk about confiserie in Holland, we cannot leave out 'zuurtjes' or sour candies. In Amsterdam, we found a very trendy shop where this candy is being made in a professional and trendy way.

It all started in Barcelona with owners Dominik Otto and Marieken van den Brink. They both had finished their studies and decided to take a year off to relax. For them that meant studying Spanish in the capital of Catalonia. While they were doing their language course, they met two Australian guys who were starting a candy shop. A friendship developed, and Marieken was often seen at their shop, Papabubble, making candies. Once back in Holland, their passion had grown in such a way that the two of them decided to continue the concept in Amsterdam. They got support from Australia and slowly but surely started to master the technique of refining sugar. Two and a half years later, we meet their

colleagues now running the shop in Amsterdam, South African James Dawson, and the very cheerful Australian Isobel Harper.

A child in a candyshop

The shop in Amsterdam is not very large, but your eyes are immediately drawn to the zuurtjes and lollipops. The very colourful sight literally makes you feel like you are a child in a candy shop. It is relief to see that there is a real confiserie in the basement of the shop, where the general public can see how lollipops and zuurtjes are being made. Although the recipe is simple, the technique of making these little candies is a lot more



complicated. At Papabubble they are dedicated to using as much natural flavoring as possible, and they prefer using essential oils whenever they can. It's no problem doing this with citrus fruits and herbs like rosemary, but it doesn't work for every flavour. Only artificial flavouring will work for strawberries. Other complicating factors include temperature and humidity. Holland has a very changeable climate, which has a lot of influence on sugar. When it rains, the sugar becomes sticky, if the temperature is too high the sugar doesn't cool off, and dry air makes the sugar dusty. However, in conquering the details, Papabubble shows that candies are for everyone and that hip and trendy go very well together with craftsmanship and natural ingredients. It doesn't matter if it is a zuurtje with your own name on it, or an extra-extra-large lollipop with a diameter of twenty centimeters...



Basic recipe for zuurtjes and lollipops

Ingredients: 12 kg sugar, 3 liters water, 3 kg glucose, 8 ml flavoring per 1 kg material, food coloring of your choice, citric acid to taste

Bring water and sugar to a boil and add the glucose and flavoring, continue to boil to 156°C/312°F and pour on a slab. Add coloring and citric acid.

We follow Isobel after she has cooked the syrup and poured it on a thick iron table. It is an old toffee table that can be cooled with water flowing underneath it. An iron ledge prevents the syrup from overflowing. The surface of the table and the ledge are coated with beeswax to stop the



stickiness of the sugar. The citric acid is then added to make the zuurtjes more sour. Because zuurtjes have different colours, they mix the colouring on the table with a palette knife. If the candies are made with one colour only, the colouring is added right away in the pan. If the sugar is cooled off sufficiently, the pieces will be divided by using a big pair of scissors. We are fortunate today, because they are creating zuurtjes with letters in it; a present from a romantic guy for his girlfriend. He must really love her or he is apologizing for something, because at Papabubble the minimum order is 10 kilograms. Of course the benefit is that you will have even more of a girlfriend to love after she has eaten all those candies!

Rolling and Pulling

The colors are divided and the center of the zuurtjes will consist of blue letters with a white background. For this background, the sugar will be pulled or glazed; with this kind of volume a big hook is used and the sugar spun around it. Slowly, a beautiful soft glaze is created and the spectacle can start. The letters we see in the zuurtjes are all just square flat pieces. First, the outline of the letters is created with blue colored sugar, which is then filled with white sugar. Isobel tells us that the letters look slightly digital because of the many straight pieces. The letter Q is the most difficult one, because of its round form and a straight line. James glues the little squares together with a damp sponge. Normally, something damp should never be used when working with sugar, but here it helps to get the sticky effect. It is obvious that James has to work



according to the textbook. Although they both have lots of experience, it can still happen that a letter turns out to be upside down or is in the wrong spot. If this is discovered too late, they have to start all over again. Slowly we see the names of the two lovebirds and in the center of the zuurtje a little heart. Isobel creates the outside with the rest of the colours. If the sugar is a bit too cold, it is heated in the microwave. The table they work on is heated from the bottom with a thermostat adjusted to 90°C/195°F. The surface is finished with leather to prevent the sugar from sticking. In the meantime, the letters have been rolled into the sugar, and it is starting to look more like a large tree trunk with a diameter of 25 cm than a zuurtje. As Isobel is kneading a handle for the trunk with her hands, she lifts the giant mass up and spins it around. Suddenly the tree trunk looks more like a designer vase. The pulling has started and lasts until the tree trunk is only 1 cm wide. A little stick is cut every 80 cm, after which James rolls them into a round shape. The big letters are now diminished to a few millimeters. Our math tells us that we have created 50 metres of sour sticks that have been made from the start of this enormous mass. The little sticks are rapidly cut in small pieces, which results in at least 4000 zuurtjes. A last inspection guarantees that only perfect zuurtjes will be wrapped. The same technique is shown to us with lollipops. For this, an array of colours is rolled together, cut, and pushed in a tight can, which results in a straight lollipop.

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