

Baby Yoda toys are finally arriving

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Image 1. "The Mandalorian" merchandise, whose release was delayed to avoid spoilers, makes its debut before Toy Fair New York. Photo by: Devin Doyle/The Washington Post

The lack of Baby Yoda toys, a destroyer of many 2019 holiday hopes, is officially coming to an end this spring. This moment has been greatly anticipated.

The official announcement of Baby Yoda toys came from the far, far away galaxy known as New York City in mid-February. Disney and Lucasfilm gathered journalists in New York City days ahead of Toy Fair New York. They showed off their Baby Yoda wares in all forms. The products ranged from pajamas to PopSockets. They will soon be in Star Wars fans' eager hands.

The event was officially described as a showcase for products inspired by the live-action series, "The Mandalorian," and the animated "Star Wars: The Clone Wars." These were two Disney Plus hits that represent the best of the fictional universe after "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" was met with mixed reviews.

Unavailable In Wake Of Viral Fame

There was no denying that everyone at the toy fair wanted to see products based on the most famous 50-year-old child in Hollywood. The toy Baby Yodas were strangely unavailable in shops in the wake of his viral fame in the fall.

That child, by the way, is officially just "the Child." The character has yet to be named on "The Mandalorian," despite fans affectionately calling him Baby Yoda because of a strong likeness to the legendary "Star Wars" Jedi master. After the show first aired in November, the Child became a sensation through memes and GIFs. An especially popular one showed him sipping soup.

On February 20, at the Dream Hotel in New York City, the Child was finally on display in the form of Legos, action figures, costumes, backpacks, hats, shirts, wallets and socks.

You can get a framed image of the now-classic moment in "The Mandalorian" when a young Baby Yoda reaches out of a capsule and extends the cutest finger in the universe for the first time. The capsule itself? Also available. It features an animatronic Baby Yoda that blinks, coos and will melt your heart.

Baby Yoda Plush Toys — And Lattes

Build-A-Bear employees were there to show onlookers that if you squeezed their soon-to-be-available plush Baby Yoda's left hand, he made baby noises. Squeeze the right hand, and Ludwig Göransson's theme song from "The Mandalorian" begins to play.

An espresso machine, perhaps guided by the Force itself, churned out Baby Yoda lattes.

One thing you couldn't find was an apology from Lucasfilm and Disney for not having toys ready for the 2019 holiday season. Imitation products ended up on eBay and Etsy. Disney, however, made efforts to remove them.

However, attendees got confirmation of what was already assumed: The only way to keep Baby Yoda's end-of-Episode-1 appearance a secret was to not sell products. The products would have been seen online months ahead of when "The Mandalorian" aired, so the series' producer asked Disney and Lucasfilm to hold off on production until the first episode was released.

The goal of holding back on products was to give Star Wars fans the same feeling they had when they discovered George Lucas' universe for the first time, according to "The Mandalorian" producer Dave Filoni. If that meant millions of dollars in sales were left on the table, so be it.

"It's so hard to do surprises anymore," Filoni said. "We wanted the audience to experience meeting the Child with Mando," the bounty hunter title character.

Paul Southern is a senior vice president with Lucasfilm. He was one of the few who knew of Baby Yoda's existence before the series aired.

Voracious Appetite For News

"We live in a world with Star Wars where the fans, they have a voracious appetite for news," Southern said. "It's very difficult for us to manage the security and confidentiality of everything once things are in development. It just touches too many people," Southern said.

JoAnn McLaughlin, senior vice president of brand merchandising and product design at Lucasfilm, didn't know the Baby Yoda storm was brewing because the decision to keep the

character a secret came before she was officially working on the project. She learned quickly.

"The phone didn't stop ringing from the powers that be at Disney saying, 'OK, how fast are you going to get this done?'" said McLaughlin. She also said fans should expect to see a heavy Mandalorian presence at Disney Parks in California and Florida soon. She's been taking calls from retailers in regions where Disney Plus isn't even available yet.

A Global Event

"This is truly a global (event)," McLaughlin said.

Toy companies often have to take precautions to not spoil key plot points from movies or series.

The Baby Yoda products will be rolled out starting in March. Some, such as Lego products on Amazon, won't come until as late as August.

Midtown Comics sells comics and action figures in New York City. The store began receiving calls for Baby Yoda products the same day "The Mandalorian" aired, according to assistant manager Jadrian Schmidt. Schmidt said he quickly sold out of the Mandalorian products he did have, which were only figurines of the Mandalorian. He said he spent most of the holidays letting customers know the green guy wouldn't arrive until spring.

Schmidt called the surprise a "genius" move, but he doesn't think the demand this spring will be anything like it was this winter. That won't stop Midtown Comics from ordering as much of the Child as they can.

"We're going to order (Baby Yoda) products pretty heavy," Schmidt said. "Because we know it's going to sell."



Quiz

1 Read the following paragraphs from the section "Unavailable In Wake Of Viral Fame."

On February 20, at the Dream Hotel in New York City, the Child was finally on display in the form of Legos, action figures, costumes, backpacks, hats, shirts, wallets and socks.

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How is the central idea developed in these two paragraphs?

- (A) The paragraphs help explain how the Baby Yoda became popular.
- (B) The paragraphs describe the main place to purchase Baby Yoda toys.
- (C) The paragraphs describe the variety of Baby Yoda toys available to buy.
- (D) The paragraphs help explain why Baby Yoda toys were kept a secret.

2 Which statement would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?

- (A) Disney and Lucasfilm announced that Baby Yoda toys would soon be available.
- (B) The producer of "The Mandalorian" TV show thinks it is hard to do surprises on TV anymore.
- (C) Fans of the Star Wars movies have a huge appetite for news related to Star Wars.
- (D) A comic book store in New York City thinks the demand for Baby Yoda toys will be less this spring.

3 Which of the following MOST influenced the decision to delay the production of Baby Yoda products?

- (A) the desire by Disney and Lucasfilm to make millions of dollars in sales
- (B) the need to create the first episode of a live-action TV show series
- (C) the need to prevent people from buying imitation products of the Baby Yoda character
- (D) the desire to surprise viewers of a TV show with the appearance of a Baby Yoda character

4 According to the article, why were many fans of Baby Yoda disappointed during the 2019 holiday season?

- (A) Stores kept running out of Baby Yoda products.
- (B) The only Baby Yoda products on sale were those found online.
- (C) There were no Baby Yoda products available to buy.
- (D) Stores sold Baby Yoda toys but no other Baby Yoda products.