



## Candy Making

**Candy making is a lost art. Revive it in your kitchen this season with some old-fashioned recipes.**

Is It a Candy or a Cookie?

I was introduced to this winning combination of chocolate and peanut butter by a college friend.

Her family in Michigan always made these delectable “no-bake cookies” for the holidays.

Simple enough to put together in a dorm room, they quickly became our favorite post-exams treat.

Calling them cookies rather than candy may make them seem less decadent, but thankfully it doesn't change their irresistible flavor.

Ann's Buckeyes

Ingredients 1 cup smooth peanut butter 1/4 cup butter, softened 2 1/2 to 3 cups powdered sugar 1 tsp. vanilla extract 6 ounces semisweet chocolate

Beat the peanut butter, butter and vanilla together in a large bowl. Gradually add powdered sugar until the mixture is smooth and holds its shape if made into a ball.

Roll into one-inch balls. Place on a waxed paper-lined cookie sheet and refrigerate at least 20 minutes.

Melt the chocolate in the top of a double boiler. Using a toothpick or a spoon, dip the candy balls in the chocolate.

Remove to the lined cookie sheet and let stand until chocolate is firm.

TopText and photos by Adrienne L. Shtop

It happens every December in homes and offices all over the country: The mail arrives and everyone perks up, expectant. Special delivery rings the doorbell and hearts beat a little faster; chores become easier.

A wrapped box is dropped off and visions of sugarplums begin their ecstatic dance.

Candy is the universal gift—everyone loves it! Why not try candy making any time there's a special occasion? Find 6 recipes to try at home, like: Sea Foam Pan Candy Fudge Truffles

We send candy to the young, the old, the infirm and the successful. We give it to those near and dear, and to people we hardly know.

Artfully boxed sweets communicate love, admiration, gratitude and general good cheer. This holiday season--or any special time--let your gift express even more by making the candy yourself.

Sound complicated and exotic? It's not.

Long before corporate candy giants sold packaged cures for sweet cravings, Great-grandma patiently simmered, stirred, pulled and dipped away the family's blues in her very own kitchen.

Although some candies require concentration and finesse, most are easy and fun to cook.

Here are a few old-fashioned candy recipes, from “you can't go wrong” to “a bit challenging.”

No matter which you try, be prepared: When there's homemade candy in the house, it rarely lasts long. If you intend to give these treats as gifts, plan your wrappings and your hiding places before you start!



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#### It's Crystal Clear

Candy making is an art, but it uses science to create its magic.

The basic ingredient in candy is sugar; it's sugar's crystalline chemical structure that's responsible for the amazing diversity of sweets available to us.

A basic knowledge of the chemistry behind candy making will help you adapt recipes to your own tastes and correct any problems you may encounter along the way.

Candy can be hard and smooth, soft and grainy or anywhere in between; it all depends on the size and arrangement of the sugar crystals.

Dissolving sugar in a liquid and heating it is the most common way to control the crystals. Hard, dry candies, such as lollipops or toffee, are made by cooking sugar for a long time and to a high temperature. Soft, moist candies, like fondant, are cooked only briefly. The top temperature of the boiling sugar syrup tells you what the candy will be like when it cools.

That's why the temperature of the candy mixture is critical to the success of the recipe.

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#### Sugar Syrup Temperatures

There are two main methods for determining the temperature of sugar syrup.

The more scientific choice is to use a candy thermometer. Some candy chefs will not even attempt a recipe without one.

The other option is to drop small amounts of the boiling sugar into a bowl of ice water and then check the cooled syrup's texture. This method, aptly known as the "cold water test," is likely the one used by your Gran.

The cold water test involves five stages of candy texture, each corresponding to a particular temperature range. Most modern candy recipes specify both a temperature in degrees and the appropriate cold water stage.

Stirring and beating also affect the size of sugar crystals, and therefore the texture of the candy.

For example, some candies are stirred only to combine the ingredients or to prevent scorching, whereas divinity, a combination of egg whites and sugar syrup, is beaten "until the mixer burns out" to ensure it holds its shape.

Another common way to manipulate sugar crystals is by adding interfering agents to the recipe. Ingredients like butter, milk, corn syrup or lemon juice not only add flavor to the candy, but, by inhibiting the formation of crystals, also help keep the sugar's grains small and the texture smooth.

#### Candy Making

##### Makes You Strong

"I remember my mother making a candy called Sea Foam," Dr. Corrine Brown reminisces.

"It is very similar to divinity, but a bit lighter. This was before the days of electric mixers. Mother's mixer had a handle on it that she would have to crank. She would use that until the candy got too stiff and then she would switch to a wooden spoon, beating the mixture by hand until it would hold its shape. As you can imagine, this took a while—and a strong woman."

"I haven't been able to find anything quite as light as Mother's Sea Foam, so occasionally I will settle for a piece of store-bought divinity. I do find that making candy using the old methods produces a better product."



## Sea Foam

Ingredients 2 cups sugar 1/2 cup water 1 tsp. vanilla extract 2 egg whites 1/8 tsp. salt 1/8 tsp. cream of tartar

Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Set aside. Combine sugar, water, salt and cream of tartar in a heavy-bottomed pot.

Cover and boil for 5 minutes. Wipe down the sides of the pot with a damp cloth. Do not stir.

Continue to boil until the firm-ball stage. Slowly pour the cooked sugar syrup over the egg whites, beating constantly.

Stir in the vanilla. Beat this mixture until it holds its shape. Drop teaspoonfuls onto waxed paper.

\* Adapted from The Household Searchlight Recipe Book, edited by Ida Migliano, Harriett Allard, Zorada Titus and Irene Nunemaker (The Household Magazine, 1939).

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## Try This at Home

Some candy recipes insist you follow them to the letter, but others, especially many of the oldest ones, contain only vague instructions and ad-libbing is expected.

My mother handed down the latter type of recipe to me; it was my ever-busy grandmother's version of toffee.

The lack of exact measurements may at first make this candy seem impossible, but it is, in fact, practically foolproof and leaves plenty of room for experimentation. Sometimes a bit grainy, sometimes smooth, we kids never cared; we always loved it.

Make several batches, each with a different flavoring, for a simple gift with lots of variety.

Cast-Iron Pan Candy Melt butter in a cast-iron frying pan over medium-low heat. Add sugar. Stir. The sugar will melt and meld with the butter (this is fun to watch). Continue to cook and stir for 10 to 15 minutes. When the mixture has caramelized to a light brown color and smells rich, it's done. Be careful not to let it become dark brown and burnt. Mix in optional flavorings, such as vanilla, rum, lemon juice or herbs to taste. Pour in small amounts or spoon onto waxed paper. Let cool.

Note: The more butter, the richer the candy. For the smoothest texture, the butter and sugar should be in approximately equal proportion. If using unsalted butter, a half-pinch of salt may brighten the flavor.

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## As American as Fudge

Fudge, that much-loved, chocolaty square, is a true American success story and a born sentimentalist.

Folklore pins the origin of fudge to Valentine's Day, 1886. True to the spirit of American inventiveness and thrift, this now ubiquitous confection is said to have gotten its start as a "fudged" batch of caramels.

Actress Jane Lincoln Taylor's family has celebrated this happy accident for many generations. Their time-tested recipe relies on homey, old-fashioned visual cues rather than scientific temperature measurements, but, as Jane says, "It actually works and makes great fudge."

## Taylor Family Fudge

Ingredients 2 cups sugar 1/4 tsp. salt 2 squares unsweetened chocolate 2/3 cup cream Butter, the size of an egg (see Notes, 1) 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract (see Notes, 2) Walnuts

Melt chocolate and cream together over medium heat, stirring so chocolate doesn't burn. Add sugar and salt. Boil 6 minutes, stirring all the while until it reaches the soft-ball stage. When it's ready, it will look as though little ladies are holding a quilting bee underneath; little quilting stitches will pull down toward the bottom of the pan. Add butter and vanilla;



beat well until your arms get tired. Add nuts. Spread in a greased pan. Cut into squares before it gets impossibly hard.

Notes:

1. The equivalent of 2 T.
2. "We always pour in a lot more because it smells so good." —JLT

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### The Black-tie-and-tails Treat

When it comes to candy, chocolate truffles define the word "elegant." As prized as the elusive gourmet mushrooms that share their name, truffles are far simpler to make than most people think. These two truffle recipes are from Old-Fashioned Candy Recipes, compliments of Bear Wallow Books. Neither is extremely complicated; both are delicious.

### Chocolate Truffles

Ingredients 1 1/2 cups heavy cream 6 T. unsalted butter 1 lb. semisweet chocolate, broken into pieces

In the top of a double boiler, combine cream and butter over simmering water. Stir constantly while butter melts, then increase heat until mixture begins to boil. Remove from heat and stir in chocolate pieces until mixture is smooth and blended. Continue stirring mixture 5 to 10 minutes, until cooled to lukewarm. Cover with tight lid and refrigerate 8 hours or overnight. Stir occasionally during the first 2 hours of refrigeration. When mixture is firm, shape into one-inch balls and place on a waxed paper-lined cookie sheet. Refrigerate until very firm. Roll in powdered cocoa (see below). Refrigerate until ready to serve.

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### Extra-rich Chocolate Truffles

Ingredients 1/2 lb. semisweet chocolate, broken into pieces

2 T. superfine sugar

2 T. water

3/4 cup butter

2 egg yolks, slightly beaten

1/2 cup powdered sugar

In the top of a double boiler, melt chocolate. Quickly blend in sugar, water and butter. Remove pan from heat and let mixture cool, approximately 5 minutes. Stir in egg yolks.

Pour mixture into a bowl and refrigerate for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Mixture will be firm.

Scoop spoonfuls of the truffle mixture and shape into bite-sized balls. Roll in powdered cocoa (see below).

Refrigerate until ready to serve.

### Powdered Cocoa for Dusting Truffles

You will need 1/2 to 1 cup of good-quality powdered cocoa. Sprinkle the cocoa in a cake pan and dust your hands with it.

Roll the truffles in the powder one at a time until each is well coated.



Place truffles on a waxed paper-lined cookie sheet and chill.

Variations are limited only by the candy maker's imagination. Whether you choose a flavoring oil (such as mint or orange), nuts or a liqueur, stir in the addition after all the other ingredients have been combined, but before the mixture is refrigerated.

About the Author Adrienne L. Shtop is a freelance writer and photographer with a passion for all the things that make life sweet. She wishes to thank the generous souls who contributed recipes for this article.

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