



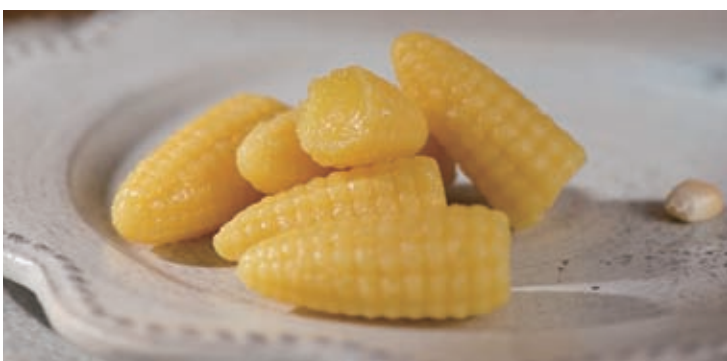
Salty dried Chinese plum (*huamei* 话梅)

This little snack sounds a bit strange, and, honestly, tastes strange as well. But don't necessarily take that to mean that it's bad. This treat, which originated in south China's Guangdong Province (where it's referred to as *li hing mui* in Cantonese) certainly isn't for everyone, but it packs a unique punch that, if you're a bit daring, you might find alluring.

Chinese plums are, as the name suggests, dried and salted, producing a small, pitted fruit that

you can pop in your mouth and savor whilst slowly chomping away at the bits of dried fruit still clinging to the seed within. The flavor is strongly sour with a salty aftertaste, which is very distinctive and for many, polarizing.

Huamei are also often ground up to make powder, which can be used as a seasoning on fruits or other treats to add a twist of flavor, so eating a whole one certainly might pucker the lips, but I am a big fan of these. Give them a try.



Chewy corn candy (*yumi ruantang* 玉米软糖)

This is exactly what it sounds (and looks) like — a chewy, soft candy colored and shaped like an ear of corn. For better or worse, it's flavored this way as well.

This exists in ice cream form as well; corn-shaped and flavored ice cream on a stick, and while this chilled version is fairly palatable (though I wouldn't enthusiastically

recommend it), the chewy candy is ... not.

You might initially be puzzled by the idea of turning the flavor of a vegetable into a sweet candy, and I share in this perplexion. It's weird, and it doesn't work. Sorry for those who like this one, but, for me ... hard pass. Give this one a miss.

Orange peel candy (*chenpi tang* 陈皮糖)

This small hard candy is made with powdered orange peel, which gives it an extra zesty kick when compared to regular fruit-flavored candies. It has less of an artificial imitation flavor profile and tastes more like it's seasoned with some sort of cinnamon or nutmeg, even though, according to the ingredient list, it's not.

The unusual flavor is enjoyable and a bit unexpected. You'll often find it in the little glass tray on a receptionist's desk in a random office building or waiting room. Worth a shot; it's interesting.



Dried hawthorn wafers (*shanzha pian* 山楂片)

These thin, reddish circular wafers usually come in small packs of five, and are dried and pressed versions of the hawthorn fruit. This fruit, scientifically referred to as *crataegus*, grows in many temperate

regions throughout the Northern Hemisphere. The species most prevalent in China is a sweet-and-sour fruit that is often used to make jams, beverages, a classic treat called *bingtang hulu*, which are candied frozen hawthorn on a stick, and this packaged wafer candy here.

Not overly sweet (which is a bit of a theme here) and somewhat sour, this candy actually tastes like dried fruit and isn't overpowered by the taste of artificial sweeteners. Though perhaps best enjoyed just a few at a time, hawthorn wafers are a solid fruity snack.



This list is, of course, not a comprehensive one, and many people of different generations certainly had different experiences with sweets during their childhoods. Leave a comment and tell me which of these you love or hate, or if there are any I missed that I might try in the future.

Happy snacking!