

We "dress" chocolate Easter Bunnies!

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Did you know that more chocolate Easter bunnies are sold in Germany than chocolate Santa Clauses? And why is the bunny hollow on the inside? We spoke with Manfred Hofmann, who as Technical Product Manager Food at Constantia Flexibles is responsible for "clothing" the chocolate Easter bunnies.



Constantia Flexibles: Constantia Flexibles packages more than half of the German chocolate Easter bunnies –out of a total of 213 million bunnies in 2015...

Manfred Hofmann: You probably wouldn't have thought that the chocolate Easter bunny would be more popular than the chocolate Father Christmas. According to manager magazin, 213 million bunnies were produced in 2015 but 'only' 146 million Santa Claus figures were made for the 2014 Christmas season.

We are proud to package the majority of chocolate Easter bunnies – and to make many people happy at Eastertime. The patented method which involves aluminum foil being produced industrially and rolled almost endlessly has been in existence since roughly 1910. Since then, chocolate producers in Europe and the USA have been wrapping their products in aluminum foil. After World War II, the market for seasonal chocolate grew steadily – due in part to the fact that packaging machines could process an increasing number of individual shapes of hollow figures made of chocolate. Previously, dozens of workers stood at the conveyor belts in the confectionary factories to manually package the Easter bunnies. Today, this is accomplished with a single modern machine.

Constantia Flexibles: What is important about the “clothing” of the Easter bunnies as well as the Father Christmas figures made of chocolate?

Manfred Hofmann: Aluminum foil does not interact with chocolate at all. Thanks to the manufacturing process, the surface is free of contaminants and does not support the growth of any microorganisms. It also prevents the migration of printing ink components and other substances from the outside and offers complete light protection. The low restoring force of the aluminum foil allows for completely tight wrapping of the foil against the chocolate product during packaging. Custom-made aluminum materials and state-of-the-art technologies of Constantia Flexibles combined with our decades of experience in design and packaging production guarantee that our customers can provide your chocolate figures with the right “attire”. The possibilities range from the low-priced product in a mixed bag to the glossy golden premium product at the point of sale.

And should there be a slightly problematic Easter Bunny for example with too pointy ears, edged facial traits or other things that could lead to problems

when the bunnies are wrapped up – we have a solution. Our innovative wrapping foil Tepro2® is a combination of aluminum with very thin OPP foil and displays excellent tear strength while staying easy to wrap. Tepro2® foil thus also enables new creative possibilities with new contours of chocolate figures.

Constantia Flexibles: Something most people don't know – why is the bunny hollow?

Manfred Hofmann: The explanation is relatively simple – the chocolate Easter bunnies are hollow figures that consist of two shells. In industrial production, two plastic shells are filled with liquid chocolate and then spun until the chocolate is evenly distributed and forms a wall. Then the bunny figures are taken out of the mold and carefully inspected before moving on to the packaging machines, where they are wrapped with our foil.

Constantia Flexibles: One myth still persists – that the chocolate Santa Claus figures become Easter bunnies. Can you clear that up?

Manfred Hofmann: That is in fact a widespread misconception. In reality, the return transport and unpacking, including melting, would be much too expensive for the confectionary producers. In addition, the typical chocolate taste is lost upon melting – so this definitely makes no sense for the chocolate makers. Instead, Santa Claus figures and Easter bunnies are sold as part of a special offer after the season, and the rest are distributed among institutions and organizations.

Constantia Flexibles: Last year, Lindt put out a modern Easter bunny with 'animal print', meaning that the classic gold bunny had a zebra look. Do you see a new trend in Easter bunnies this year?

Manfred Hofmann: The Easter bunnies have for the most part remained the same. What we see is the trend toward adapting the flavors of other chocolate products within the product range of a customer to the hollow figures. For example, in addition to the classic milk chocolate bunnies, there is now also the crunchy bunny or the chocolate cookie bunny, and so on. The product families for Easter are also getting larger. The Easter sheep and the Easter hens from Lindt are examples of this.