

**HISTORY OF SKI WAXING
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During the 1920s a Cross Country skier used more time “cooking” ski wax than training.

The women complained that the old man was cooking during the evening and night before a ski race, they complained about the stench and the wax that got smeared over the furniture and other contents in the room. It stunk of burned rubber where the athletes spent the night before the race.

It was proposed in Norway to wax the ski tracks or to place a large vat of ski wax at the start, so that all the competitors would have the same wax. All kinds of solutions were used.

Sheep blood and caraway seed cheese.

In the old days the skiers would use sheep blood, blood from cattle and caraway seed cheese - more often than not a piece of cheese would be sitting at the top of the inrun at the ski jump. The boys would rub some cheese on their skis and start down the inrun. Herring was also good and the cross country skiers would compete carrying half a herring in their pockets.

The glide wax “Record” from 1904 was one of the first commercially produced ski waxes available in Norway. However, in Finland where most of the cross country skiing was done on flat terrain over frozen lakes and bogs, ski waxing as an art was much more advanced.

When the Norwegians were decisively beaten by the Finns in 1890, the Norwegians complained that the Finns had “cheated”, by using glide wax. But even the Norwegians had to admit that ski waxing had good effect and was not cheating.

Phonograph records in the waxing mix became popular after 1910. The triple Olympic Champion Thorleif Haug listened to the phonograph records and “cooked” the ones he did not care for.

Haug was also the first to use rubber inner tubes in the wax mix and that occurred in Trondheim in 1918. The sale of rubber inner tubes for bicycles increased during the winter for the next couple of years.

Secret recipes.

The boys never disclosed their recipes. They cooked alone in their rooms and never let anybody know what was in the mix, but Thorleif Haug would sometime give some finished product to the other athletes.

After a ski race in Trondheim, Ivar Aasen from Lillehammer scraped some of the wax off of Thorleif Haug's skis. Seven years later during difficult waxing conditions, Ivar would give that wax to Bernt Bergehagen, one of Lillehammer's best cross country racers. "Here some good ski wax. This is what Thorleif Haug used when he won a race in Graakallen a while back."

Bernt looked at the wax. There were some pine needles and dirt in it, but one does not throw out what Haug has cooked up.

Earwax and fat from dead animals.

The skiers in Os in Østerdalen used earwax, collected by clearing out the ear canals with wooden matches, and then rubbing it on the skis. One skier had heard that fat from dead animals was good, so he shot his dog just before a ski race, and rubbed the fat on the skis.

Emergence of many commercial ski waxes on the Norwegian market reduced the need for cooking your own. But cooking of ski wax by the competitors was done many years after the Second World War.

Magnar Dalen, who used to be the coach for the Finnish national cross country team, was the Norwegian ski waxing expert and coach during the 1990's. He cooked his own ski wax and had good results with that.

Emergence of klister.

In December of 1913 Peter Østbye from Kristiania (Oslo) took out a patent on klister. He arrived at the start of the Holmenkollen race in 1914 carrying a bucket with a sticky, gooey mass.

"Look at that "klister" people would say, and that is how it got its name. Many of the competitors got to try this new wax, which both provided glide and grip on soft wet snow. Many were doubtful about this new klister wax.

Pete Østbye wrote: "I had a long tail of competitors behind me when I was testing the wax before the start. They wanted to see how this goo would perform. And at first when I was stuck and could not move, there were a lot of smirks. But suddenly I started to glide and the smirks disappeared.

Peter grinned during the whole race, and won spectacularly ahead of the "King" of cross country skiing Lauritz Bergendahl from Sørkedalen. His brother Sverre was feeling sick at the time, and his mother forbade him to start. That was a bitter pill to swallow as he was a better skier.

Peter Østbye became enormously rich from his ski wax, and "Østbye Medium" and "Østbye Mix" became legendary products – the biggest ski wax manufacturer in the world before the Second World War.

Swedish Swix.

Swix was introduced in Sweden on November 28th 1946. The Swedish company AB Astra presented the new ski wax after many years of experimenting. It was based on science and chemical products, not tar, wood sap or Reodor Felgenish experimenting.

Astra had a name competition where "Rimi" was also suggested for the wax that was named Swix.

Swix did not catch on in Norway right away. It took some time to overcome the negative feelings about a Swedish product, but Sweden's success in cross country skiing during the 1948 Olympics was good advertising.

The more than 20 ski wax manufacturers in Norway felt the competition from the neighbouring country. Slowly but surely Swix gained a good marketing position in Norway.

Swix was eventually bought up by Norwegian investors. As of 1978 the Andresen family owned 100% of Swix and moved all production to Norway. Very few are aware that Swix originally was Swedish.