By Nancy Whitaker

DON’T TOUCH MY PEEPS

Do you remember eating your first Peep? Those sweet, sugary marshmallow chicks and bunnies that hops into stores every Easter are the most popular Easter candy next to chocolate.

An Easter basket would not be complete without these cute marshmallow candies. My own children loved the packages of the gooey, sugary, marshmallow treats and would always expect to find them in their baskets on Easter morning.

Even though Peeps were first made in 1953, it wasn’t until I had my own kids that I really paid attention to the chewy marshmallow treat. I love Peeps and I like to eat mine when they are stale and dried out, however, some people prefer their Peeps soft and fluffy.

When I think of a Peep, I think of the yellow chicks and pink rabbits. But, Peeps, just like everything else has progressed and today we see blue, pink, green and purple Peeps.

Have you ever wondered how these spongy, pastel, gritty chicks come and get into our Easter goodies every year? One thing for certain is, that there is no big, neon yellow, sparkly chicken who births little peeps for us every spring.

Peeps are produced in Bethlehem, Pa. by the Just Born Company. The Just Born Candy Company has a rich history dating back to 1923. Back in the early years they made various types of chocolate and prospered even through the Depression years.

It was in 1953 that Just Born bought the Rodda Candy Company. The Rodda Candy Company was making the little marshmallow chicks that the Just Born Candy Company just happened to capitalize on and the rest is history.

When Just Born acquired the Rodda Candy Company, Peeps were being made completely by hand. Marshmallow was squeezed out of pastry tubes to form the chicks, and then each was individually decorated. At that time, it took 27 hours to make one Peep.

How things have changed. Today, it only takes 6 minutes to make each Peep.

Peeps are made of sugar, corn syrup, gelatin, preservatives and yellow, pink, blue, green or lavender dye. Carnauba wax is used for their little black eyes.

Ingredients are mixed together in large kettles and then sent to a whipper for beating. The Peeps' sugar coating is made by mixing sugar with one of the color dyes in large metal mixing pans. One color of Peep is made at a time.

So, how many Peeps are made each Easter? It is reported that enough Peep chicks and bunnies are sold each Easter to circle the Earth's circumference. Now, that is a lot of Peeps.

Now, new things are always welcome and I am usually one that loves new products. However, there are now Halloween and Christmas Peeps, not just the Easter ones we always looked forward to.

In fact, through my research on this popular topic of Peeps, in addition to the Halloween Peeps there is a star shaped Peep that is peppermint flavored.

I know business is business and progress has to continue, but I really only want my Peeps at Easter time.

In fact when I see orange pumpkins, black cats and white ghost Peeps at Halloween, I feel that this is just not right. To me, Peeps are just for Easter and should be chicken and bunny shapes.

Peeps made for other holidays, just aren't Peeps. I wish they would just leave my Peeps alone.

Do you like Peeps? Do you like them dried out or soft? Do you think Peeps are just for Easter or should every holiday have a Peep?

Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for your Thoughts.