The Fudge Maker's Handbook

Classic, Modern and Global Fudge Recipes for Every Kitchen



ROBIN WICKENS

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This book is intended for general culinary information and home cooking inspiration. Recipes, methods, temperatures, timings, storage guidance, allergy information and serving suggestions are provided in good faith. Readers are responsible for checking ingredient labels, kitchen safety, dietary suitability, local food safety regulations and personal allergy requirements before preparing or serving any recipe.

Hot sugar can cause severe burns. Please read the safety notes before attempting fudge-making or any confectionery involving boiled sugar.

This is a work of original recipe development and culinary writing. Any resemblance between recipe names and other published recipes is coincidental. Flavour traditions may be inspired by global ingredients and sweet-making customs, but each recipe has been written as an original home-kitchen interpretation.

Dedication

For every cook who has stood over a saucepan of bubbling sugar and wondered whether they were making fudge, caramel, edible lava, or a small domestic emergency.

And for every person who cut the uneven edge off a slab of fudge “just to tidy it up” and then had to tidy it up six more times.

Prologue: The Square That Started Trouble

There are foods that arrive politely.

A salad, for example, does not usually cause emotional disturbance. A boiled egg may wobble about the plate with modest dignity. A sandwich knows its station in life. Soup, unless carried over a pale carpet, is generally well behaved.

Fudge is different.

Fudge is a small square of sugar, cream, butter and nerve. It looks harmless, even friendly, sitting there in a paper bag or gift tin, but behind that innocent face lies drama. Fudge has opinions. Fudge remembers whether you stirred too early. It knows whether your thermometer was lying. It can detect fear through a wooden spoon. One minute you are a confident adult with a clean kitchen and a reasonable plan; the next, you are standing over a pan of bubbling sweetness wondering whether you have invented a new building material.

That is part of the charm.

Fudge is not difficult in the grand, haughty sense. It is not a sugar sculpture of a swan, nor a twelve-layer patisserie requiring a French apprenticeship and a nervous breakdown. Fudge is democratic. It belongs in family kitchens, market stalls, village fêtes, seaside shops, Christmas hampers, rainy afternoons, school fundraisers, wedding favours, thank-you parcels and “I made too much” excuses that nobody believes.

But fudge does ask for attention.

It asks you to learn the look of a boil, the feel of a mixture thickening, the moment when glossy becomes grainy in the best possible way. It asks you to understand that sugar is both friend and menace, and that butter, cream and patience can turn a few ordinary ingredients into something people remember. Not merely eat. Remember.

This book is for the reader who wants to make fudge properly, but not pompously. It is for the beginner who has never boiled sugar beyond a cup of tea and for the seasoned cook who wants new flavours, better methods and fewer mysterious failures. It is for gift-makers, sweet-lovers, kitchen experimenters, market-stall dreamers, Christmas planners and quiet nibblers who cut the smallest possible piece, then return with a knife held casually behind their back.

Inside these pages you will find classic fudge, modern fudge and global fudge. You will meet crumbly British-style fudge, creamy American-style fudge, condensed milk fudge, chocolate fudge, vegan fudge, microwave fudge, slow cooker fudge, festive fudge, spiced fudge, nut fudge, fruit fudge and the sort of fudge that makes relatives ask whether you have “bought this from somewhere nice”, which is the highest form of domestic insult disguised as praise.

There will be knowledge articles too, because fudge-making is not only recipes. It is temperature, texture, timing, ingredients, storage, safety, wrapping, cutting, fixing mistakes and learning why sugar occasionally behaves like a tiny dictator.

Most of all, this book is a celebration of the sweet square: humble, generous, mischievous, international, and just difficult enough to make success feel deserved.

So fetch a heavy pan, clear the worktop, read the safety notes, and put the kettle on.

Fudge is waiting.

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Introduction: Welcome to the Fudge Pot

Fudge has a peculiar talent for making people sentimental.

Mention fudge and someone will immediately remember a paper bag from a seaside town, a grandmother's tin, a Christmas market, a school fair, a holiday gift shop, a village fête, a birthday parcel, or a tiny square placed beside coffee in a café where everyone pretended one piece was enough. Fudge lives in memory because it is rarely eaten by accident. It is chosen. It is wrapped. It is offered. It is hidden from children, then discovered by children, then blamed on children by adults who should know better.

At its simplest, fudge is a sweet made by cooking sugar with dairy or dairy-like ingredients, then cooling and beating the mixture until it sets into a firm, sliceable texture. That sentence is technically correct and emotionally inadequate. It makes fudge sound like a laboratory incident with a knife. In reality, fudge sits somewhere between science and comfort. It is chemistry wearing an apron.

The heart of fudge-making is crystal control. Sugar crystals form as the mixture cools, and the size of those crystals decides the final texture. Tiny crystals give smoothness. Larger crystals give graininess. No crystals at all, or the wrong sort, can give sticky, slumping sadness. The fudge-maker's job is to persuade sugar to behave itself. We do this with temperature, stirring, fat, liquid, cooling and beating. Sometimes we do it with a thermometer. Sometimes we do it with experience, observation and muttering.

There are many styles of fudge. British fudge is often firmer and more crumbly, especially when compared with very creamy American fudge. Scottish tablet, which is close cousin rather than identical twin, is more brittle, grainy and sugary. Condensed milk fudge is reliable and popular because the milk solids and sugar have already done much of the negotiating. Chocolate fudge may set because of both sugar structure and chocolate's own firmness. Microwave fudge is modern, shameless and useful. Slow cooker fudge is beloved by those who like their appliances to do a little emotional labour.

Then there is global fudge. Strictly speaking, not every world sweet that resembles fudge is called fudge. Many cultures have their own milk sweets, nut pastes, sugar confections, halva-like slices, coconut squares, bean sweets, condensed milk treats and festival candies. This book does not claim that the whole world has always made fudge under the same name. That would be culinary nonsense, and culinary nonsense is best saved for novelty crisps. Instead, the recipes here are fudge recipes inspired by global flavours, ingredients and sweet traditions. Cardamom, saffron, rose, matcha, sesame, dulce de leche, maple, pandan, coconut, lime, peanut, coffee, pistachio and spice all have their place in the fudge pot.

The aim is not to flatten the world into sugar cubes. The aim is to celebrate flavour respectfully, with clear notes, practical methods and original recipes suitable for a home kitchen.

This book uses British English, metric measurements and sensible home equipment. Where a sugar thermometer is recommended, it is recommended because it helps. Where it is not essential, the recipe will say so. Most recipes are designed for an ordinary kitchen, not a confectionery factory. You will not be asked to purchase equipment that requires a business loan, an extension lead and a risk assessment from three departments.

Each recipe includes a description, yield, timings, ingredients, equipment, method, maker's notes, storage, freezing guidance where appropriate, allergens and swaps, pairing suggestions, and an image prompt for those who want to create visual content for blogs, listings, social posts or book promotion.

The wine and beer pairings are suggestions for adults who enjoy pairing sweets with drinks. They are optional. Fudge also pairs magnificently with tea, coffee, milk, hot chocolate, water, silence, gossip and hiding in the pantry.

A Short History of Fudge, Tablet, Toffee and Sweet-Making Mischief

Nobody knows the exact moment fudge was born, which is probably just as well. If the first batch failed, the inventor may have preferred anonymity.

The most common story places fudge in late nineteenth-century America, possibly emerging from a batch of caramels that had been “fudged”, meaning botched or mishandled. That explanation has the pleasing smell of truth about it. Many great foods began as accidents, thrift, improvisation or stubbornness. Fudge may well have started life as a caramel that lost its nerve and became something better.

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fudge had become associated with American colleges, women’s domestic culture, home entertaining and social sweet-making. It was relatively inexpensive, could be made in a shared kitchen, and was suitable for gifting. Recipes spread through handwritten notes, community cookbooks, magazines and family tradition. Like all good sweets, it travelled through affection as much as through instruction.

Britain, meanwhile, had its own deep traditions of boiled sweets, toffee, tablet, butter tablet, clotted cream sweets, cinder toffee, treacle confections and seaside fudge. British fudge became firmly tied to holiday towns, gift shops, railway outings and sweet counters. Walk along a British seafront and you will find fudge behaving like it owns the place. It sits beside rock, boiled sweets and postcards of questionable taste, looking respectable while quietly planning to stick to your teeth.

Scottish tablet deserves particular mention. It is not simply fudge with a Scottish accent. Tablet is usually grainier, more crystalline, more brittle and intensely sweet. It has a proud snap and crumble. It does not apologise. It is the sort of sweet that looks at fudge and says, “Soft, are we?”

Across the world, many sweets share similarities with fudge even when their histories are separate. Indian burfi, often made with milk solids, nuts, sugar and flavourings such as cardamom or saffron, has a texture that can range from soft and fudgy to firm and grainy. Middle Eastern halva traditions use sesame, nuts or starches in ways that create dense, sliceable sweetness. Latin American dulce de leche sweets rely on cooked milk and sugar. Brazilian brigadeiro offers chocolate and condensed milk in soft, celebratory form. Coconut sweets appear in many tropical regions, from the Caribbean to Southeast Asia. Japanese and East Asian confectionery traditions bring matcha, sesame, bean pastes, yuzu and delicate sweetness to the conversation.

The modern fudge-maker has access to ingredients and influences that earlier home cooks could only dream of. We can make classic vanilla fudge one day and cardamom pistachio fudge the next. We can make salted maple pecan fudge for autumn, coconut pandan fudge for a tropical gift box, Mexican hot chocolate fudge for a chilly evening, or lemon drizzle fudge when we want cake to stop pretending it has the monopoly on joy.

Fudge keeps evolving because it is adaptable. Its base is simple; its possibilities are enormous. That makes it perfect for a handbook.

It also makes it slightly dangerous. Once you realise nearly any flavour can become fudge, you may begin looking at every dessert, drink, biscuit, spice blend and childhood memory with a troubling expression.

This is normal.

How Fudge Works

Fudge is a crystallised sugar confection. The word “crystallised” may sound severe, but it is the key to fudge’s charm.

When sugar is dissolved in liquid and heated, water evaporates and the syrup becomes more concentrated. As the syrup cools, sugar wants to reform into crystals. If left unchecked, those crystals may grow large and coarse. In some sweets, such as rock candy, large crystals are the point. In fudge, they are usually not. Fudge needs many tiny crystals suspended in a mixture rich with fat, milk solids and flavour. Tiny crystals make the fudge feel smooth, creamy or pleasingly crumbly rather than gritty in an unpleasant way.

Temperature matters because it determines the final concentration of sugar. Cook the mixture too low and the fudge may not set. Cook it too high and it may become dry, hard or more like tablet or toffee. The classic target for many boiled fudge recipes is around 114°C to 116°C, often called the soft-ball stage. At this stage, a drop of syrup placed in cold water forms a soft, pliable ball.

Cooling matters because if you beat fudge while it is too hot, sugar crystals can form too soon and become coarse. If you wait until it has cooled somewhat, then beat, you encourage fine crystallisation. This is one reason traditional fudge instructions often say to cool the mixture before beating. It is also the step most impatient cooks resent. Unfortunately, sugar is not moved by resentment.

Stirring matters because stirring at the wrong time can encourage crystals to form where they should not. During the early dissolving stage, gentle stirring helps dissolve sugar evenly. Once boiling, many traditional recipes ask you to stop stirring to prevent stray crystals from causing graininess. Later, beating is deliberately used to create the final texture.

Fat matters because butter, cream, chocolate and milk solids interfere with crystal formation and add richness. Condensed milk, evaporated milk, cream, butter and chocolate all influence how fudge sets. A recipe using white chocolate and condensed milk behaves differently from a traditional cream-and-sugar fudge.

Acid, glucose syrup, golden syrup or invert sugars can reduce crystallisation and help smoothness. That is why some recipes include golden syrup, liquid glucose, honey or similar ingredients. They act like small peacekeepers in the sugar crowd.

Chocolate changes the rules again. Chocolate-based fudge often sets partly because cocoa butter and chocolate solids firm up as they cool. This can make some chocolate fudges easier for beginners, though they still deserve care.

In short, fudge is not magic.

But when done well, it has the decency to taste like it.

Tools You Actually Need

Fudge-making does not require a professional sweet kitchen. A few good tools will make the process safer, easier and more reliable.

A Heavy-Based Saucepan

This is the most important piece of equipment for traditional fudge. A heavy base spreads heat more evenly and reduces scorching. Thin pans are enthusiastic burners of sugar and should not be trusted with your hopes.

Choose a pan with high sides because fudge bubbles up as it boils. A mixture that looks modest at the start can become alarmingly ambitious once heated.

A Sugar Thermometer or Digital Probe Thermometer

A thermometer removes guesswork. For traditional boiled fudge, it is strongly recommended. Clip-on sugar thermometers are useful, but a good digital probe thermometer can also work. Make sure the probe does not rest against the bottom of the pan, or it may read the pan temperature rather than the syrup temperature.

Wooden Spoon or Heatproof Silicone Spatula

A sturdy wooden spoon is classic. A heatproof silicone spatula is excellent for scraping the pan and folding in ingredients. Avoid flimsy utensils, especially those that bend at the first sign of responsibility.

Baking Tin

Most recipes in this book use a square tin of around 20 cm. Some smaller batches use a loaf tin, and larger batches may use a rectangular tin. Exact sizes are given in recipes. A slightly smaller tin gives thicker fudge; a larger tin gives thinner fudge.

Baking Parchment

Line your tin properly. Leave overhanging edges so you can lift the fudge out once set. This is not fussy. It is the difference between neat squares and chiselling sugar from a corner while muttering about betrayal.

Kitchen Scales

Accurate weighing matters in confectionery. Cups are not used as the primary measure in this book because sugar work benefits from precision. Digital scales are inexpensive and useful beyond fudge.

Measuring Jug and Spoons

Use these for liquids, flavourings, salt and extracts. Strong flavourings such as peppermint, rosewater or almond extract should be measured carefully unless you enjoy fudge that tastes like a bathroom cupboard.

Large Mixing Bowl

Useful for cooling certain mixtures, combining additions, or making no-boil fudge.

Sharp Knife

For cutting fudge neatly. A long, sharp knife dipped in hot water and wiped dry can help with cleaner slices.

Palette Knife or Offset Spatula

Useful for smoothing fudge into the tin. Not essential, but pleasing.

Cooling Rack

Helps a filled tin cool evenly. Do not place very hot tins directly on delicate surfaces.

Airtight Tins or Containers

Fudge needs protection from air, moisture and household grazers. A tin with parchment layers is ideal.

Optional But Useful

A pastry brush for washing sugar crystals from pan sides.

Disposable gloves for handling sticky pieces hygienically.

Gift bags, waxed paper, small boxes or parchment squares for packaging.

Labels for allergens and dates.

A bench scraper for neat cutting.

A ruler, if you want square pieces rather than the rustic “every piece is special” approach.

Tools You Do Not Need

You do not need a copper sugar pan, a marble slab, a confectionery guitar cutter, a commercial cooling table, edible glitter in seventeen shades, or a thermometer that connects to a satellite.

If you own such things, delightful. If not, your fudge will cope.

Ingredients Explained

Sugar

Granulated white sugar is the standard for many recipes. Caster sugar dissolves faster but is not always necessary. Soft brown sugar, muscovado sugar and demerara sugar add flavour but can change texture and moisture. Dark sugars bring caramel, treacle and molasses notes.

Butter

Use proper butter unless a recipe says otherwise. Salted butter can be used where salt is already part of the flavour, but unsalted butter gives more control. Butter adds richness and helps texture.

Cream

Double cream gives rich fudge. Single cream is usually too thin for traditional recipes unless adjusted. Clotted cream creates luxurious British-style fudge with deep dairy flavour.

Milk

Whole milk is best when milk is needed. Skimmed milk lacks richness. Evaporated milk gives a slightly cooked dairy note and is useful in traditional fudge.

Condensed Milk

Sweetened condensed milk is a fudge-maker's reliable friend. It contains milk and sugar already cooked down into a thick form, making many recipes easier and quicker. Do not confuse it with evaporated milk, which is unsweetened and thinner.

Golden Syrup

Golden syrup helps reduce unwanted crystallisation and adds a gentle caramel flavour. It is especially useful in British-style fudge.

Liquid Glucose

Useful for smoothness and control. It can be sticky and unglamorous, but it does the job.

Chocolate

Use decent eating or baking chocolate, not bargain chocolate-flavoured optimism. Dark, milk and white chocolate behave differently. White chocolate is sweet and dairy-rich, excellent for flavouring but prone to scorching if overheated.

Cocoa Powder

Adds chocolate depth without too much extra sweetness. Use unsweetened cocoa.

Salt

Salt sharpens sweetness and prevents fudge from tasting flat. Even sweet fudge often benefits from a pinch.

Nuts

Toast nuts before adding them unless the recipe says otherwise. Toasting wakes the flavour and improves texture.

Dried Fruit

Chop larger fruits. Sticky dried fruits can be tossed lightly in icing sugar to prevent clumping.

Extracts and Essences

Use sparingly. Extracts can dominate fudge quickly. Vanilla is forgiving. Peppermint is not. Almond extract is powerful. Rosewater behaves like perfume if overused.

Spices

Fresh spices matter. Old cinnamon tastes like a cupboard. Ground cardamom, ginger, nutmeg, allspice, clove and chilli can transform fudge, but balance is key.

Alcohol-Inspired Flavours

Some recipes include wine, beer, whisky-style, rum-style or liqueur-style suggestions. When actual alcohol is used, it must be handled carefully because excess liquid can affect setting. Some recipes use flavourings instead. Alcohol-based fudge is not suitable for children, pregnant people, those avoiding alcohol, or anyone for whom alcohol is unsuitable.

Hot Sugar Safety

Hot sugar is hotter than boiling water and sticks to skin. Treat it with respect.

Use a deep pan to prevent boiling over.

Keep children and pets away from the cooking area.

Wear long sleeves if possible and avoid dangling clothing.

Use dry oven gloves or heatproof mitts when handling hot pans.

Never taste hot fudge from the spoon while it is boiling.

Do not put your finger into hot syrup.

Do not leave boiling sugar unattended.

Keep pan handles turned inward.

If hot sugar spills on skin, cool the burn under cool running water and seek medical advice where needed.

Do not try to wipe hot sugar from skin immediately, as it can spread the burn.

Set your lined tin near the cooking area before starting.

Read the whole recipe before heating anything.

Do not answer the door mid-boil unless the visitor is carrying a fire extinguisher and excellent timing.

The Fudge Maker's Method

Most traditional fudge follows a pattern.

First, the sugar, dairy, butter and syrup are combined and heated gently until the sugar dissolves. This stage should be calm. Stir slowly. Scrape the base. Do not rush. Undissolved sugar crystals can cause graininess later.

Second, the mixture is brought to a boil. Depending on the recipe, you may stir occasionally or avoid stirring. Watch for scorching, especially with milk-rich mixtures. The thermometer guides you towards the target temperature.

Third, the mixture is removed from the heat and allowed to cool slightly. This pause matters. It allows the syrup to become ready for controlled crystallisation.

Fourth, flavourings are added, and the fudge is beaten until it thickens, loses some gloss and begins to hold its shape. This is where fudge becomes fudge. It is also where your arm may ask whether it has offended you.

Fifth, the fudge is quickly transferred to the prepared tin, smoothed and left to set.

Sixth, the fudge is cut, stored, wrapped, eaten, gifted or defended from relatives.

Common Fudge Problems and How to Rescue Them

Fudge Will Not Set

It was probably undercooked or contains too much liquid. You may be able to return it to the pan, reheat gently and boil again to the correct temperature. If it still refuses, call it fudge sauce and serve with ice cream. Dignity can be restored with a spoon.

Fudge Is Too Hard

It may have been overcooked. Chop it into small pieces and use it as a topping for ice cream, brownies or hot chocolate. Hard fudge is not failure; it is garnish with a backstory.

Fudge Is Grainy

Some graininess is desirable in crumbly fudge or tablet-style recipes. Unpleasant graininess usually means sugar crystallised too early or too coarsely. Next time, dissolve sugar fully, avoid stirring during boiling unless instructed, and cool before beating.

Fudge Is Greasy

The mixture may have split, or the fat was not incorporated properly. Beating can sometimes bring it back together. If not, use the pieces in baking.

Fudge Is Sticky

It may be undercooked, stored somewhere humid, or not cooled fully. Dusting lightly with icing sugar can help, but proper storage is the real cure.

Fudge Burned on the Base

Heat was too high or the pan too thin. Do not scrape burnt bits into the mixture. Transfer the unburnt portion carefully if caught early. Burnt sugar has a way of announcing itself from across the room.

Part One

The Foundation Pan

Chapter One: Classic Vanilla Fudge



Why Vanilla Fudge Matters

Classic vanilla fudge is the sensible black dress of the fudge world. It is simple, flattering, adaptable and never quite as plain as people think. Anyone who dismisses vanilla as boring has either used poor vanilla or has been emotionally damaged by cheap ice cream.

Vanilla fudge is the foundation because it teaches nearly everything you need to know. You learn how sugar dissolves, how the mixture boils, how temperature affects set, how cooling changes texture, and how beating transforms a glossy syrup into a thick, creamy mass. There is nowhere to hide. Chocolate cannot cover the mistake. Nuts cannot distract from the texture. Spices cannot stride in wearing a dramatic hat. Vanilla fudge stands on its own.

This chapter gives you the essential recipe and several original variations. Master these, and the rest of the book becomes less mysterious. You will begin to understand the difference between fudge that is ready and fudge that is merely pretending. You will feel the mixture thicken under the spoon. You will learn the moment when the shine dulls and the fudge starts pulling itself together like a person who has heard unexpected visitors arriving.

Vanilla also gives you a blank canvas for pairings. It works with tea, coffee, dessert wine, stout, pale ale, fruit, nuts, salt, citrus, berries and spices. It can be cut into squares, wrapped as gifts, crumbled over pudding, stirred into ice cream, or hidden in a tin marked “lentils” if your household cannot be trusted.

Recipe One: Proper Classic Vanilla Fudge

Description

This is the dependable foundation fudge: buttery, creamy, sweet and gently fragrant with vanilla. It has enough firmness to cut neatly, enough softness to melt on the tongue, and enough old-fashioned charm to make a modern kitchen feel briefly like a sweet shop with better lighting.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

20 to 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 to 4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

75 g unsalted butter, cubed

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste

A generous pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based medium saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof silicone spatula

20 cm square baking tin

Baking parchment

Sharp knife

Method

Line a 20 cm square baking tin with baking parchment, leaving enough overhang to lift the fudge out later.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk, double cream, butter and golden syrup into a heavy-based saucepan.

Place the pan over a low heat and stir gently until the butter has melted and the sugar has dissolved. Take your time here. Rub a little of the mixture between the spoon and the side of the pan; if you can feel sugar grains, keep heating gently.

Once the sugar has dissolved, increase the heat to medium and bring the mixture to a steady boil.

Attach or insert the thermometer, making sure it measures the syrup and not the base of the pan.

Boil until the mixture reaches 115°C. Stir only occasionally and carefully, scraping the base if needed to prevent catching.

Remove the pan from the heat. Leave the mixture to stand for 5 minutes, undisturbed.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat the mixture firmly with a wooden spoon or heatproof spatula for 5 to 8 minutes, until it thickens, loses some of its shine and begins to hold soft trails.

Quickly pour and scrape the fudge into the prepared tin.

Smooth the top without overworking it.

Leave to cool at room temperature until fully set.

Lift from the tin and cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The beating stage is where the texture develops. Stop too soon and the fudge may be sticky or soft. Beat too long and it may start setting in the pan. You are looking for a mixture that changes from glossy caramel cream to thicker, duller, softly grainy fudge. It should begin to resist the spoon.

If using vanilla bean paste, the little specks give a beautiful appearance and deeper flavour.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin between layers of baking parchment for up to 2 weeks in a cool, dry place.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months. Wrap tightly and thaw at room temperature before opening the wrapping to reduce condensation.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

For a slightly deeper flavour, use salted butter and reduce the added salt.

This recipe is not suitable for dairy-free adaptation without changing the method. Use the vegan fudge chapter for better results.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Late-harvest Riesling or a light Moscato-style dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Milk stout, vanilla porter or a gentle golden ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Strong breakfast tea, vanilla rooibos or milky coffee.



Vanilla Fudge

Recipe Two: Brown Butter Vanilla Fudge

Description

Brown butter adds nutty depth to this vanilla fudge, giving it a toasted, almost biscuit-like flavour. It tastes as if shortbread and fudge had a quiet meeting and decided to improve each other.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 to 4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

A generous pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Small light-coloured saucepan for browning butter

Heavy-based medium saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square baking tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line a 20 cm square baking tin with baking parchment.

Put the butter in a small saucepan over a medium heat. Let it melt, foam and turn golden brown, swirling the pan occasionally. When it smells nutty and has brown flecks, remove it from the heat immediately.

Pour the browned butter, including the brown flecks, into the heavy-based fudge pan.

Add the sugar, evaporated milk, double cream and golden syrup.

Heat gently, stirring until the sugar has dissolved.

Increase the heat and boil to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and let the mixture stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla bean paste and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Transfer to the prepared tin, smooth the top and leave to set.

Cut into squares once completely cool.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use a light-coloured pan for browning butter so you can see the colour clearly. Brown butter moves from perfect to burnt with theatrical speed.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

For a stronger toasted flavour, add 50 g finely chopped toasted pecans after beating, just before transferring to the tin.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Madeira or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale or oatmeal stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Toasted barley tea, strong coffee or chai without too much sugar.



Recipe Three: Sea Salt Vanilla Fudge

Description

This fudge uses salt not as decoration, but as balance. The result is sweet, creamy and clean-tasting, with a little sparkle of sea salt that keeps the sugar from becoming bossy.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

20 to 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 to 4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

75 g unsalted butter, cubed

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half a teaspoon fine sea salt

Half a teaspoon flaky sea salt, for finishing

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the sugar dissolves.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and fine sea salt.

Beat until thick, creamy and beginning to lose its shine.

Transfer to the tin and smooth the surface.

Sprinkle with flaky sea salt while still slightly soft.

Leave to set fully, then cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not overdo the flaky salt. You want little bright moments, not a coastal defence system.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks. Keep away from humidity, as salt on the surface can attract moisture.

Freezer Advice

Freezing is possible, but the surface salt may dissolve slightly when thawed. For best appearance, freeze without the finishing salt and add a tiny pinch before serving.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sauternes, sweet Chenin Blanc or cream sherry.

Beer suggestion: Porter, stout or a lightly salty gose for adventurous palates.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, black tea or sparkling water with lemon.



Recipe Four: Honeyed Vanilla Fudge

Description

Honey gives this fudge a floral warmth and a slightly softer sweetness. It is particularly good for gifting, especially when cut into small pieces and wrapped in waxed paper like something from a village shop that knows everyone’s business.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

20 to 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 to 4 hours.

Ingredients

400 g granulated sugar

75 g clear honey

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

75 g unsalted butter

1 tablespoon golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, honey, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Warm gently, stirring until the sugar dissolves.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and allow to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Leave to cool and set completely before cutting.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use a mild honey for a gentle flavour or a stronger floral honey for a more pronounced character. Very dark honey can dominate the vanilla.

Storage

Store in an airtight container for up to 10 days. Honey can make fudge slightly softer over time.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Not suitable for infants under 12 months due to honey.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Muscat or Tokaji-style dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Honey ale or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Chamomile tea, lemon tea or warm milk.



Recipe Five: Vanilla Cream Tea Fudge

Description

Inspired by the gentle glory of a cream tea, this fudge brings together vanilla, clotted cream richness and a whisper of strawberry. It is not trying to be a scone. A scone has enough responsibilities. This is fudge with afternoon-tea manners.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

20 to 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

430 g granulated sugar

150 g clotted cream

100 ml double cream

120 ml evaporated milk

50 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

40 g freeze-dried strawberry pieces, lightly crushed

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, clotted cream, double cream, evaporated milk, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until melted and smooth and the sugar has dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C, watching carefully as dairy-rich mixtures can catch.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Fold in most of the freeze-dried strawberry pieces, reserving a spoonful for the top.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter over the reserved strawberry pieces and press very lightly.

Leave to set fully before cutting.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Freeze-dried strawberries work better than fresh strawberries because they add flavour without excess moisture. Fresh fruit can make fudge weep, slump or behave like a pudding that has lost confidence.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 1 week. The strawberry pieces may soften over time.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because the strawberry texture may suffer.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

For a raspberry version, use freeze-dried raspberries.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or demi-sec Champagne-style sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Earl Grey tea, Darjeeling or strawberry iced tea.



Chapter Closing Note

Vanilla fudge teaches patience without making a speech about it. It shows the maker how sugar behaves, how texture develops and how small changes produce different results. Once you can make a good vanilla fudge, you are no longer simply following recipes. You are reading the pan.

That is the quiet skill at the centre of this book.

The next chapter moves into chocolate, where fudge becomes darker, richer and slightly more forgiving, though not so forgiving that you can wander off and reorganise the spice cupboard while it cooks.

Chocolate waits for no one.

Next section should continue with **Chapter Two: Proper Chocolate Fudge**, then move through the foundation methods before the global chapters.

Chapter Two: Proper Chocolate Fudge



Chocolate Changes Everything

Chocolate fudge is the recipe people expect first and forgive least.

Vanilla fudge may be judged with a kindly smile. Chocolate fudge is judged with narrowed eyes, because everyone has a private idea of what it ought to be. Some want it dark and grown-up, nearly truffle-like. Some want it creamy and mellow, the sort of fudge that could sit comfortably beside a mug of tea and never use the word “artisan” in public. Some want it firm enough to slice with sharp edges. Others want it soft, melting and dangerous near a warm window.

Chocolate affects fudge in three important ways: flavour, sweetness and setting.

Traditional fudge relies mainly on sugar crystallisation for its structure. Chocolate-based fudge also gains firmness from cocoa solids and cocoa butter. That is helpful, especially in condensed milk or quick-set recipes, but it can create a false sense of security. Chocolate can firm a mixture that has not been cooked in quite the same way as classic fudge, which is why some chocolate fudges feel closer to truffle slabs than boiled sugar confections. Both can be delicious. They are simply not identical.

The quality of chocolate matters. This does not mean you must use rare single-origin chocolate wrapped in paper so expensive it looks like legal documentation. It does mean you should avoid chocolate that tastes waxy, bland or aggressively sweet. Fudge concentrates flavour. If the chocolate tastes disappointing before it goes in, it will not suddenly develop moral character in the pan.

Dark chocolate gives intensity and balance. Milk chocolate gives comfort and nostalgia. White chocolate, which technically contains cocoa butter but no cocoa solids, gives sweetness, dairy richness and a useful blank canvas for fruits, spices and global flavours. Cocoa powder can deepen chocolate flavour without adding more sweetness, but it must be whisked in carefully or it will form little bitter lumps that lurk like kitchen gossip.

Chocolate also scorches if abused. Low, steady heat is your friend. If melting chocolate separately, use gentle heat and patience. If adding chocolate to a hot mixture, remove the pan from direct heat first and let residual warmth do much of the work.

In this chapter, you will make several styles of chocolate fudge: a proper boiled chocolate fudge, a condensed milk version, a dark cocoa fudge, a milk chocolate comfort fudge and a double chocolate fudge with texture. These are foundation recipes, but they are not plain. They are the recipes you return to when you need a reliable gift, a market-stall staple, a family peace offering, or a private square eaten in the kitchen while pretending to check whether it has set.

Recipe Six: Proper Boiled Chocolate Fudge

Description

This is a classic chocolate fudge made with sugar, cream, butter and cocoa, then finished with dark chocolate for depth. It is firm, rich and deeply flavoured without becoming heavy. It has the old-fashioned texture of boiled fudge with the unmistakable comfort of chocolate.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 to 4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

30 g unsweetened cocoa powder

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

75 g unsalted butter, cubed

2 tablespoons golden syrup

100 g dark chocolate, 60 to 70 per cent cocoa solids, finely chopped

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A generous pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based medium saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Whisk

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square baking tin

Baking parchment

Sharp knife

Method

Line a 20 cm square tin with baking parchment, leaving overhanging edges.

In the saucepan, whisk together the sugar and cocoa powder until evenly combined. This helps prevent cocoa lumps.

Add the evaporated milk, double cream, butter and golden syrup.

Place over a low heat and stir gently until the butter melts and the sugar dissolves.

Increase the heat to medium and bring to a steady boil.

Cook until the mixture reaches 115°C, stirring only occasionally and carefully to prevent catching.

Remove from the heat and leave the pan undisturbed for 5 minutes.

Add the chopped dark chocolate, vanilla and salt.

Let the chocolate sit for 1 minute, then beat firmly until melted, thickened and less glossy.

Continue beating for 4 to 6 minutes, until the fudge begins to hold soft trails.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Leave to set at room temperature until firm.

Lift out and cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Whisking cocoa into the sugar before adding liquid is a small but important step. Cocoa powder loves clumping together like villagers around a rumour. Break it up early and the fudge will be smoother.

Do not use very high-percentage chocolate unless you want a more bitter, intense fudge. Around 60 to 70 per cent gives balance.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months. Thaw wrapped at room temperature.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Check chocolate labels for milk, soya and nut traces.

For a softer chocolate flavour, use 50 g dark chocolate and 50 g milk chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port, Banyuls or a rich red dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout, porter or dark mild.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Black coffee, peppermint tea or hot milk.



Recipe Seven: Creamy Condensed Milk Chocolate Fudge

Description

This is the friendly, reliable chocolate fudge that beginners love. It is smooth, quick, less temperamental than boiled fudge, and perfect for gifts. It does not require a sugar thermometer, which immediately makes it popular with anyone who has ever distrusted a dial.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g milk chocolate, chopped

150 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square baking tin

Baking parchment

Sharp knife

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into a heavy-based saucepan.

Place over a very low heat and stir constantly until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape the mixture into the prepared tin and smooth the surface.

Leave to cool, then refrigerate for at least 3 hours until firm.

Lift from the tin and cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Keep the heat low. Chocolate does not enjoy being rushed and will punish impatience by becoming grainy or greasy.

This fudge is technically closer to a quick-set chocolate fudge than a traditional boiled sugar fudge, but it earns its place because it is useful, delicious and unlikely to send beginners into a sugar-based sulk.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks. Bring to room temperature for 10 minutes before serving for the best texture.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate used.

For a darker version, increase the dark chocolate to 300 g and reduce milk chocolate to 200 g.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Milk stout or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cappuccino, hot chocolate or strong tea.



Recipe Eight: Deep Cocoa Fudge

Description

This fudge is for people who want chocolate flavour without excessive sweetness. Cocoa powder gives it a deeper, darker taste and a slightly more grown-up edge. It is still fudge, not punishment, but it has the good manners to balance itself.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

425 g granulated sugar

45 g unsweetened cocoa powder

200 ml evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

80 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

75 g dark chocolate, finely chopped

Half a teaspoon instant espresso powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A generous pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Whisk

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Whisk the sugar, cocoa powder and espresso powder together in the saucepan.

Add the evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup.

Heat gently, stirring until smooth and fully dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the chopped dark chocolate, vanilla and salt.

Beat until the chocolate melts and the mixture thickens.

Continue beating until the fudge loses its glossy shine and begins to hold shape.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Leave to set fully before cutting.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Espresso powder does not make the fudge taste strongly of coffee. It deepens the chocolate. Think of it as turning up the bass rather than inviting a brass band.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Check chocolate labels for soya, milk and nut traces.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Port, Pedro Ximénez sherry or a dark dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Imperial stout or robust porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, black tea or unsweetened cherry cordial diluted with sparkling water.



Recipe Nine: Milk Chocolate Comfort Fudge

Description

This is soft-hearted fudge. It is creamy, mellow, sweet and nostalgic, the kind of chocolate fudge that belongs in lunch boxes, birthday parcels and tins brought out when someone says, “I’ll just have a small piece,” with obvious dishonesty.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g milk chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring continuously until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Because this fudge is sweet, keep the pieces small. Nobody needs a paving slab of milk chocolate fudge unless they are recovering from a great betrayal or building a dessert fort.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya and nut traces depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Light tawny port or sweet sparkling red.

Beer suggestion: Cream ale, brown ale or milk stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Tea, cold milk or malted hot chocolate.



Recipe Ten: Double Chocolate Biscuit Fudge

Description

This recipe adds crushed biscuits to creamy chocolate fudge for texture, crunch and the unmistakable feeling that someone has improved the biscuit tin without asking permission.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g milk chocolate, chopped

200 g dark chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

120 g plain digestive biscuits, roughly crushed

50 g white chocolate, melted, for drizzling

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small heatproof bowl for melting white chocolate

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Melt gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Fold in the crushed digestive biscuits.

Scrape the fudge into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Drizzle with melted white chocolate.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not crush the biscuits to dust. You want pieces large enough to give crunch. Biscuit dust disappears into the fudge like a secret nobody asked for.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. The biscuit texture may soften slightly after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya and nut traces depending on chocolate and biscuits.

Use gluten-free digestive-style biscuits if needed, checking all labels carefully.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout, brown ale or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Builder’s tea, hot chocolate or cold milk.



Recipe Eleven: Chocolate Orange Fudge

Description

Chocolate orange fudge is cheerful, familiar and faintly festive. Orange zest lifts the chocolate, while a little orange extract gives that classic sweet-shop flavour. It is bright without being sharp and rich without being gloomy.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g dark chocolate, chopped

200 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 1 unwaxed orange

Half a teaspoon orange extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Optional: 40 g candied orange peel, finely chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Fine grater

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the orange zest, orange extract and salt.

Fold in the candied peel, if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Orange extract can be strong, so measure it carefully. Too much and the fudge begins to taste like it has been polished.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya and nut traces depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Orange muscat, tawny port or sweet sherry.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate orange stout, porter or Belgian dubbel.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Earl Grey tea, orange hot chocolate or black coffee.



Recipe Twelve: Salted Dark Chocolate Fudge

Description

This is a more grown-up chocolate fudge: dark, smooth, sharp-edged and finished with a controlled sparkle of salt. It belongs beside coffee after dinner, though it also behaves well beside a kettle at half past four.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, 60 to 70 per cent cocoa solids, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon fine sea salt

Half teaspoon flaky sea salt, for finishing

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Melt gently over a very low heat, stirring constantly.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and fine sea salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the surface.

Sprinkle sparingly with flaky sea salt.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Small squares are best. This fudge is rich and direct. It does not need to arrive in great slabs like paving for a chocolate driveway.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months, though the surface salt may dissolve slightly after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Check chocolate labels for soya and nut traces.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Vintage-style port or Pedro Ximénez sherry.

Beer suggestion: Imperial stout, porter or dark Belgian ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, mint tea or sparkling water.



Chapter Closing Note

Chocolate fudge is generous, but it is not careless. It gives beginners a little help through the setting power of chocolate, yet still rewards careful heating, good ingredients and measured flavouring. It can be homely or elegant, childish or adult, plain or dressed for Christmas.

The important lesson is balance. Chocolate brings bitterness, sweetness, fat, aroma and structure. Too much sugar flattens it. Too much heat spoils it. Too many additions turn it into a confused rocky road wearing fudge's coat.

When in doubt, begin with good chocolate, low heat and a pinch of salt.

Chapter Three: Condensed Milk Fudge



The Tin That Made Fudge Less Frightening

Sweetened condensed milk is one of the great conveniences of the sweet kitchen. It is milk and sugar cooked down into a thick, creamy, shelf-stable ingredient with an almost suspicious ability to turn into desserts. It can become caramel, filling, ice cream, sauce, pie, traybake, frosting and, most importantly for our purposes, fudge.

Traditional fudge asks the maker to dissolve sugar, boil to a precise temperature, cool, beat and set. Condensed milk fudge simplifies the process. Because the milk and sugar are already combined and concentrated, and because many condensed milk recipes use chocolate as the setting structure, the method becomes more forgiving. Not foolproof, because kitchens specialise in humbling language like that, but certainly friendlier.

Condensed milk fudge is particularly useful for beginners, gift-makers and busy cooks. It can be made quickly, flavoured widely, and cut neatly after chilling. It also travels well in gift boxes, which makes it excellent for birthdays, Christmas hampers, school fairs, craft stalls and “I brought something” moments when turning up empty-handed would feel socially thin.

There are a few rules.

Use sweetened condensed milk, not evaporated milk. They are not interchangeable. Evaporated milk is unsweetened and much thinner. If you confuse them, the fudge will not simply shrug and adapt. It will become something else entirely, possibly sauce, possibly regret.

Use low heat. Condensed milk catches easily on the bottom of the pan. Chocolate can seize or split if overheated. Gentle heat and steady stirring are the difference between glossy fudge and a pan that requires soaking, scraping and a small apology.

Balance sweetness. Condensed milk is already sweet, so darker chocolate, salt, citrus, nuts, coffee, spices and tart dried fruit can all help keep the fudge from becoming cloying.

Do not overload with wet ingredients. A splash too much alcohol, juice or syrup can prevent the fudge from setting properly. Use concentrated flavourings, zests, extracts, powders and dry inclusions wherever possible.

Condensed milk fudge may not have quite the same crystalline texture as traditional boiled fudge, but it has earned its place. It is reliable, adaptable and democratic. It invites shy cooks into confectionery without demanding that they first learn the soft-ball stage by staring into a pan like a Victorian alchemist.

Recipe Thirteen: Everyday Condensed Milk Vanilla Fudge

Description

A simple, creamy, white chocolate vanilla fudge made with condensed milk. It is sweet, smooth and gift-friendly, ideal for beginners or anyone who wants homemade fudge without boiling sugar to a precise temperature.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

2 teaspoons vanilla bean paste

A generous pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square baking tin

Baking parchment

Sharp knife

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring constantly until smooth and fully melted.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla bean paste and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Chill for at least 3 hours, or until firm.

Lift from the tin and cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

White chocolate is sweet, so the salt matters. It stops the fudge tasting flat and gives the vanilla more shape.

Do not use high heat. White chocolate overheats easily and then behaves as though deeply offended.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya and nut traces depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato, sweet Riesling or light dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Blonde ale, wheat beer or vanilla porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Earl Grey, vanilla rooibos or milky coffee.



Recipe Fourteen: Condensed Milk Coffee Fudge

Description

This is smooth, creamy coffee fudge with enough bitterness to balance the sweetness. It tastes like the square you want beside a strong cup of coffee, except the coffee is already inside it and has brought chocolate for company.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g white chocolate, chopped

150 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons instant espresso powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, dark chocolate, butter and espresso powder into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring constantly until everything is melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Instant espresso powder dissolves cleanly and gives better flavour than ordinary granules. If using granules, crush them finely first.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Coffee liqueur-style dessert drink or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Coffee stout or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, flat white or chilled oat milk coffee.



Recipe Fifteen: Condensed Milk Lemon Fudge

Description

Sharp lemon zest and lemon extract cut through sweet white chocolate to make a bright, cheerful fudge. It has the sunny character of lemon drizzle cake but with fewer crumbs in the sofa.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 2 unwaxed lemons

Half teaspoon lemon extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Optional: 30 g crushed lemon boiled sweets or yellow sugar sprinkles for the top

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Melt gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the lemon zest, lemon extract and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Scatter with crushed lemon sweets or sprinkles if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not add lemon juice. It brings too much liquid and acidity, which can upset the texture. Zest and extract give flavour without causing trouble.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. The topping may soften after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato d'Asti or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, saison or light citrus pale ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lemon tea, iced tea or sparkling elderflower.



Recipe Sixteen: Condensed Milk Peanut Butter Fudge

Description

This is a soft, nutty, deeply satisfying fudge with a lovely salty-sweet balance. It is rich enough to make people close their eyes for a moment, which is either praise or a mild sugar trance.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g white chocolate, chopped

150 g smooth peanut butter

50 g unsalted butter

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 60 g roasted salted peanuts, roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, peanut butter and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Fold in the chopped peanuts if using.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use standard smooth peanut butter rather than very oily natural peanut butter, unless it is well stirred and stable. Excess oil can make the fudge greasy.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and peanuts.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

For a different nut version, use almond butter or cashew butter, checking consistency and allergens.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or sweet Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, stout or nut brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cold milk, banana milkshake or strong coffee.



Recipe Seventeen: Condensed Milk Raspberry Ripple Fudge

Description

A pretty white chocolate fudge rippled with raspberry powder and jammy sweetness. It is ideal for gifts, parties and the sort of afternoon when ordinary squares simply will not do.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

20 g freeze-dried raspberry powder

2 tablespoons seedless raspberry jam

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

Skewer or knife for rippling

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Melt gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Spoon about one-quarter of the mixture into a small bowl and stir in the raspberry powder.

Scrape the plain fudge mixture into the prepared tin.

Dollop the raspberry fudge and raspberry jam over the top.

Use a skewer or knife to ripple gently through the mixture.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not over-swirl. A few bold ripples look better than a pan of pink confusion.

Freeze-dried raspberry powder gives strong flavour without adding too much moisture.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. The jam ripple may become slightly softer after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or sweet rosé.

Beer suggestion: Raspberry wheat beer or fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Raspberry tea, lemonade or sparkling water with berries.



Chapter Closing Note

Condensed milk fudge is the chapter that proves confectionery need not begin with terror. It is practical, generous and adaptable. It allows a beginner to make something impressive before they have memorised sugar stages or learned to interpret bubbling syrup like weather patterns.

Yet it still teaches discipline. Low heat. Good chocolate. Measured flavourings. Not too much liquid. Proper chilling. Clean cutting.

Respect the tin, and the tin will reward you.

Chapter Four: British Crumbly Fudge



The Charm of the Crumble

British crumbly fudge is not trying to be silky.
That is its first virtue.

Some fudge melts like a truffle. Some behaves like soft caramel in polite clothing. British crumbly fudge, when made well, breaks with a gentle resistance and dissolves into creamy, sugary grains on the tongue. It is not gritty in the unpleasant sense. It is sandy in the way a good shortbread is sandy: deliberate, delicate and somehow comforting. It has texture. It has character. It looks as though it belongs in a paper bag bought near a pier, carried home in a coat pocket, and opened before the kettle has quite boiled.

The secret is controlled crystallisation. In smoother fudge, we aim for the smallest possible crystals. In crumbly fudge, the crystals are still small, but more assertive. The mixture is usually boiled properly, cooled a little, then beaten until it thickens and begins to lose its shine. That beating encourages the fudge to set into a firm, crumbly block rather than a glossy slab.

British-style fudge often uses golden syrup, condensed milk, evaporated milk, cream or clotted cream. Brown sugars may appear for deeper flavour. Butter is essential for richness. Vanilla is common, but treacle, sea salt, tea, coffee, fruit and spice all belong comfortably in the tradition.

The danger with crumbly fudge is taking the word “crumbly” too far. We want it to break cleanly, not collapse into sweet rubble. If it is dry, harsh and powdery, it has likely been overcooked or overbeaten. If it is sticky and bendy, it has probably been undercooked or not beaten enough. As with many British things, the ideal sits somewhere between sternness and affection.

This chapter begins with a classic crumbly base, then moves into clotted cream, brown sugar, treacle, tea and seaside salt. These are not delicate confectionery whispers. They are proper squares. They stand up to strong tea, damp weather and relatives who say they “shouldn’t really” before taking four.

Recipe Eighteen: Proper British Crumbly Fudge

Description

This is a firm, creamy, crumbly British-style fudge with a traditional sweet-shop texture. It cuts cleanly, breaks gently and melts into fine sugar crystals as you eat it.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

150 ml evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

100 g unsalted butter, cubed

3 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Sharp knife

Method

Line a 20 cm square tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk, double cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Warm gently, stirring until the butter has melted and the sugar has fully dissolved.

Increase the heat to medium and bring the mixture to a steady boil.

Cook to 116°C, stirring occasionally and carefully to prevent catching.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat firmly for 6 to 10 minutes, until the mixture becomes thick, duller and visibly grainier.

Scrape quickly into the prepared tin.

Press and smooth the top with the spatula.

Leave to cool completely at room temperature.

Cut into small squares once fully set.

Fudge Maker's Notes

For crumbly fudge, beating is slightly more assertive than for smooth fudge. You want the mixture to thicken and lose its gloss. It may begin to set at the edges of the pan. Move quickly once it reaches that stage.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin at cool room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months. Thaw wrapped at room temperature.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Not suitable for dairy-free adaptation without changing the recipe structure.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Cream sherry or sweet Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, mild or milk stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Strong tea, builder’s tea or milky coffee.



Recipe Nineteen: Clotted Cream Crumbly Fudge

Description

Rich, indulgent and deeply British, this clotted cream fudge has a luxurious dairy flavour and a tender crumb. It tastes like a cream tea wandered into a sweet shop and refused to leave.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

425 g granulated sugar

150 g clotted cream

120 ml evaporated milk

75 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

A generous pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, clotted cream, evaporated milk, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the mixture is smooth and the sugar has dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil.

Cook to 116°C, stirring occasionally to stop the dairy catching on the base.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla bean paste and salt.

Beat until thick, dull and beginning to grain.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the surface.

Leave to set completely before cutting.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Clotted cream gives richness but can catch easily. Use a heavy pan and do not let the heat become aggressive. Sugar should bubble, not riot.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 10 days in a cool place.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sauternes or sweet white dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Golden ale, cream ale or light stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Earl Grey, Darjeeling or breakfast tea.



Recipe Twenty: Brown Sugar Crumbly Fudge

Description

Soft brown sugar gives this fudge a mellow caramel flavour and a warmer colour. It is homely, rich and ideal for autumn, though it will not object to being eaten in July by someone with excellent judgement.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

250 g light soft brown sugar

200 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

85 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the sugars dissolve completely.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 116°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thick, less glossy and beginning to crystallise.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Leave to set fully.

Cut into neat squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Brown sugar can contain small lumps. Break them up before cooking or stir patiently while the mixture warms. A hidden lump of sugar in fudge is not treasure.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, porter or amber ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Spiced tea, coffee or hot apple drink.



Recipe Twenty-One: Treacle Crumbly Fudge

Description

Dark, bold and old-fashioned, this treacle fudge has a deep molasses note that makes it perfect for Bonfire Night, winter hampers and anyone who likes their sweets with a little backbone.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

400 g granulated sugar

50 g dark muscovado sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

85 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 tablespoon black treacle

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter, golden syrup and black treacle into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until fully melted and dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil.

Cook to 116°C, stirring carefully now and then to prevent catching.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thick, dull and beginning to turn crumbly.

Transfer quickly to the prepared tin.

Smooth the top and leave to set.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Black treacle is powerful. One tablespoon gives depth. More can make the fudge taste severe, as though it has been raised by Victorian weather.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Porter, stout or dark ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Strong black tea, ginger tea or hot apple and spice.



Recipe Twenty-Two: Strong Tea Fudge

Description

A proper cup-of-tea fudge, made by infusing evaporated milk with strong black tea. The flavour is gentle but distinct, with tannic warmth cutting the sweetness. It is ideal for people who believe tea is not a drink but a national coping mechanism.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

200 ml evaporated milk

3 strong black tea bags

425 g granulated sugar

100 ml double cream

85 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A generous pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Small saucepan or jug for infusing tea

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Warm the evaporated milk gently until steaming but not boiling.

Add the tea bags and steep for 8 minutes.

Remove the tea bags, squeezing them gently without tearing. Measure 170 ml of the tea-infused evaporated milk. Top up with a little extra evaporated milk if needed.

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the infused milk, sugar, double cream, butter and golden syrup into the heavy-based saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the sugar dissolves.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 116°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened, dull and crumbly.

Scrape into the tin and leave to set.

Cut into squares when fully cool.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use a strong everyday black tea or Assam-style tea. Delicate teas disappear under the sugar and dairy. This is no time for a timid teabag.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Cream sherry.

Beer suggestion: Mild ale or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: More tea, naturally. Also good with coffee if you enjoy culinary rebellion.



Recipe Twenty-Three: Seaside Salted Fudge

Description

A firm, crumbly fudge finished with a whisper of sea salt. It tastes like a British seaside sweet shop after a breezy walk: sweet, creamy, salty and just windswept enough to be interesting.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Half teaspoon flaky sea salt, for finishing

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Warm gently, stirring until dissolved and smooth.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 116°C.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and fine sea salt.

Beat until thick, dull and crumbly.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Sprinkle lightly with flaky sea salt while still warm.

Leave to set completely before cutting.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The salt should lift the sweetness, not turn the fudge into a lighthouse warning. Use a light hand.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 10 days. Salt can draw moisture, so avoid humid storage.

Freezer Advice

Freeze without the flaky salt for best results. Add salt after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Chenin Blanc or cream sherry.

Beer suggestion: Gose, pale ale or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Tea, lemonade or sparkling water.



Chapter Closing Note

Crumbly fudge asks for confidence. It wants a proper boil, a firm beating and a clear decision. It does not respond well to nervous half-measures. Once you understand it, though, it becomes one of the most satisfying styles to make because it feels so honest. Sugar, butter, cream and time become something that snaps, crumbles and melts.

It is sweet-shop fudge with its sleeves rolled up.

Chapter Five: Creamy American-Style Fudge



Smooth, Soft and Generous

American-style fudge often leans smoother, creamier and softer than traditional British crumbly fudge. It may use marshmallow crème, chocolate chips, evaporated milk, condensed milk or nut butter to create a reliable texture. It is the fudge of bake sales, holiday tins, family gatherings, Thanksgiving sideboards, Christmas plates and handwritten recipe cards with butter stains in the corner.

This style became especially popular because it is dependable. Marshmallow crème, in particular, helps control sugar crystallisation and gives a smooth, creamy texture. Chocolate chips provide structure. Evaporated milk brings dairy richness without too much water. Nuts add crunch and tradition, especially walnuts and pecans.

Where British fudge often celebrates grain and crumble, American-style fudge often celebrates smoothness and abundance. It is cut thick, shared generously and frequently flavoured with peanut butter, maple, marshmallow, chocolate, peppermint or nuts. It may not always follow the old boiled-and-beaten method in the same way, but it has its own logic and its own devoted audience.

This chapter includes recipes inspired by that smoother tradition. They are not copies of famous commercial recipes; they are original home-kitchen versions designed for British measurements and accessible ingredients. Marshmallow crème can be found in many larger supermarkets, online shops or American-style food sections. If unavailable, some recipes offer alternatives, but for the classic texture it is worth seeking out.

This is fudge that does not whisper. It arrives in generous squares, makes friends quickly and looks at restraint as a distant administrative concept.

Recipe Twenty-Four: Smooth Chocolate Marshmallow Fudge

Description

A creamy, smooth chocolate fudge made with evaporated milk, sugar, marshmallow crème and chocolate. It has a soft, melting texture and a classic holiday feel.

Makes

About 49 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

350 g granulated sugar

150 ml evaporated milk

75 g unsalted butter

180 g marshmallow crème

300 g dark chocolate, chopped

150 g milk chocolate, chopped

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer, optional but helpful

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk and butter into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the butter melts and the sugar dissolves.

Bring to a steady boil and cook for 5 minutes, stirring carefully and constantly, or until the mixture reaches about 112°C.

Remove from the heat.

Add the marshmallow crème, dark chocolate, milk chocolate, vanilla and salt.

Beat until fully melted, smooth and thick.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Leave to cool, then refrigerate until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Marshmallow crème is sticky and ridiculous, but useful. Lightly oiling the spoon or spatula can help it slide out of the jar without creating a scene.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Check chocolate and marshmallow crème labels for egg, soya and gelatine suitability.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Milk stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Hot chocolate, coffee or cold milk.



Recipe Twenty-Five: Walnut Chocolate Fudge

Description

A classic smooth chocolate fudge filled with toasted walnuts. The nuts cut through the sweetness and add a pleasing bite. It is old-fashioned in the best way, like a recipe card that has survived three house moves and one family argument about who owns the good tin.

Makes

About 49 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

350 g granulated sugar

150 ml evaporated milk

75 g unsalted butter

180 g marshmallow crème

400 g dark chocolate, chopped

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g walnuts, toasted and roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk and butter into the saucepan.

Heat gently until dissolved and melted.

Bring to a steady boil and cook for 5 minutes, stirring carefully.

Remove from the heat.

Add the marshmallow crème, chocolate, vanilla and salt.

Beat until smooth and thick.

Fold in the toasted walnuts.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Cool, then chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Toast the walnuts first. Untoasted walnuts can taste slightly bitter and dusty. Toasted walnuts taste as though they have remembered their purpose.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and walnuts.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, nut brown ale or stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, chai or strong tea.



Recipe Twenty-Six: Maple Pecan Cream Fudge

Description

A soft, creamy fudge flavoured with maple syrup and toasted pecans. It is autumn in square form, minus the wet leaves stuck to your shoes.

Makes

About 49 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

300 g granulated sugar

100 g light soft brown sugar

150 ml evaporated milk

75 g unsalted butter

120 g marshmallow crème

250 g white chocolate, chopped

75 ml maple syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g pecans, toasted and roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, butter and maple syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook for 5 minutes, stirring carefully.

Remove from the heat.

Add the marshmallow crème, white chocolate, vanilla and salt.

Beat until melted and smooth.

Fold in the toasted pecans.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Cool, then chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use real maple syrup, not maple-flavoured syrup. The latter may be cheaper, but so is cardboard, and we are not making that either.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and pecans.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, amber ale or maple stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, hot apple drink or spiced tea.



Recipe Twenty-Seven: Peanut Butter Marshmallow Fudge

Description

A creamy peanut butter fudge with marshmallow softness and a salty-sweet finish. This is the kind of fudge that disappears from a tin in mysterious geometric stages.

Makes

About 49 squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

300 g granulated sugar

150 ml evaporated milk

75 g unsalted butter

220 g smooth peanut butter

150 g marshmallow crème

200 g white chocolate, chopped

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk and butter into the saucepan.

Heat gently until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook for 5 minutes, stirring carefully.

Remove from the heat.

Add the peanut butter, marshmallow crème, white chocolate, vanilla and salt.

Beat until smooth and thick.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

This fudge sets softer than traditional boiled fudge. Keep it chilled if your kitchen is warm.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and peanuts.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, stout or peanut butter stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cold milk, coffee or banana smoothie.



Recipe Twenty-Eight: Peppermint Chocolate Holiday Fudge

Description

Smooth chocolate fudge brightened with peppermint and finished with crushed peppermint sweets. It is festive, cheerful and capable of making a kitchen smell like December has arrived wearing a knitted scarf.

Makes

About 49 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

350 g granulated sugar

150 ml evaporated milk

75 g unsalted butter

180 g marshmallow crème

400 g dark chocolate, chopped

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon peppermint extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

50 g crushed peppermint sweets, for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk and butter into the saucepan.

Heat gently until dissolved and melted.

Bring to a steady boil and cook for 5 minutes, stirring carefully.

Remove from the heat.

Add the marshmallow crème, chocolate, vanilla, peppermint extract and salt.

Beat until smooth and thick.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Sprinkle with crushed peppermint sweets.

Cool, then chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Peppermint extract is powerful. Do not pour freely unless you want fudge that clears the sinuses and possibly the room.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze without the peppermint sweet topping if possible, as it may become sticky after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Check peppermint sweets for allergens and gelatine.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout or dark winter ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Peppermint tea, hot chocolate or coffee.

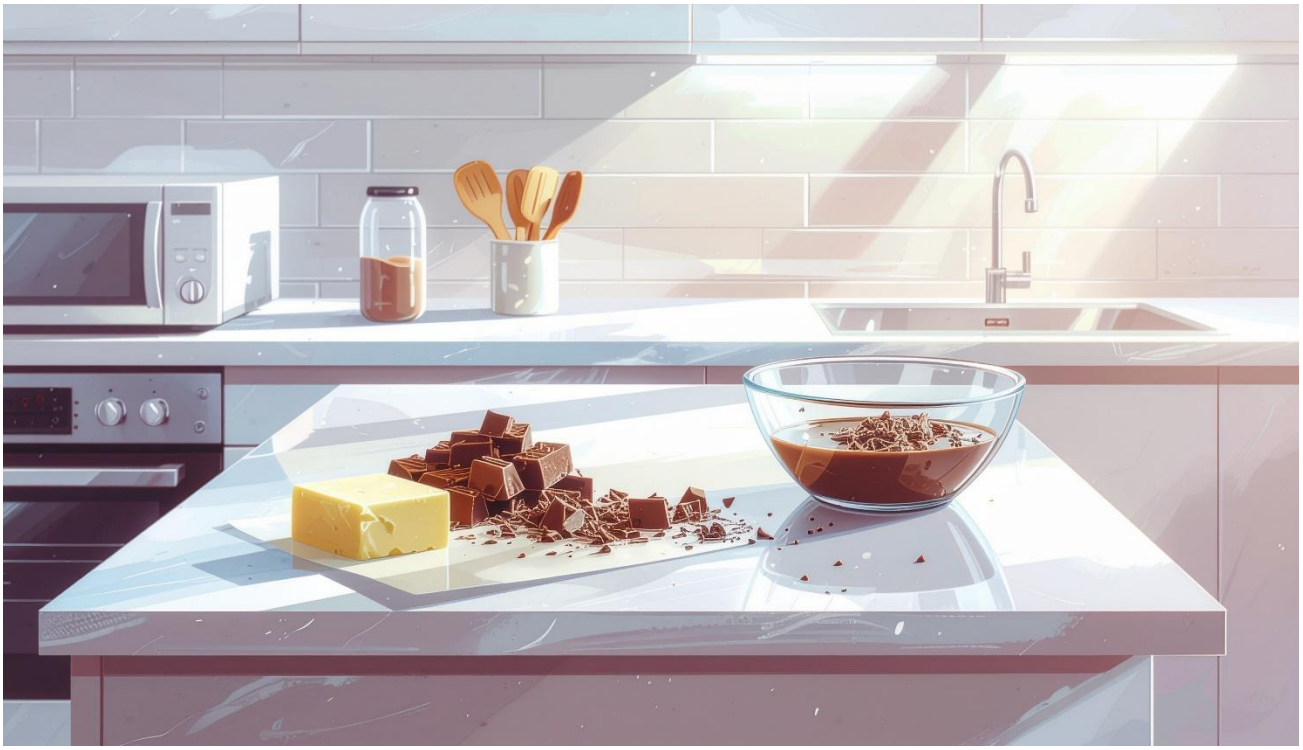


Chapter Closing Note

Creamy American-style fudge is generous by nature. It is softer than British crumbly fudge, smoother than tablet-style sweets and wonderfully suited to nuts, chocolate, maple, marshmallow and festive flavours. It may use shortcuts, but shortcuts are not sins when they lead somewhere delicious.

The next chapter takes that practical spirit even further, into the world of microwave fudge: the method that makes traditionalists raise an eyebrow and busy cooks reach for a bowl.

Chapter Six: Microwave Fudge for the Sensibly Impatient



The Shortcut with Standards

Microwave fudge is not cheating.

It is merely a different route to sweetness, and a very useful one. Not every cook wants to stand over a bubbling saucepan with a thermometer and a prayer. Sometimes you need a gift by teatime, a school-fair contribution, a birthday box, or something sweet because the day has been unreasonable.

Microwave fudge usually relies on condensed milk and chocolate. The microwave melts and combines them quickly, while chilling firms the mixture. It is not the same as traditional boiled fudge. It does not develop the same crystalline structure. But it can be smooth, rich, attractive and delicious.

The microwave does demand restraint. Use short bursts. Stir well between each burst. Stop heating before everything is fully melted and let residual heat finish the job. Overheated chocolate can become grainy, greasy or seized. The microwave is convenient, not magical. It will not forgive you for pressing three minutes and walking away to look for gift ribbon.

Use a large microwave-safe bowl because mixtures can heat unevenly. Stir thoroughly, scraping the sides and base. Add delicate flavourings after melting. Avoid too much liquid. Chill properly. Cut with a sharp knife.

Microwave fudge is excellent for children to help with, provided an adult handles hot bowls and supervises. It is also ideal for flavour experiments. Once you understand the base ratio, you can make biscuit fudge, fruit fudge, spice fudge, nut fudge and colourful celebration fudge without turning the kitchen into a sugar laboratory.

This chapter is for the sensible impatient: those who want speed, but not sloppiness.

Recipe Twenty-Nine: Simple Microwave Chocolate Fudge

Description

A quick, smooth chocolate fudge made in the microwave with condensed milk, chocolate and butter. It is reliable, beginner-friendly and ready to chill in minutes.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

3 to 5 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g milk chocolate, chopped

200 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Large microwave-safe bowl

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the microwave-safe bowl.

Microwave on medium power for 45 seconds.

Stir thoroughly.

Continue microwaving in 20-second bursts, stirring well each time, until almost melted.

Remove from the microwave and stir until completely smooth.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Stop heating while a few small pieces of chocolate remain. Stirring will melt them. This prevents overheating.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Porter or milk stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Tea, coffee or cold milk.



Recipe Thirty: Microwave White Chocolate Funfetti Fudge

Description

A colourful, cheerful fudge for birthdays, parties and people who believe sprinkles are a legitimate emotional support system.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

3 to 5 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

60 g colourful sugar sprinkles, plus extra for the top

Equipment

Large microwave-safe bowl

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the bowl.

Microwave on medium power for 45 seconds.

Stir well.

Continue in 20-second bursts, stirring between each, until almost melted.

Stir until smooth.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Let the mixture cool for 2 minutes so the sprinkles do not immediately melt.

Fold in the sprinkles quickly.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter extra sprinkles over the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use sugar strands or bake-stable sprinkles where possible. Some cheap sprinkles bleed colour instantly, giving you fudge that looks like a clown fell in a puddle.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because the sprinkles may bleed after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Check sprinkles for gluten, soya, colours and other allergens.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sparkling wine for adult celebrations.

Beer suggestion: Light wheat beer or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lemonade, milkshake or birthday tea.



Recipe Thirty-One: Microwave Cookies and Cream Fudge

Description

Creamy white chocolate fudge packed with crushed chocolate sandwich biscuits. It is simple, dramatic-looking and dangerously popular.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

3 to 5 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

160 g chocolate sandwich biscuits, roughly crushed

Equipment

Large microwave-safe bowl

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the bowl.

Microwave on medium power for 45 seconds.

Stir thoroughly.

Continue in 20-second bursts, stirring well, until almost melted.

Stir until smooth.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Fold in most of the crushed biscuits, keeping a handful for the top.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter the reserved biscuits over the surface and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Keep some biscuit chunks large enough to show. If everything is crushed too finely, the fudge turns grey and looks less cookies-and-cream, more fog-and-regret.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Biscuit texture may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya.

Use gluten-free sandwich biscuits if required, checking labels.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Cream sherry or sweet sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Milk stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cold milk, coffee or hot chocolate.



Recipe Thirty-Two: Microwave Salted Caramel Fudge

Description

A fast caramel-style fudge made with white chocolate, condensed milk and brown sugar notes. It is sweet, buttery and finished with salt for balance.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

4 to 6 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g white chocolate, chopped

50 g light soft brown sugar

50 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Half teaspoon flaky sea salt, for finishing

Equipment

Large microwave-safe bowl

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, brown sugar, butter and golden syrup into the bowl.

Microwave on medium power for 45 seconds.

Stir thoroughly.

Continue in 20-second bursts, stirring well each time, until melted and smooth.

Stir in the vanilla and fine sea salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Sprinkle lightly with flaky sea salt.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Make sure the brown sugar dissolves fully into the warm mixture. If it remains grainy, microwave for one more short burst and stir well.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Surface salt may dissolve slightly.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Madeira or sweet sherry.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale or salted caramel stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, chai or hot chocolate.



Recipe Thirty-Three: Microwave Rocky Road Fudge

Description

A hybrid of fudge and rocky road, packed with biscuits, marshmallows and cherries. It is colourful, chunky and utterly shameless.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

3 to 5 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g milk chocolate, chopped

200 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

100 g digestive biscuits, roughly crushed

80 g mini marshmallows

75 g glacé cherries, rinsed, dried and halved

Equipment

Large microwave-safe bowl

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the bowl.

Microwave on medium power for 45 seconds.

Stir thoroughly.

Continue in 20-second bursts until nearly melted.

Stir until smooth.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Let the mixture cool for 3 minutes so the marshmallows do not melt completely.

Fold in the biscuits, marshmallows and cherries.

Scrape into the tin and press level.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dry the cherries well after rinsing. Extra syrup can make the fudge sticky.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because marshmallows and cherries change texture.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya and gelatine depending on chocolate and marshmallows.

Use vegetarian marshmallows if needed.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Hot chocolate, milk or cherry cola.



Chapter Closing Note

Microwave fudge is a useful friend. It is not the traditionalist's grand ceremony, but it is quick, generous and often exactly what a busy kitchen needs. It can make gifts, party trays and sweet treats without demanding a thermometer or a lengthy negotiation with boiling sugar.

The essential rules are simple: short bursts, steady stirring, good chocolate, little liquid and proper chilling.

In other words, impatience is allowed. Recklessness is not.

Chapter Seven: Slow Cooker Fudge



The Gentle Appliance With a Sweet Tooth

The slow cooker has a calmness that confectionery often lacks.

Traditional fudge can feel dramatic. There is boiling, timing, temperature, beating, steam, and the faint sense that the saucepan has entered negotiations without telling you. The slow cooker, by contrast, sits on the worktop with the patient expression of an appliance that has seen stews, soups, pulled pork, rice pudding and family schedules, and is not easily impressed.

Slow cooker fudge is usually made with condensed milk and chocolate. It relies on gentle heat to melt everything together steadily. This makes it useful for people who feel nervous around pans of hot sugar, or for busy cooks who want to make generous gift batches without hovering over the hob. It is also excellent for flavour development, because the slow, even warmth helps chocolate, butter and condensed milk combine smoothly.

It is not the same as traditional boiled fudge. It does not have the crystalline structure of classic pan fudge. It is closer to condensed milk chocolate fudge, with the slow cooker replacing the saucepan or microwave. But it has real advantages. It is less likely to scorch if stirred regularly, it frees up hob space, and it is particularly friendly for larger batches.

There are rules, naturally. Sweetness may be relaxed; sugar is not.

Use the low setting unless your slow cooker runs unusually cool. Stir every 10 to 15 minutes. Keep the lid off for most recipes, because trapped condensation can drip into the fudge and affect the set. Moisture is the enemy of neat fudge. Condensation has ruined many confident plans while looking entirely innocent.

Use good chocolate. Add flavourings at the end where possible. Avoid large amounts of wet ingredients. Line the tin before the mixture is ready. Do not be tempted to leave fudge in the slow cooker while you “just do something else”. That phrase has caused more kitchen disappointment than almost any other.

Slow cooker fudge is perfect for gifting. It makes a generous batch, cuts cleanly once chilled, and welcomes flavours such as chocolate orange, mint, coffee, gingerbread, fruit and nuts. It is also comforting to make. There is something deeply pleasing about turning a practical appliance into a sweet-shop assistant.

The slow cooker will not judge you.

It may, however, make you very popular.

Recipe Thirty-Four: Slow Cooker Chocolate Fudge

Description

A smooth, rich slow cooker chocolate fudge made with condensed milk, milk chocolate and dark chocolate. This is the basic recipe to master before moving into flavoured versions.

Makes

About 64 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

1 to 1 hour 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

400 g milk chocolate, chopped

300 g dark chocolate, chopped

60 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Slow cooker

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square baking tin

Baking parchment

Sharp knife

Method

Line the baking tin with baking parchment, leaving overhanging edges.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the slow cooker.

Set the slow cooker to low.

Leave the lid off.

Stir after 10 minutes, then continue stirring every 10 to 15 minutes until the chocolate has melted and the mixture is thick, glossy and smooth.

This usually takes between 1 hour and 1 hour 30 minutes, depending on the slow cooker.

Turn off the slow cooker.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape the mixture into the prepared tin and smooth the surface.

Leave to cool slightly, then chill until firm.

Lift from the tin and cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Slow cookers vary. Some run hot enough to scorch chocolate at the edges, so stir regularly and scrape the sides. Leaving the lid off reduces condensation and helps the mixture thicken properly.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months. Thaw wrapped at room temperature.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya and nut traces depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout, porter or dark mild.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Black coffee, strong tea or hot chocolate.



Recipe Thirty-Five: Slow Cooker Chocolate Orange Fudge

Description

A bright, rich chocolate orange fudge made gently in the slow cooker. It has the familiar festive flavour of chocolate and orange, but with a smoother homemade texture.

Makes

About 64 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

1 to 1 hour 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g milk chocolate, chopped

250 g dark chocolate, chopped

60 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 1 unwaxed orange

Half teaspoon orange extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Optional: 50 g candied orange peel, finely chopped

Equipment

Slow cooker

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the slow cooker.

Set to low and leave the lid off.

Stir every 10 to 15 minutes until melted, thick and smooth.

Turn off the slow cooker.

Stir in the orange zest, orange extract and salt.

Fold in the candied orange peel if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the surface.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Add orange extract carefully. Chocolate orange should taste cheerful, not like a bottle of cleaning spray has joined the pudding course.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya and nut traces depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port, orange muscat or sweet sherry.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate orange stout, porter or Belgian dubbel.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Earl Grey tea, orange hot chocolate or coffee.



Recipe Thirty-Six: Slow Cooker Gingerbread Fudge

Description

Spiced, cosy and warmly aromatic, this fudge brings together white chocolate, condensed milk, treacle and gingerbread spices. It tastes like winter has put on slippers.

Makes

About 64 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

1 to 1 hour 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

650 g white chocolate, chopped

60 g unsalted butter

1 tablespoon black treacle

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Quarter teaspoon ground nutmeg

Quarter teaspoon ground cloves

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 80 g crushed ginger biscuits, for topping

Equipment

Slow cooker

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, butter and black treacle into the slow cooker.

Set to low and leave the lid off.

Stir every 10 to 15 minutes until melted and smooth.

Turn off the slow cooker.

Stir in the ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Scatter crushed ginger biscuits over the surface if using, pressing them lightly into the fudge.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Treacle gives colour and depth, but too much can affect texture and dominate the flavour. One tablespoon is plenty unless you are making fudge for a family of chimney sweeps.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Biscuit topping may soften after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains wheat and gluten if using ginger biscuits.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or mulled wine.

Beer suggestion: Winter ale, stout or ginger beer-style ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Chai, hot apple juice or ginger tea.



Recipe Thirty-Seven: Slow Cooker White Chocolate Cranberry Fudge

Description

A pretty, giftable fudge with creamy white chocolate and sharp dried cranberries. It is simple, bright and ideal for Christmas boxes, though it behaves perfectly well in spring if nobody checks the calendar.

Makes

About 64 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

1 to 1 hour 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

700 g white chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g dried cranberries

Optional: finely grated zest of 1 orange

Equipment

Slow cooker

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Fine grater, if using orange zest

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the slow cooker.

Set to low and leave the lid off.

Stir every 10 to 15 minutes until smooth and melted.

Turn off the slow cooker.

Stir in the vanilla, salt, dried cranberries and orange zest if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dried cranberries are ideal because they add chew and sharpness without too much moisture. Fresh cranberries are too wet and tart for this method.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or light fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cranberry juice with sparkling water, Earl Grey or white hot chocolate.



Recipe Thirty-Eight: Slow Cooker Mocha Walnut Fudge

Description

Dark chocolate, coffee and walnuts make this a sophisticated slow cooker fudge with proper depth. It is rich, slightly bitter, nutty and excellent with after-dinner coffee.

Makes

About 64 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

1 to 1 hour 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, chopped

200 g milk chocolate, chopped

60 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons instant espresso powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g walnuts, toasted and roughly chopped

Equipment

Slow cooker

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate, butter and espresso powder into the slow cooker.

Set to low and leave the lid off.

Stir every 10 to 15 minutes until melted and smooth.

Turn off the slow cooker.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Fold in the toasted walnuts.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the surface.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Toast the walnuts before adding them. Coffee and walnut are already a grand partnership; toasted walnuts make it official.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and walnuts.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or coffee liqueur-style dessert drink.

Beer suggestion: Coffee stout, porter or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, cappuccino or strong black tea.



Chapter Closing Note

Slow cooker fudge is a lesson in gentle control. It proves that convenience can still have standards and that the quietest appliance in the kitchen may secretly be the one with the best party trick.

The important thing is to respect the method. Lid off. Low heat. Regular stirring. No wandering away for half an episode of anything gripping. Add flavours carefully, chill properly, and cut neatly.

The slow cooker will do much of the work.

It will not, however, wrap the fudge. That remains your problem.

Chapter Eight: Vegan and Dairy-Free Fudge



Fudge Without Dairy, Without Apology

Dairy-free fudge should not feel like a consolation prize.

It should not sit in the corner wearing a worthy expression while everyone else enjoys the good tin. Good vegan and dairy-free fudge can be rich, creamy, smooth, crumbly, chocolatey, nutty, spiced and properly indulgent. The method simply needs to respect the different behaviour of plant-based ingredients.

Traditional fudge relies heavily on butter, cream, milk and condensed milk. These ingredients bring fat, milk solids, sugar, proteins, water and flavour. Remove them and you must replace their function, not merely their name. Vegan butter is not always identical to dairy butter. Coconut milk behaves differently from cream. Oat cream gives a gentler flavour but less fat. Nut butters add body and richness. Dark chocolate may be dairy-free, but always check labels carefully because many brands carry milk traces or contain milk fat.

There are several good approaches to dairy-free fudge.

One is chocolate-based fudge using vegan condensed milk and dairy-free chocolate. This is the easiest route and often gives the smoothest result.

Another is coconut milk fudge, cooked more traditionally with sugar and coconut fat. This can produce a lovely texture, though it may carry a coconut flavour.

A third is nut butter fudge, which uses peanut, almond, cashew or tahini for richness and body. These fudges are deeply flavoured and often very satisfying.

There is also date-based fudge, which is not traditional fudge in the sugar-crystal sense, but can be a dense, sliceable sweet useful for those seeking a different style. In this handbook, it appears as an alternative confection rather than pretending to be classic fudge.

The key is honesty. A coconut fudge will taste faintly of coconut. A tahini fudge will taste of sesame. A dark chocolate vegan fudge will depend entirely on the quality of the chocolate. These are not flaws; they are identities.

For allergy purposes, vegan does not automatically mean safe for everyone. Many vegan recipes include nuts, soya, coconut or gluten. Always label clearly, especially if gifting or selling. Dairy-free also requires careful checking of chocolate, biscuits, spreads, flavourings and decorations.

This chapter gives practical plant-based recipes that stand proudly beside the dairy versions. They are not apologies. They are fudge.

Recipe Thirty-Nine: Vegan Dark Chocolate Fudge

Description

A smooth, rich vegan chocolate fudge made with dairy-free condensed milk and dark chocolate. It is simple, intense and excellent for gifting.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

370 g vegan sweetened condensed milk

500 g dairy-free dark chocolate, chopped

40 g vegan block butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the vegan condensed milk, dark chocolate and vegan butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring constantly until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the surface.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Choose a vegan condensed milk that is thick and sweet. Some versions are coconut-based and will add a subtle coconut flavour.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Dairy-free if using certified dairy-free chocolate and vegan butter.

May contain soya, nuts or coconut depending on ingredients.

Always check labels.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Vegan-certified ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Vegan stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, peppermint tea or oat milk hot chocolate.



Recipe Forty: Coconut Milk Vanilla Fudge

Description

A dairy-free boiled fudge made with coconut milk, sugar and vegan butter. It has a gentle coconut note and a firm, sliceable texture.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

425 g granulated sugar

250 ml full-fat coconut milk

75 g vegan block butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, coconut milk, vegan butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the sugar dissolves.

Bring to a steady boil.

Cook to 115°C, stirring occasionally and carefully to prevent catching.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat firmly until thickened, duller and beginning to hold shape.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Leave to set fully at room temperature.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use full-fat tinned coconut milk, not thin drinking coconut milk. Shake or stir the tin well before measuring.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 1 week in a cool place, or in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Dairy-free and vegan if all ingredients are suitable.

Contains coconut.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Vegan-certified sweet Muscat or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Vegan wheat beer or golden ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coconut milk coffee, chai or pineapple iced tea.



Recipe Forty-One: Vegan Peanut Butter Fudge

Description

A rich, salty-sweet vegan fudge made with peanut butter, dairy-free chocolate and vegan condensed milk. It is smooth, filling and very difficult to ignore once cut.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

370 g vegan sweetened condensed milk

350 g dairy-free white chocolate or dairy-free oat-based white chocolate, chopped

180 g smooth peanut butter

40 g vegan block butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 60 g roasted peanuts, chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the vegan condensed milk, dairy-free white chocolate, peanut butter and vegan butter into the saucepan.

Warm over very low heat, stirring until smooth and fully melted.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Fold in the chopped peanuts if using.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dairy-free white chocolate varies greatly. Some brands are sweeter and softer than others. If the mixture seems loose, add an extra 50 g chocolate and melt gently.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains peanuts.

May contain soya or other nuts depending on chocolate and vegan condensed milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Vegan-certified tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Vegan brown ale or stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cold oat milk, coffee or banana smoothie.



Recipe Forty-Two: Tahini Maple Fudge

Description

A nut-free, dairy-free sesame fudge with tahini, maple syrup and dark chocolate. It is earthy, rich and slightly savoury, with a grown-up flavour that makes sweetness feel balanced.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

300 g dairy-free dark chocolate, chopped

200 g tahini, well stirred

100 ml maple syrup

40 g coconut oil or vegan block butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 1 tablespoon sesame seeds, toasted

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan or heatproof bowl over a pan of simmering water

Heatproof spatula

18 cm square tin or loaf tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the dark chocolate, tahini, maple syrup and coconut oil or vegan butter into a saucepan over very low heat.

Stir gently until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter with toasted sesame seeds if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

This is a softer, chocolate-set fudge rather than traditional boiled sugar fudge. Keep it chilled for the neatest texture.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains sesame.

Dairy-free if using suitable chocolate.

Nut-free if all ingredients are certified nut-free, but check labels carefully.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Vegan-certified sweet sherry or port.

Beer suggestion: Vegan porter or dark ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Turkish coffee, mint tea or black tea.



Recipe Forty-Three: Vegan Date and Almond Fudge Squares

Description

These are not traditional sugar-crystal fudge, but dense, chewy, naturally sweet fudge-style squares made with dates, almonds and cocoa. They are useful, satisfying and require no boiling.

Makes

About 25 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

None.

Chilling Time

2 hours.

Ingredients

300 g soft pitted dates

150 g almond butter

60 g ground almonds

35 g cocoa powder

2 tablespoons maple syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 50 g chopped roasted almonds

Equipment

Food processor

18 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Spatula

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the dates, almond butter, ground almonds, cocoa powder, maple syrup, vanilla and salt into a food processor.

Blend until the mixture forms a thick, sticky paste.

Add the chopped almonds if using and pulse briefly.

Press firmly into the prepared tin.

Chill for at least 2 hours.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use soft dates. If your dates are dry, soak them in hot water for 10 minutes, then drain very thoroughly before blending.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains almonds.

May contain sulphites if dates are treated.

For a nut-free version, use sunflower seed butter and extra ground seeds, checking labels.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Vegan-certified ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Vegan stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Black coffee, chai or almond milk.



Chapter Closing Note

Dairy-free fudge is not a lesser branch of the family tree. It simply grows differently. Coconut milk, vegan condensed milk, nut butters, tahini and dark chocolate all bring their own strengths. The results can be smooth, rich, intense and deeply satisfying.

The main lesson is function. Replace what dairy does, not merely what dairy is called. Add fat, structure, sweetness and flavour in ways that make sense.

Good fudge is not defined by butter alone.

Though butter, being butter, will continue to look smug about it.

Chapter Nine: No-Thermometer Fudge



Reading the Pan Without the Numbers

A sugar thermometer is useful.

It is also not the only way to make fudge.
Long before digital probes, clip-on thermometers and kitchen gadgets that beep as if announcing a spacecraft launch, cooks made sweets by watching, listening, touching, dropping syrup into cold water and learning the personality of a pan. They used experience. They used instinct. They used the cold-water test. Occasionally they used language not suitable for a family cookbook.

No-thermometer fudge is not guesswork when done properly. It uses methods that avoid precise sugar boiling or rely on visual cues and reliable ingredient ratios. Condensed milk and chocolate fudges are especially suitable because chocolate helps the mixture set. Some traditional fudges can also be made using the soft-ball test, where a small drop of boiling syrup is placed in cold water. If it forms a soft, pliable ball between your fingers, the syrup has reached the correct stage.

The cold-water test is simple, but it requires caution. Keep a small bowl of cold water near the stove. Drop a tiny amount of syrup into it using a spoon. Let it cool for a moment in the water before touching it. If it dissolves or forms threads, it needs more cooking. If it forms a soft ball that can be pressed between finger and thumb, it is ready for fudge. If it forms a hard ball or brittle threads, it has gone too far.

This chapter focuses on recipes that are friendly to cooks without thermometers. Some are chocolate-set fudges. Some use condensed milk. Some use the cold-water test. All include clear cues: smoothness, thickness, gloss, resistance and set.

The aim is not to frighten you away from thermometers. If you have one, use it. The aim is to show that fudge-making is not locked behind equipment. You can learn to read the pan. You can listen for the change in the boil. You can notice when a mixture thickens. You can learn the moment when glossy sweetness becomes fudge.

You may also learn that buying a thermometer is still quite a good idea.

Both things can be true.

Recipe Forty-Four: No-Thermometer Chocolate Fudge

Description

A simple chocolate fudge made with condensed milk and chocolate, requiring no sugar thermometer. It is smooth, reliable and ideal for beginners.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g milk chocolate, chopped

150 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Place over a very low heat.

Stir constantly until the chocolate is almost melted.

Remove from the heat and continue stirring until completely smooth.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

What to Look For

The mixture should become thick, glossy and smooth. It should fall from the spatula in heavy ribbons rather than thin streams. If it looks oily, it has overheated. Remove from the heat and beat firmly; it may come back together.

Fudge Maker's Notes

This is the most forgiving no-thermometer recipe in the book. Master it and use it as a base for nuts, biscuits, dried fruit or flavour extracts.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya and nut traces depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Porter or stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, strong tea or cold milk.



Recipe Forty-Five: Cold-Water Test Vanilla Fudge

Description

A traditional vanilla fudge made without a thermometer, using the cold-water test to judge when the syrup is ready. It teaches observation and gives a proper old-fashioned result.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

75 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small bowl of cold water

Teaspoon for testing

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Place a small bowl of cold water beside the hob.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the sugar dissolves completely.

Increase the heat and bring to a steady boil.

Boil without aggressive stirring, scraping the base only if needed to prevent catching.

After about 15 minutes of boiling, begin testing.

Drop a small amount of syrup from a teaspoon into the cold water.

Let it cool in the water for a moment, then gather it between finger and thumb.

If it dissolves or feels like syrup, keep boiling.

If it forms a soft ball that squashes easily, remove the pan from the heat.

Leave the pan to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened, duller and beginning to hold shape.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Leave to cool and set before cutting.

What to Look For

The boil becomes heavier and slower as the water evaporates. The bubbles look thicker. The colour deepens slightly. The cold-water test should give a soft, pliable ball, not a hard pellet.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The cold-water test takes practice. Use tiny amounts and cool them properly before touching. Hot syrup is dangerous, even in small quantities.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Riesling or cream sherry.

Beer suggestion: Golden ale, brown ale or light stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Breakfast tea, coffee or vanilla rooibos.



Recipe Forty-Six: No-Thermometer White Chocolate Pistachio Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge dotted with pistachios. It looks elegant, cuts neatly and requires no sugar thermometer.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g shelled pistachios, roughly chopped

Optional: 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring constantly until almost melted.

Remove from the heat and stir until smooth.

Add the vanilla, salt and lemon zest if using.

Fold in most of the pistachios, reserving a spoonful for the top.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter over the reserved pistachios and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

What to Look For

The mixture should be thick and glossy before the nuts go in. If it looks thin, allow it to cool for 2 minutes and stir again before adding pistachios.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Pistachios bring colour and elegance. Use unsalted pistachios if possible; if using salted, reduce the fine sea salt.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and pistachios.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato or sweet sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Mint tea, green tea or lemon tea.



Recipe Forty-Seven: No-Thermometer Biscuit Tin Fudge

Description

A practical, crowd-pleasing fudge made with chocolate, condensed milk and whatever plain biscuits are lurking in the tin. It is forgiving, crunchy and exactly the sort of recipe that rescues a wet afternoon.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g milk chocolate, chopped

200 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

150 g plain biscuits, roughly broken

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until almost melted.

Remove from the heat and stir until smooth.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Fold in the broken biscuits.

Scrape into the prepared tin and press level.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

What to Look For

The fudge should be thick enough to hold the biscuit pieces in suspension. If it seems very loose, wait 2 minutes before folding in the biscuits.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Digestives, rich tea, shortbread pieces or plain oat biscuits all work. Avoid cream-filled biscuits unless you want a sweeter, softer result.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Biscuits may soften slightly.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten unless using suitable alternatives.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or sweet sherry.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, milk stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Tea, coffee or hot chocolate.



Recipe Forty-Eight: No-Thermometer Coconut Lime Fudge

Description

A bright, tropical no-thermometer fudge made with white chocolate, condensed milk, coconut and lime zest. It is creamy, chewy and cheerful.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

80 g desiccated coconut

Finely grated zest of 2 limes

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

A generous pinch of fine sea salt

Optional: 20 g toasted coconut flakes for the top

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until almost melted.

Remove from the heat and stir until smooth.

Stir in the desiccated coconut, lime zest, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Scatter with toasted coconut flakes if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

What to Look For

The mixture thickens quickly once the coconut is added. Work promptly and press it into the tin before it stiffens.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use lime zest, not lime juice. Juice adds too much liquid and can affect the set.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and coconut.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Riesling or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, pale ale or light fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lime soda, coconut water or iced green tea.



Coconut lime fudge squares with flecks of green zest and toasted coconut on top.

Chapter Closing Note

No-thermometer fudge is about learning confidence. Some recipes avoid sugar boiling entirely; others teach you how to use old-fashioned visual cues. Both approaches are useful.

A thermometer is a tool, not a badge of honour. If you have one, use it proudly. If you do not, you can still make excellent fudge by choosing the right recipes and paying attention.

Fudge has always belonged to ordinary kitchens.

Ordinary kitchens, as we know, are where extraordinary snacks hide.

Chapter Ten: Cutting, Wrapping and Gifting Fudge



The Difference Between Homemade and Handmade

There is a moment in fudge-making when the cooking is done, the slab is set, and the maker feels victorious. This is good. Enjoy it.

Then comes cutting.

A beautiful batch of fudge can be made to look careless by rough cutting, sticky wrapping or poor storage. Equally, a slightly imperfect batch can look charming and professional with neat squares, clean parchment, good packaging and proper labelling. Presentation matters not because fudge is vain, although it might be, but because gifting is part of the pleasure.

Good fudge should be fully set before cutting. This sounds obvious, but impatience is a powerful force. Warm fudge tears, smears and slumps. Chilled fudge can cut more neatly, especially chocolate-set fudge. Traditional crumbly fudge often cuts well at cool room temperature.

Use a sharp knife. For sticky or chocolate-rich fudge, dip the knife in hot water, wipe it dry, then cut. Wipe the knife between cuts for neat edges. For crumbly fudge, use steady downward pressure rather than sawing. A ruler can help if you want uniform squares, though there is nothing wrong with slightly uneven pieces if the tone is rustic rather than commercial.

Small pieces are best. Fudge is rich. A 2.5 cm square is generous enough for most styles. Larger pieces can be wrapped individually for gifts, but remember that fudge is not a sandwich. It does not need to sustain a farm labourer until dusk.

Wrapping depends on purpose. For home storage, use an airtight tin with layers of baking parchment. For gifts, waxed paper, parchment squares, small compostable bags, cardboard sweet boxes, tins or glass jars all work. Keep fudge away from heat, direct sunlight and moisture. Avoid packaging warm fudge, as condensation can make it sticky.

Labelling is essential if gifting beyond your household. Include the flavour, date made, storage advice and allergens. If using alcohol, label clearly. If making vegan, gluten-free or nut-free fudge, be precise and honest. “Made without nuts” is not the same as “nut-free” if your kitchen or ingredients may contain traces.

This chapter includes practical finishing recipes and presentation ideas: fudge for gift tins, fudge shards, mixed boxes, dipped squares and wrapped wedding favour fudge.

Recipe Forty-Nine: Gift Tin Mixed Vanilla Fudge

Description

A neat, reliable vanilla fudge designed for cutting small and packing into gift tins. It keeps well, travels nicely and has a classic flavour that suits almost everyone.

Makes

About 49 small gift squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

75 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Sharp knife

Gift tin and extra parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into small, even squares.

Layer in a gift tin with parchment between layers.

Fudge Maker's Notes

For a mixed tin, divide the cut squares into small groups and dust one group lightly with cocoa, top one with flaky salt, and leave one plain. It gives variety without making three full batches.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze before gifting if needed, then thaw wrapped and pack fresh.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Riesling or cream sherry.

Beer suggestion: Golden ale or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Tea, coffee or hot chocolate.



Recipe Fifty: Chocolate-Dipped Fudge Squares

Description

Classic fudge squares dipped partly in chocolate for a polished gift finish. The contrast between crumbly fudge and crisp chocolate makes them feel special without requiring complicated decoration.

Makes

About 36 dipped squares.

Preparation Time

30 minutes.

Cooking Time

As needed for the fudge base.

Setting Time

1 hour after dipping.

Ingredients

36 squares fully set vanilla, chocolate or crumbly fudge

250 g dark, milk or white chocolate, chopped

1 teaspoon neutral oil, optional, for a thinner coating

Optional toppings: chopped nuts, freeze-dried fruit, flaky sea salt or crushed biscuits

Equipment

Heatproof bowl

Small saucepan for bain-marie or microwave-safe bowl

Baking tray

Baking parchment

Fork or dipping tool

Method

Line a baking tray with parchment.

Melt the chocolate gently in a heatproof bowl over barely simmering water, or in short microwave bursts.

Stir in the neutral oil if using.

Dip each fudge square halfway into the melted chocolate.

Let excess chocolate drip off.

Place on the lined tray.

Add toppings while the chocolate is still wet.

Leave to set at cool room temperature or chill briefly.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not dip warm fudge. It must be fully set and cool, or it may soften into the chocolate. Half-dipping is easier and often prettier than full coating.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in a cool place for up to 1 week, or in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze undipped fudge if possible. Chocolate coating may bloom after freezing.

Allergens and Swaps

Depends on fudge base and chocolate used.

Check toppings carefully for nuts, gluten, milk and soya.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Port or sweet sparkling wine, depending on the fudge flavour.

Beer suggestion: Stout, porter or wheat beer for white chocolate versions.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, tea or chilled milk.



Recipe Fifty-One: Wedding Favour Vanilla Rose Fudge

Description

A delicate vanilla and rose fudge designed for small favour boxes. The rose is subtle, floral and elegant, not the sort that makes people think of soap and panic.

Makes

About 64 small favour pieces.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

75 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon rosewater

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: dried edible rose petals, food-safe and unsprayed, for finishing

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small favour boxes or bags

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla, rosewater and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Scatter lightly with dried rose petals if using.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into small squares.

Pack into favour boxes with allergen and date labels.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Rosewater is powerful. Use less than you think. You can always add a drop more next time; you cannot remove "grandmother's dressing table" once it has entered the pan.

Storage

Store in an airtight container for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze without rose petals if possible. Add petals after thawing for best appearance.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Check dried rose petals are edible and food-safe.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or delicate fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Rose tea, Earl Grey or sparkling elderflower.



Recipe Fifty-Two: Fudge Shards for Dessert Boards

Description

Thin-set fudge cut or broken into shards for dessert boards, ice cream toppings, coffee plates or party platters. It is less formal than squares and very useful for presentation.

Makes

One tray of shards.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g dark chocolate, chopped

200 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional toppings: chopped roasted hazelnuts, cocoa nibs, crushed biscuits or freeze-dried berries

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Large shallow baking tray

Baking parchment

Method

Line a large shallow baking tray with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Spread thinly over the lined tray.

Scatter with toppings if using.

Chill until firm.

Break or cut into irregular shards.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The thinner layer gives a different eating experience: firmer, neater and useful for decorating desserts. It is also excellent crumbled over ice cream.

Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Toppings may contain nuts, gluten or soya.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, hot chocolate or cherry cordial with sparkling water.



Recipe Fifty-Three: Market Stall Salted Caramel Fudge

Description

A neat, gift-ready salted caramel fudge designed for cutting, packing and presenting. It is sweet, buttery and popular, with enough salt to make customers, guests or relatives come back “just to check”.

Makes

About 64 small pieces.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

20 to 30 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

350 g granulated sugar

100 g light soft brown sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

3 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Half teaspoon flaky sea salt, for finishing

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Sharp knife

Packaging bags or boxes

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved and smooth.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and fine sea salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the surface.

Sprinkle lightly with flaky sea salt.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into small pieces and pack with clear labels.

Fudge Maker's Notes

For selling or public gifting, label allergens clearly and include the date made. Keep batches consistent by weighing pieces if needed.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze before final packaging if needed.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Madeira or cream sherry.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, amber ale or stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, chai or strong tea.



Chapter Closing Note

Cutting and wrapping are not afterthoughts. They are the final chapter of the recipe before the fudge reaches someone else. A neat square, a clean label, a good tin or a folded piece of waxed paper turns sugar and butter into a gift.

Homemade is what you make.

Handmade is how you present it.

Part Two - British and Irish Fudge

Chapter Eleven: Clotted Cream, Treacle and Tea



The Flavours of the British Sweet Tin

British and Irish fudge flavours often come from familiar comforts: cream, tea, treacle, oats, butter, biscuits, dried fruit, whisky-style warmth, brown sugar, sea salt, pudding spices and old-fashioned sweets. They are flavours of cupboards and coastlines, farmhouse kitchens and railway cafés, school fêtes and Christmas fairs.

Clotted cream brings luxury. It is thick, golden and deeply dairy-rich, especially associated with Devon and Cornwall. In fudge, it gives a plush texture and a flavour that feels instantly nostalgic, even if your childhood involved more margarine than clotted cream.

Treacle brings depth and darkness. It is not subtle, but it is magnificent when controlled. Too much treacle makes fudge stern. Just enough gives it a bonfire warmth, like smoke, molasses and winter coats.

Tea is gentler but deeply British. Infusing milk or cream with strong black tea gives fudge a tannic note that balances sweetness. It is not loudly flavoured; it is quietly civilised. It tastes like a square that knows how to queue.

This chapter gathers those comforting flavours into original recipes with a British and Irish spirit. They are not delicate patisserie. They are the sort of fudge you put in a tin and bring out when someone arrives damp, tired or in need of cheering up.

Recipe Fifty-Four: Devon Clotted Cream Vanilla Fudge

Description

A rich, pale fudge with the luxurious flavour of clotted cream and vanilla. It is smooth at first bite, then gently crumbly as it melts.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

425 g granulated sugar

170 g clotted cream

100 ml evaporated milk

75 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, clotted cream, evaporated milk, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until smooth and fully dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and beginning to lose its shine.

Scrape into the tin.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The clotted cream gives richness, so small pieces are ideal. This fudge is particularly good in gift boxes because it feels classic and generous.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sauternes or sweet Chenin Blanc.

Beer suggestion: Golden ale or cream ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Darjeeling, breakfast tea or milky coffee.



Recipe Fifty-Five: Black Treacle Bonfire Fudge

Description

A dark, bold fudge with black treacle, brown sugar and a hint of ginger. It is made for cold evenings, fireworks, woollen scarves and people who say they do not want much pudding before eating it anyway.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

350 g granulated sugar

100 g dark brown soft sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 tablespoon black treacle

Half teaspoon ground ginger

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter, golden syrup and black treacle into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 116°C.

Remove from the heat and stand for 5 minutes.

Add the ginger, vanilla and salt.

Beat until thick and dull.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Leave to set fully.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The ginger should warm the fudge, not dominate it. Add cinnamon as well if you want a more spiced winter version.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or mulled wine.

Beer suggestion: Stout, porter or winter ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Ginger tea, hot apple juice or strong black tea.



Recipe Fifty-Six: Proper Breakfast Tea Fudge

Description

A gentle, comforting fudge infused with strong breakfast tea. It is creamy, sweet and lightly tannic, ideal with an actual cup of tea because Britain does enjoy repeating a theme.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

220 ml evaporated milk

4 strong breakfast tea bags

425 g granulated sugar

100 ml double cream

80 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Small saucepan or heatproof jug

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Warm the evaporated milk until steaming.

Add the tea bags and steep for 10 minutes.

Remove the bags, squeezing gently. Measure 170 ml infused milk.

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the infused milk, sugar, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Scrape into the tin.

Leave to set and cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

A strong tea infusion is essential. Weak tea disappears entirely, which is unacceptable in any respectable kitchen.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Cream sherry.

Beer suggestion: Mild ale or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Breakfast tea, naturally, or coffee for the daring.



Recipe Fifty-Seven: Irish Cream-Style Fudge

Description

A creamy chocolate fudge inspired by Irish cream flavours: chocolate, coffee, vanilla and a hint of whisky-style warmth. It can be made with actual Irish cream liqueur or alcohol-free flavour notes.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g milk chocolate, chopped

200 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons Irish cream liqueur, or 1 teaspoon coffee extract plus 1 teaspoon vanilla extract for an alcohol-free version

Half teaspoon instant espresso powder

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over very low heat until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the Irish cream liqueur, espresso powder and salt.

For the alcohol-free version, stir in coffee extract, vanilla and salt instead.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not add extra liqueur, tempting though it may be. Too much liquid can soften the fudge and turn gift boxes into a sticky situation.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week if made with liqueur, or up to 2 weeks for the alcohol-free version.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains alcohol if made with liqueur.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Not needed if using liqueur, but tawny port works well.

Beer suggestion: Stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, hot chocolate or vanilla rooibos.



Chapter Closing Note

Clotted cream, treacle and tea give fudge a sense of place. These are flavours that feel rooted in weather, habit and comfort. They do not shout for attention. They sit in the tin and quietly become the piece everyone reaches for first.

British and Irish fudge works because it knows sweetness needs memory.

And possibly a very strong cup of tea.

Chapter Twelve: Puddings, Biscuits and Rainy-Day Sweetshops



When Pudding Climbs Into the Fudge Tin

Britain has never been shy about pudding.

We have steamed puddings, baked puddings, nursery puddings, school puddings, cold puddings, hot puddings, puddings with custard, puddings that require sauce, puddings that arrive in bowls large enough to suggest emotional weather. If there is a grey sky and someone has had a difficult day, pudding becomes less of a course and more of a public service.

Fudge borrows beautifully from puddings because both depend on comfort. Sticky toffee pudding brings dates, brown sugar and toffee notes. Lemon drizzle cake brings citrus brightness and the memory of church-hall cake stands. Rhubarb and custard brings sharp fruit and creamy sweetness. Chocolate biscuit cake brings crunch and nostalgia. Bakewell tart brings almond and cherry. Ginger sponge brings spice and warmth. Jam roly-poly, frankly, has been waiting for someone to take it seriously in fudge form.

The challenge is not flavour inspiration. The challenge is moisture.

Many puddings rely on wet ingredients: fresh fruit, sauces, custard, syrup and jam. Fudge does not appreciate too much liquid. The trick is to use concentrated flavours: freeze-dried fruit, fruit powders, zests, extracts, dried fruit, crushed biscuits, cocoa, spice, brown sugar and careful ripples of thick jam or caramel. You want the memory of the pudding, not the pudding itself falling face-first into the fudge.

Biscuits are easier, but still need thought. Crisp biscuits add texture, but they soften over time. Shortbread gives buttery richness. Digestives bring a homely wheat note. Gingernuts add spice and crunch. Amaretti bring almond fragrance. Bourbon biscuits, custard creams and sandwich biscuits all work, but their fillings make the fudge sweeter and softer.

This chapter is cheerful, nostalgic and slightly mischievous. These recipes are not trying to be authentic puddings. They are fudge recipes inspired by the flavours of British sweets, cakes and biscuit tins. They are for rainy afternoons, gift boxes, bake sales, Christmas hampers, family visits and any day when the weather has looked through the window and said, “You’ll be needing sugar.”

Recipe Fifty-Eight: Sticky Toffee Pudding Fudge

Description

A rich brown sugar fudge with dates, vanilla and toffee notes, inspired by sticky toffee pudding. It is soft, deep and comforting, with the good sense to arrive already cut into squares.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

250 g light soft brown sugar

175 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

3 tablespoons golden syrup

75 g soft pitted dates, finely chopped

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 2 tablespoons thick caramel sauce for rippling

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small knife or skewer, if rippling caramel

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the dates and evaporated milk into a small bowl and leave for 10 minutes to soften.

Tip the date mixture into the saucepan.

Add both sugars, double cream, butter and golden syrup.

Heat gently, stirring until the butter has melted and the sugars have dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C, stirring carefully now and then to stop the dates catching.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened, darker and less glossy.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

If using caramel sauce, dot it over the top and ripple lightly with a skewer.

Leave to set fully before cutting.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Chop the dates finely so they melt into the fudge rather than forming chewy lumps. You want sticky toffee depth, not surprise fruit archaeology.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Caramel ripple may soften after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain sulphites if dates are treated.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, sticky toffee stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Strong tea, coffee or hot apple drink.



Recipe Fifty-Nine: Rhubarb and Custard Fudge

Description

A nostalgic white chocolate fudge with tangy rhubarb powder and creamy custard notes. It is pink, pale, cheerful and tastes faintly like a sweet shop remembered through rain.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons custard powder

20 g freeze-dried rhubarb powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Optional: a few drops pink food colouring

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer or knife for rippling

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, butter and custard powder into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth and thick.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Spoon one-third of the mixture into a small bowl.

Stir the rhubarb powder and pink colouring, if using, into that smaller portion.

Scrape the custard fudge into the prepared tin.

Dollop the rhubarb fudge over the top.

Ripple gently with a skewer.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

Freeze-dried rhubarb powder gives tang without water. Fresh rhubarb is too wet and would make the fudge sulk.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Colour may soften slightly after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Custard powder may contain maize and colourings; check labels.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or sweet Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Fruit beer, wheat beer or light pale ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Rhubarb cordial with sparkling water, tea or vanilla milk.



Recipe Sixty: Lemon Drizzle Fudge

Description

A bright, zesty fudge inspired by lemon drizzle cake. It is creamy, sharp-edged and finished with a crunchy lemon sugar topping.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 2 unwaxed lemons

Half teaspoon lemon extract

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

For the topping

2 tablespoons granulated sugar

Finely grated zest of 1 unwaxed lemon

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Mix the topping sugar and lemon zest in a small bowl, rubbing them together with your fingertips until fragrant.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the lemon zest, lemon extract, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Scatter with the lemon sugar topping.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

Use zest, not juice. Lemon juice brings brightness but also liquid, and liquid is how fudge begins writing its resignation letter.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month, though the sugar topping may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, saison or citrus pale ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lemon tea, iced tea or sparkling elderflower.



Recipe Sixty-One: Bakewell Cherry Almond Fudge

Description

A white chocolate almond fudge with glacé cherries and a Bakewell-inspired flavour. It is sweet, fragrant and rather pleased with itself.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon almond extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

100 g glacé cherries, rinsed, dried and chopped

60 g flaked almonds, lightly toasted

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Rinse the glacé cherries and dry them thoroughly on kitchen paper.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla, almond extract and salt.

Fold in the chopped cherries and most of the toasted flaked almonds.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter the remaining almonds over the top and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dry the cherries properly. Sticky syrup can make the fudge too soft around the fruit. Almond extract is strong, so keep it restrained.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because cherries may weep slightly.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and almonds.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet rosé or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Blonde ale or cherry beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cherry tea, almond milk or breakfast tea.



Recipe Sixty-Two: Ginger Biscuit Fudge

Description

A warm, spiced fudge packed with crushed gingernut biscuits. It has crunch, heat and the cheerful stubbornness of a biscuit that refuses to go quietly into tea.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g white chocolate, chopped

150 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon ground ginger

Half teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

140 g gingernut biscuits, roughly crushed

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the ginger, cinnamon, vanilla and salt.

Fold in most of the crushed gingernuts, reserving a handful for the top.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter over the reserved biscuits and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Leave some biscuit pieces chunky for texture. Too much biscuit dust makes the fudge muddy rather than crunchy.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Biscuit topping may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Use gluten-free ginger biscuits if needed.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or cream sherry.

Beer suggestion: Ginger beer-style ale, stout or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Ginger tea, chai or hot apple juice.



Recipe Sixty-Three: Jam Roly-Poly Fudge

Description

A playful fudge inspired by jam roly-poly, with creamy vanilla fudge and a careful raspberry jam ripple. It is nostalgic, sweet and much easier to slice than a suet pudding, which is already a promising start.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

3 tablespoons thick seedless raspberry jam

30 g freeze-dried raspberry pieces, lightly crushed

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer or knife for rippling

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Warm the jam briefly if very stiff, then dot it over the fudge.

Ripple gently with a skewer.

Scatter freeze-dried raspberry pieces over the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use thick jam and a light hand. Too much jam makes the fudge sticky and difficult to cut. The freeze-dried raspberries boost flavour without extra moisture.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because the jam ripple may become wet.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or sweet Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Fruit beer or wheat beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Raspberry tea, lemonade or hot custard-style milk.



Chapter Closing Note

Pudding fudge is joy with a memory. It takes the flavours of childhood bowls, cake tins and rainy-day treats and sets them into squares small enough to pretend they are sensible. The secret is concentration: use zest, powder, dried fruit, spice, biscuit, extract and restrained ripples rather than pouring wet pudding into a fudge base and hoping for the best.

Hope is admirable.

Condensation and jam are stronger.

Chapter Thirteen: Irish Cream, Oats and Fireside Fudge



Sweetness by the Fire

Irish-inspired fudge flavours suit warmth.

Not heat exactly, though the hob is involved. Warmth. The sort found in oats, cream, coffee, chocolate, butter, brown sugar, dried fruit and the suggestion of a fireside when rain is bothering the windows. Irish sweet traditions include bakes, breads, dairy richness, tea-table comforts and festive flavours that translate beautifully into fudge.

Oats bring a wholesome nuttiness, but they must be used carefully. Raw oats can taste dusty in fudge. Toasted oats, oat biscuits or oat crumble toppings are better. They add texture and flavour without making the fudge feel like breakfast has taken a wrong turning.

Irish cream-style flavours are popular because chocolate, cream, coffee and vanilla work so naturally together. Actual Irish cream liqueur can be used in small amounts, but too much liquid will soften fudge. Alcohol-free versions can be made with coffee extract, vanilla and a little cream flavouring or simply a balanced chocolate-coffee base.

Dried fruit and spice offer a fruitcake-like direction. Raisins, sultanas, cherries, candied peel and mixed spice can make fudge feel festive and generous. Again, moisture control matters. Rinse sticky fruit only if necessary, then dry thoroughly.

This chapter leans into comfort: oats, coffee, chocolate, cream-style flavours, fruit and firelight. These are recipes for late afternoons, winter boxes, grown-up gifts and quiet evenings when the kitchen light is on before teatime.

Recipe Sixty-Four: Oat Crumble Fudge

Description

A creamy brown sugar fudge topped with buttery toasted oat crumble. It has the comfort of a fruit crumble topping without requiring fruit to misbehave in the fudge.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

25 minutes.

Cooking Time

30 to 40 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

For the fudge

250 g light soft brown sugar

175 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

85 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

For the oat crumble

50 g rolled oats

25 g plain flour

25 g light soft brown sugar

30 g unsalted butter, melted

A pinch of cinnamon

Equipment

Small baking tray

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Heat the oven to 170°C fan.

Mix the oats, flour, brown sugar, melted butter and cinnamon in a small bowl.

Spread on a baking tray and bake for 8 to 10 minutes until golden.

Leave to cool.

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thick and less glossy.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter the oat crumble over the top and press lightly.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The oat crumble should be cool before it goes on the fudge. Warm crumble can soften the surface and make cutting untidy.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing, as the crumble may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

Oats may contain gluten unless certified gluten-free.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, oatmeal stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Tea, coffee or hot apple juice.



Recipe Sixty-Five: Irish Coffee Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate coffee fudge with an optional whisky-style note. It is rich, smooth and suitable for after dinner, provided dinner has behaved itself.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

400 g dark chocolate, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons instant espresso powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 tablespoon Irish whiskey, optional

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate, butter and espresso powder into the saucepan.

Warm over very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla, whiskey if using, and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Keep the whiskey to one tablespoon. More may soften the set and make the fudge taste harsh. For an alcohol-free version, omit it and add an extra half teaspoon vanilla.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week if using whiskey, or up to 2 weeks without.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains alcohol if whiskey is used.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Coffee stout or dry stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Black coffee, cappuccino or strong tea.



Recipe Sixty-Six: Fruitcake Fireside Fudge

Description

A spiced fudge with dried fruit, candied peel and brown sugar, inspired by the cosy richness of fruitcake. It is festive without needing to mature in a cupboard for three months and frighten the family.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g white chocolate, chopped

150 g milk chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon mixed spice

Half teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g mixed dried fruit and candied peel

Optional: 1 tablespoon brandy or orange juice flavouring, not fresh juice

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

If the dried fruit is very sticky, separate it with your fingers and pat dry.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the mixed spice, cinnamon, vanilla, salt and brandy or orange flavouring if using.

Fold in the dried fruit and peel.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the surface.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use flavouring rather than fresh juice. Fresh juice adds liquid and can shorten storage life. Dried fruit brings enough chew and flavour.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Dried fruit may contain sulphites.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Contains alcohol if brandy is used.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Mulled wine, port or sweet Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Winter ale, stout or dark mild.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Spiced tea, hot apple drink or ginger tea.



Recipe Sixty-Seven: Toasted Oat and Honey Fudge

Description

A mellow fudge with toasted oats and honey, bringing a gentle farmhouse flavour. It is sweet, nutty and quietly comforting.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

400 g granulated sugar

75 g clear honey

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

80 g unsalted butter

1 tablespoon golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

60 g rolled oats, toasted

Equipment

Small frying pan

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Toast the oats in a dry frying pan over a medium heat for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring often, until lightly golden and nutty. Leave to cool.

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, honey, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Fold in most of the toasted oats, reserving a spoonful for the top.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with the remaining oats and press lightly.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Toasted oats are much better than raw oats here. Raw oats taste too worthy, which is a dangerous quality in fudge.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month, though oats may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Oats may contain gluten unless certified gluten-free.

Contains honey, so not suitable for infants under 12 months.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Muscat or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Golden ale, honey ale or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Chamomile tea, breakfast tea or warm milk.



Chapter Closing Note

Irish-inspired and fireside fudge is not about loud flavours. It is about warmth, richness and the feeling that someone has put something sweet in a tin because the weather cannot be trusted. Oats, coffee, chocolate, dried fruit and cream-style notes all make fudge feel generous and settled.

There are sweets for parties.

These are sweets for chairs pulled closer to the fire.

Part Three - European Fudge

Chapter Fourteen: Chocolate Houses and Pastry Windows



Borrowing from the Patisserie Window

Europe gives the fudge-maker an almost unfair number of flavour ideas.

Walk past a pastry window in France, Italy, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Spain or Portugal and you will see chocolate, nuts, cream, custard, coffee, orange, almond, cherry, caramel, spice and fruit arranged with a level of confidence that makes ordinary biscuits feel underdressed. Fudge can borrow from that world without pretending to be patisserie. It can take the flavour memory of a tart, cake, praline or café sweet and turn it into a square.

This must be done with care. A custard tart is not fudge. A Black Forest gateau is not fudge. A Belgian truffle is not fudge. But their flavour structures can inspire fudge: custard and cinnamon, chocolate and cherry, hazelnut and cocoa, coffee and cream, orange and almond, vanilla and caramelised sugar.

European flavours often benefit from restraint. Too much extract, too much sweetness, or too many toppings can turn elegance into a souvenir shop. Use good chocolate, toasted nuts, citrus zest, proper coffee and carefully measured flavourings. Let the ingredients speak clearly.

This chapter is the start of the European section, beginning with patisserie and café-inspired recipes. These fudges are useful for gifts, after-dinner plates and more polished boxes. They are still homemade, but they have brushed their hair.

Recipe Sixty-Eight: Italian Hazelnut Chocolate Fudge

Description

A rich chocolate fudge with toasted hazelnuts and a smooth nut-chocolate flavour inspired by Italian gianduja. It is elegant, nutty and deeply satisfying.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g milk chocolate, chopped

200 g dark chocolate, chopped

120 g hazelnut spread

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g toasted hazelnuts, roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate, hazelnut spread and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Fold in most of the toasted hazelnuts, reserving some for the top.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with reserved hazelnuts and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Toast the hazelnuts and rub off loose skins for the best flavour. A few skins are fine; perfection is not required unless you are being watched by an Italian grandmother, in which case good luck.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and hazelnuts.

May contain soya depending on chocolate and spread.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Vin Santo, tawny port or sweet Marsala.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, porter or hazelnut stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, cappuccino or hot chocolate.



Recipe Sixty-Nine: Portuguese Custard Tart Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge inspired by pastel de nata flavours: custard, vanilla, lemon and cinnamon. It is sweet, fragrant and gently spiced.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons custard powder

Finely grated zest of 1 unwaxed lemon

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon ground cinnamon, plus a pinch for dusting

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, butter and custard powder into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the lemon zest, vanilla, cinnamon and salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Dust very lightly with cinnamon.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The cinnamon should be a hint, not a carpet. A tiny dusting on top gives the custard tart impression without overwhelming the fudge.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Custard powder may contain colourings or maize.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or Moscatel-style dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Blonde ale or wheat beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, cinnamon tea or lemon tea.



Recipe Seventy: German Black Forest Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge with cherries and a hint of creaminess, inspired by Black Forest gateau. It is rich, fruity and dramatic without requiring a cake stand.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g dark chocolate, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g dried cherries, chopped

Optional: 1 tablespoon kirsch or cherry flavouring

Optional: 50 g white chocolate, melted, for drizzling

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small bowl for melting white chocolate

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm very gently, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla, salt and kirsch or cherry flavouring if using.

Fold in the dried cherries.

Scrape into the tin and smooth.

Drizzle with melted white chocolate if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use dried cherries rather than fresh. Fresh cherries add too much moisture. If using kirsch, keep it modest or the set may soften.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week if using alcohol, or up to 2 weeks without.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains alcohol if kirsch is used.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout or dark wheat beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cherry tea, black coffee or hot chocolate.



Recipe Seventy-One: French Vanilla Bean Fudge

Description

An elegant vanilla fudge using vanilla bean paste, butter and cream for a simple French-inspired flavour profile. It is refined, pale, fragrant and perfect for a coffee plate.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

2 teaspoons vanilla bean paste

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla bean paste and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Scrape into the tin.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into neat small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

This fudge is all about vanilla quality. Use vanilla bean paste or seeds from a vanilla pod. Cheap imitation vanilla will make the whole batch taste thin.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sauternes or sweet Champagne-style sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Blonde ale or vanilla porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Café au lait, Earl Grey or vanilla rooibos.



Recipe Seventy-Two: Spanish Orange Almond Fudge

Description

A fragrant white chocolate fudge with orange zest and toasted almonds, inspired by Spanish citrus and almond sweets. It is bright, nutty and gift-worthy.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 2 unwaxed oranges

Half teaspoon orange extract

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g toasted almonds, roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the orange zest, orange extract, vanilla and salt.

Fold in most of the toasted almonds.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter remaining almonds over the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Toast almonds until just golden. Burnt almonds bring bitterness, and bitterness is only charming in certain relatives.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and almonds.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscatel or sweet sherry.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or amber ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Orange tea, coffee or sparkling orange water.

Recipe Image Prompt



Chapter Closing Note

European-inspired fudge works best when it borrows with manners. Take the flavour idea, respect its balance, and translate it into fudge without trying to drag the whole pastry counter into the saucepan. Chocolate, citrus, nuts, coffee and custard notes all sit naturally in the fudge tin.

The result is homemade sweetness with a café window in its imagination.

Chapter Fifteen: Honey, Nuts and Old Café Flavours

Chapter Landscape Image Prompt

An old European café table with small plates of fudge, honey, walnuts, pistachios, almonds, coffee cups, linen napkins and a brass spoon, soft window light, warm wood, quiet afternoon atmosphere, elegant rustic styling, landscape format, no people, no text.

The Quiet Luxury of Nuts and Honey

Some flavours do not shout.

Honey and nuts are among them. They do not burst through the kitchen door in a shower of sprinkles. They do not turn fudge bright pink or make children point. They arrive calmly, carrying centuries of use behind them, and make sweetness feel older, deeper and more generous.

Across Europe, nuts and honey appear in cakes, pastries, nougat, biscuits, tortes, festive breads and market sweets. Walnuts, almonds, pistachios and hazelnuts bring richness, texture and slight bitterness. Honey adds floral warmth. Together, they make fudge feel less like a sugar hit and more like a sweet with a history.

Nuts must be treated well. Raw nuts can taste flat, damp or dusty. Toasting is nearly always worth the effort. A few minutes in a dry pan or low oven wakes their oils and deepens their aroma. Once toasted, nuts can burn quickly, so keep watch. The line between golden hazelnut and bitter pebble is not as wide as optimism suggests.

Honey also needs balance. Different honeys vary enormously. A mild clear honey gives soft sweetness. A dark heather, chestnut or forest honey can dominate a batch. Floral honey can be beautiful with vanilla and pistachio. Strong honey may prefer walnuts, almonds or dark chocolate.

In fudge, honey can soften texture, so it should not simply replace all the sugar. Used thoughtfully, it gives flavour and depth without compromising the set. The recipes in this chapter use honey, toasted nuts, coffee, chocolate and spice in ways inspired by old café counters, market stalls and European teatime sweets.

These fudges are excellent with coffee, tea, dessert wine or a dark beer. They are also the sort of sweets that make people slow down when eating. That is useful. Fudge eaten too quickly is not so much enjoyed as administratively processed.

Recipe Seventy-Three: Greek Honey Walnut Fudge

Description

A golden fudge with honey, toasted walnuts and a hint of cinnamon, inspired by the warm flavours of Greek walnut sweets and honeyed pastries. It is rich, fragrant and gently textured.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

375 g granulated sugar

75 g clear honey

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

80 g unsalted butter

1 tablespoon golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon ground cinnamon

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

130 g walnuts, toasted and roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small frying pan or baking tray for toasting nuts

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Toast the walnuts in a dry pan over a medium heat for 3 to 5 minutes, or in a low oven until fragrant. Leave to cool.

Put the sugar, honey, evaporated milk, double cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the sugar dissolves fully.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla, cinnamon and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Fold in most of the toasted walnuts, reserving a small handful for the top.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter the reserved walnuts over the surface and press lightly.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Keep the cinnamon restrained. It should warm the honey and walnuts, not turn the fudge into a Christmas decoration with opinions.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and walnuts.

Contains honey, so not suitable for infants under 12 months.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Muscat, Samos-style dessert wine or late-harvest white wine.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, nut brown ale or honey ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Greek coffee, black tea or chamomile tea.



Recipe Seventy-Four: Viennese Coffee Fudge

Description

A creamy coffee and chocolate fudge inspired by old Viennese café flavours. It is smooth, rich and slightly sophisticated, the sort of fudge that would like to be served on a saucer.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g dark chocolate, chopped

200 g white chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons instant espresso powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 50 g white chocolate, melted, for drizzling

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small bowl for melting white chocolate, if drizzling

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, white chocolate, butter and espresso powder into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the surface.

Drizzle with melted white chocolate if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The combination of dark and white chocolate gives a creamy coffee-house effect. Use instant espresso powder rather than brewed coffee, as brewed coffee adds too much liquid.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months, preferably without the drizzle for the neatest thaw.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Coffee stout, porter or dark lager.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, cappuccino or black tea with lemon.



Recipe Seventy-Five: Nordic Lingonberry White Chocolate Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge sharpened with tart lingonberry jam and freeze-dried berries. It is bright, pretty and excellent for winter gift boxes.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

3 tablespoons thick lingonberry jam

25 g freeze-dried lingonberries or cranberries, lightly crushed

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer or knife for rippling

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Dot the lingonberry jam over the surface.

Ripple lightly with a skewer.

Scatter with freeze-dried lingonberries or cranberries.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Lingonberry jam has a lovely tartness that helps balance white chocolate. Use a thick jam, not a runny sauce. If lingonberry is unavailable, cranberry works well.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because the jam ripple may soften and weep.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sparkling wine or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, fruit beer or light saison.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cranberry tea, lingonberry cordial or sparkling water.



Recipe Seventy-Six: Belgian Chocolate Truffle Fudge

Description

A rich, smooth fudge inspired by Belgian chocolate truffles. It is dark, silky and finished with cocoa powder for a sophisticated edge.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, 60 to 70 per cent cocoa solids, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

2 tablespoons cocoa powder, for dusting

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Fine sieve

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth and glossy.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Chill until fully firm.

Lift from the tin and dust lightly with cocoa powder.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dust with cocoa after chilling and before cutting, or after cutting for a more truffle-like appearance. Keep the pieces small; this fudge is rich enough to have its own furniture.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze before dusting with cocoa for best appearance. Dust after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya and nut traces depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port, Banyuls or sweet red dessert wine.

Beer suggestion: Belgian dubbel, stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, black coffee or mint tea.



Recipe Seventy-Seven: Alpine Hazelnut Honey Fudge

Description

A mellow fudge with toasted hazelnuts, honey and milk chocolate. It has a mountain café warmth, as if it ought to be eaten after a walk while pretending not to be tired.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g milk chocolate, chopped

150 g dark chocolate, chopped

75 g clear honey

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g hazelnuts, toasted and roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate, honey and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Fold in most of the toasted hazelnuts.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with the remaining hazelnuts and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Honey softens the texture slightly, so this fudge is best kept chilled. Toasted hazelnuts give essential flavour and crunch.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and hazelnuts.

Contains honey.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or late-harvest white wine.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, dark lager or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Hot chocolate, coffee or spiced tea.



Chapter Closing Note

Honey and nuts remind fudge to slow down. Their flavours are layered rather than loud, and they reward careful eating. Toast the nuts. Choose the honey thoughtfully. Balance sweetness with salt, dark chocolate, coffee or spice.

There is nothing flashy here.

Only the old, dependable pleasure of sugar, fat, warmth and something crunchy.

Chapter Sixteen: Spiced Markets and Winter Squares



The Spice Stall in the Fudge Tin

Spices make fudge feel seasonal.

Cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, clove, cardamom, anise, allspice and pepper can turn a plain sweet into something that tastes like winter markets, bakery windows, festive kitchens and cold fingers wrapped round hot drinks. But spices are powerful. A little warmth is delightful. Too much clove and your fudge begins to resemble a dental appointment.

European winter sweets offer plenty of inspiration: Dutch speculaas, German lebkuchen, spiced biscuits, mulled wine, candied orange, gingerbread, almond pastries and chocolate-dipped festive treats. These flavours translate beautifully into fudge because sugar and fat carry spice well. The challenge is balance. Fudge is already sweet, so spices should add aroma, warmth and shape rather than simply more intensity.

Use fresh spices where possible. Ground spices fade over time. If a jar of cinnamon has been in the cupboard since a government that now feels historical, replace it. Cardamom is best when freshly ground, but ready-ground cardamom is convenient and acceptable if fragrant. Nutmeg should be used sparingly. Clove should be treated like a dramatic actor: effective in small roles, unbearable when overcast.

Spiced fudge is excellent for Christmas boxes, market stalls, winter weddings, hampers and after-dinner plates. It pairs well with dark beers, dessert wines, coffee, chai, mulled drinks and black tea. It also makes the kitchen smell as though you have your life organised, which is a useful illusion.

Recipe Seventy-Eight: Dutch Speculaas Fudge

Description

A creamy spiced fudge inspired by Dutch speculaas biscuits, with cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, clove and white chocolate. It is fragrant, festive and very good with coffee.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g white chocolate, chopped

50 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground ginger

Quarter teaspoon ground nutmeg

One eighth teaspoon ground cloves

Half teaspoon ground cardamom

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

80 g spiced biscuits, roughly crushed, optional

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, cardamom, vanilla and salt.

Fold in crushed spiced biscuits if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The tiny amount of clove is deliberate. Clove is not a team player if given too much freedom.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Biscuit pieces may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains wheat and gluten if biscuits are used.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Mulled wine or sweet Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Belgian dubbel, winter ale or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, chai or spiced apple drink.



Recipe Seventy-Nine: Mulled Wine Dark Chocolate Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge with orange zest and mulled spice notes. It can be made with a small amount of reduced red wine or as an alcohol-free spiced chocolate version.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 1 unwaxed orange

Half teaspoon ground cinnamon

Quarter teaspoon ground ginger

Tiny pinch ground cloves

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional alcohol version: 3 tablespoons red wine, reduced to 1 tablespoon and cooled

Alcohol-free version: 1 tablespoon orange cordial concentrate or omit liquid entirely

Equipment

Small saucepan if reducing wine

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

If using red wine, simmer 3 tablespoons in a small saucepan until reduced to 1 tablespoon. Cool completely.

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the orange zest, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, vanilla, salt and reduced wine if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not add unreduced wine. It adds too much liquid and too little flavour. Reducing it concentrates the flavour while keeping the fudge stable.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week if using wine, or up to 2 weeks without.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains alcohol if made with red wine.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Mulled wine, ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Winter ale, porter or stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Spiced black tea, orange hot chocolate or alcohol-free mulled punch.



Recipe Eighty: German Lebkuchen Fudge

Description

A spiced chocolate fudge inspired by lebkuchen, with honey, orange, cinnamon and ginger. It is soft, fragrant and excellent for Christmas hampers.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g dark chocolate, chopped

150 g milk chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

50 g clear honey

Finely grated zest of 1 unwaxed orange

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground ginger

Quarter teaspoon ground nutmeg

Tiny pinch ground cloves

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 60 g candied orange peel, finely chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate, butter and honey into the saucepan.

Warm gently until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the orange zest, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, vanilla and salt.

Fold in the candied orange peel if using.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Honey and chocolate give this fudge a slightly softer bite. Keep it chilled until serving for neat pieces.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains honey.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Glühwein-style mulled wine, sweet Madeira or ruby port.

Beer suggestion: Dark lager, winter ale or stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Ginger tea, spiced apple juice or hot chocolate.



Recipe Eighty-One: Spiced Almond Market Fudge

Description

A white chocolate and almond fudge with cinnamon, cardamom and toasted nuts. It is pale, fragrant and perfect for winter gift stalls.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Quarter teaspoon almond extract

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon ground cinnamon

Quarter teaspoon ground cardamom

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

140 g toasted almonds, roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the almond extract, vanilla, cinnamon, cardamom and salt.

Fold in most of the toasted almonds.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter with the remaining almonds and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Almond extract can overpower the fudge quickly. Use a quarter teaspoon only. Toasted almonds provide most of the flavour.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and almonds.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato, sweet sherry or Vin Santo.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, blonde ale or amber ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Chai, almond milk or coffee.



Recipe Eighty-Two: Winter Orange Marzipan Fudge

Description

A rich white chocolate fudge with orange zest and small pieces of marzipan. It is sweet, almond-scented and wonderfully festive.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 2 unwaxed oranges

Half teaspoon orange extract

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g marzipan, cut into small cubes

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the orange zest, orange extract, vanilla and salt.

Let the mixture cool for 2 minutes so the marzipan does not melt completely.

Fold in the marzipan cubes.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Cut the marzipan small so it appears as little almond pockets rather than large soft boulders. Dusting the cubes lightly with icing sugar can stop them sticking together.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and almonds.

May contain egg depending on marzipan.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sherry, Moscato or orange muscat.

Beer suggestion: Belgian blond ale or winter ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Orange tea, coffee or hot chocolate.



Chapter Closing Note

Spiced fudge is best when it remembers restraint. A pinch here, a little zest there, a careful warmth rather than a spice cupboard emptied in panic. Done well, these recipes taste like winter markets, old cafés, holiday lights and paper bags carried home through cold air.

Spice gives fudge atmosphere.

Too much spice gives it a personality disorder.

Part Four -Middle Eastern, Indian and Asian-Inspired Fudge

Chapter Seventeen: Cardamom, Rose and Saffron



Fragrance in the Sugar

Cardamom, rose and saffron do not behave like ordinary flavourings.

They are fragrant, complex and capable of transforming a sweet from simple to ceremonial. They are also capable of ruining it if used with a heavy hand. A little rose is elegant. Too much rose tastes like soap with ambitions. A pinch of saffron is luxurious. A fistful is wasteful and medicinal. Cardamom is beautiful, but it should perfume the fudge, not march through it wearing boots.

These flavours appear in many sweets across the Middle East, South Asia and neighbouring culinary traditions: milk sweets, rice puddings, nut pastries, halva-like confections, festival sweets and fragrant desserts. Fudge can take inspiration from these traditions by pairing dairy, sugar, nuts and chocolate with floral and spice notes.

This section does not claim that all such sweets are fudge. Many have separate identities, methods and histories. The recipes here are original fudge recipes inspired by those flavour families, adapted for a British home kitchen.

The key is balance.

Cardamom pairs beautifully with pistachio, almond, white chocolate, mango, coffee and dark chocolate. Rose pairs well with almond, pistachio, raspberry and white chocolate, but should be measured in drops or fractions of teaspoons. Saffron works with dairy, vanilla, pistachio and honey, but needs steeping to release its colour and aroma. Nuts add texture and help ground the fragrance.

These fudges are excellent for gifting because they feel special. They also look beautiful: pale gold, soft pink, green pistachio, saffron threads, rose petals and almond pieces. But beauty should never outrun flavour. A pretty fudge that tastes like perfume is not a success. It is a warning.

Recipe Eighty-Three: Cardamom Pistachio Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge scented with cardamom and filled with pistachios. It is fragrant, nutty and elegant, ideal for gifting or serving after a meal.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

140 g shelled pistachios, roughly chopped

Optional: 1 tablespoon dried edible rose petals, food-safe and unsprayed, for decoration

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the cardamom, vanilla and salt.

Fold in most of the pistachios.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter with the remaining pistachios and rose petals if using.

Press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

Freshly ground cardamom is best if you have it. If using ready-ground, make sure it is fragrant. Cardamom that smells faintly of cupboard will taste faintly of disappointment.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze without rose petals for best appearance. Add petals after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and pistachios.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Check rose petals are food-safe.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Muscat or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Masala chai, mint tea or cardamom coffee.

Recipe Image Prompt

Cardamom pistachio fudge squares with green pistachio pieces and delicate rose petals, brass dish and parchment nearby, warm golden light, elegant Middle Eastern and Indian-inspired styling, no text.

Recipe Eighty-Four: Rose Almond Fudge

Description

A soft white chocolate almond fudge with a delicate rose note. It is floral, creamy and pretty, but carefully balanced so it remains sweet rather than scented soap.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Quarter teaspoon rosewater

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon almond extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

100 g toasted flaked almonds

Optional: tiny pinch pink food colouring

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the rosewater, vanilla, almond extract, salt and pink colouring if using.

Fold in most of the toasted almonds.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with the remaining almonds.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

Measure rosewater carefully. Different brands vary in strength, so begin modestly. The fudge should smell gently floral, not like a drawer liner.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and almonds.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or delicate fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Rose tea, mint tea or sparkling elderflower.



Recipe Eighty-Five: Saffron Vanilla Fudge

Description

A luxurious golden fudge flavoured with saffron and vanilla. It is rich, aromatic and quietly special, with a warm colour and delicate fragrance.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

80 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

Generous pinch saffron threads

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 80 g pistachios or almonds, chopped

Equipment

Small bowl

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Warm 2 tablespoons of the evaporated milk in a small bowl.

Add the saffron threads and leave to steep for 10 minutes.

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, remaining evaporated milk, saffron milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Fold in nuts if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Saffron needs time to bloom in warm liquid. Do not throw it dry into the pan and hope for splendour. Splendour prefers preparation.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains nuts if added.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Muscat or Sauternes.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or honey ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cardamom tea, saffron milk or mint tea.



Recipe Eighty-Six: Turkish Delight-Inspired Fudge

Description

A white chocolate rose fudge with small pieces of Turkish delight folded through. It is soft, floral and sweet, with jewel-like pieces in every square.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

One eighth teaspoon rosewater

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g Turkish delight, cut into small cubes

1 tablespoon icing sugar, for dusting Turkish delight pieces

Optional: 40 g pistachios, chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small bowl

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Toss the Turkish delight cubes with icing sugar to reduce sticking.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the rosewater, vanilla and salt.

Let the mixture cool for 2 minutes.

Fold in the Turkish delight and pistachios if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use very little rosewater because Turkish delight already brings floral flavour. Too much rose turns charming into alarming.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because Turkish delight can become sticky.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain nuts if pistachios are used.

Check Turkish delight ingredients for gelatine, nuts and colours.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet rosé or Muscat.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Mint tea, rose tea or Turkish coffee.



Recipe Eighty-Seven: Halva-Inspired Sesame Fudge

Description

A tahini-rich fudge inspired by sesame halva flavours. It is nutty, earthy, sweet and slightly crumbly, with dark chocolate optional for contrast.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g white chocolate, chopped

150 g tahini, well stirred

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

Optional: 100 g dark chocolate, melted, for swirling

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer, if swirling chocolate

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, tahini and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin.

If using melted dark chocolate, drizzle it over the top and ripple lightly.

Scatter with toasted sesame seeds.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Tahini separates in the jar, so stir it very well before measuring. Otherwise, one spoonful may be oil and another paste, which is not a path to harmony.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and sesame.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sherry or port.

Beer suggestion: Porter or dark ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Turkish coffee, mint tea or black tea.



Chapter Closing Note

Fragrant fudge asks for a light hand and a clear nose. Cardamom, rose and saffron are beautiful because they are precise. They should lift the sweetness, not bury it. Pair them with nuts, dairy richness, white chocolate, honey or dark chocolate, and they become memorable.

Use too much, and the fudge will still be memorable.

Just for the wrong reason.

Chapter Eighteen: Chai, Mango and Coconut



Sweetness With Colour and Warmth

Some flavours bring weather with them.

Chai brings warmth. Mango brings sunshine. Coconut brings softness, richness and a faint sense that the kitchen ought to have better music playing. Together, these flavours move fudge away from the old sweet-shop counter and into something brighter, spiced and generous.

Chai is not one single flavour. It is a family of spiced tea traditions, often involving black tea, milk, sugar and spices such as cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, clove, black pepper and fennel. For fudge, we do not want to pour brewed tea into the mixture unless a recipe is specifically designed for it. Too much liquid spoils the set. Instead, we use ground spices, tea-infused dairy, or concentrated tea powder where appropriate.

Mango is another ingredient that needs control. Fresh mango is delicious but far too wet for most fudge. Mango purée can soften the set unless reduced carefully. Freeze-dried mango powder, dried mango pieces, mango flavouring, or a small amount of thick mango curd can give better results. The goal is bright fruit flavour without turning fudge into a tropical landslide.

Coconut is more forgiving. Desiccated coconut adds chew and absorbs moisture. Coconut milk brings richness to dairy-free recipes. Coconut cream can be used with care. Toasted coconut adds aroma and texture. Paired with white chocolate, it becomes creamy and mellow; paired with dark chocolate, it becomes richer and more dramatic.

This chapter is full of colour and fragrance. It still respects the rules of fudge: not too much wet fruit, not too much spice, not too much heat, and enough salt to make sweetness stand upright. These recipes are cheerful, giftable and particularly good for spring, summer and festive boxes that need something more interesting than yet another square of plain chocolate.

Not that plain chocolate has done anything wrong.

It is merely having a rest.

Recipe Eighty-Eight: Masala Chai Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge flavoured with cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, clove and black tea powder. It is warm, fragrant and gently spiced, like a cup of chai transformed into a sweet square.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Half teaspoon ground ginger

Tiny pinch ground cloves

Tiny pinch finely ground black pepper

1 teaspoon finely ground strong black tea leaves or instant black tea powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 60 g chopped pistachios or almonds

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Fine sieve, if using ground tea leaves

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

If using loose tea leaves rather than instant tea powder, grind them finely and sieve out any large pieces.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth and melted.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, clove, black pepper, tea powder, vanilla and salt.

Fold in the nuts if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The black pepper should be barely noticeable, just enough to give warmth. Chai fudge should taste fragrant and comforting, not as though it is challenging you to a duel.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains nuts if added.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Riesling or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, blonde ale or spiced winter ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Masala chai, cardamom tea or warm milk.



Recipe Eighty-Nine: Mango Lassi Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge inspired by mango lassi, using freeze-dried mango powder, yoghurt-style tang and cardamom. It is bright, sunny and softly spiced.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

25 g freeze-dried mango powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon ground cardamom

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

1 teaspoon yoghurt powder, optional

Optional: 40 g dried mango, very finely chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

In a small bowl, mix the mango powder, cardamom, salt and yoghurt powder if using.

Stir the dry mixture into the fudge base.

Add the vanilla.

Fold in the finely chopped dried mango if using.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Freeze-dried mango powder gives strong mango flavour without adding water. Dried mango should be chopped very finely because large chewy strips make the fudge difficult to cut neatly.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Yoghurt powder contains milk if used.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato or sweet sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, mango pale ale or light fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Mango lassi, iced tea or sparkling lime water.



Recipe Ninety: Coconut Cardamom Fudge

Description

A creamy coconut fudge with cardamom and white chocolate. It is soft, fragrant and chewy, with a gentle tropical warmth.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g white chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

100 g desiccated coconut

1 teaspoon ground cardamom

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 40 g toasted coconut flakes for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the desiccated coconut, cardamom, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Scatter with toasted coconut flakes if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Desiccated coconut thickens the mixture quickly, so work promptly once it is added. Toasted coconut on top gives a lovely aroma and a little crunch.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and coconut.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Muscat or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, golden ale or coconut stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Chai, coconut milk coffee or pineapple iced tea.



Recipe Ninety-One: Pistachio Mango Ripple Fudge

Description

A pretty white chocolate fudge with a mango ripple and chopped pistachios. It is colourful, creamy and made for gift boxes that need a little sunshine.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

20 g freeze-dried mango powder

2 tablespoons thick mango curd or mango jam

100 g pistachios, roughly chopped

Optional: tiny pinch ground cardamom

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer or knife for rippling

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Spoon one-third of the fudge mixture into a small bowl.

Stir the mango powder and cardamom, if using, into the smaller portion.

Fold most of the pistachios into the plain fudge.

Scrape the plain pistachio fudge into the tin.

Dollop the mango fudge and mango curd over the surface.

Ripple lightly with a skewer.

Scatter with the remaining pistachios.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use thick mango curd or jam and keep it modest. Too much fruit ripple may prevent clean cutting.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because the fruit ripple may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and pistachios.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling Moscato or sweet Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Mango pale ale, wheat beer or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Mango iced tea, lime soda or cardamom tea.



Recipe Ninety-Two: Coconut Jaggery-Style Fudge

Description

A deep caramel coconut fudge inspired by the warm flavour of jaggery and coconut sweets. It uses dark brown sugar for accessibility and gives a rich, toasty result.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

250 g dark brown soft sugar

175 g granulated sugar

200 ml full-fat coconut milk

75 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

80 g desiccated coconut

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: quarter teaspoon ground cardamom

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, coconut milk, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the sugars dissolve.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the desiccated coconut, vanilla, salt and cardamom if using.

Beat until thickened, dull and beginning to hold shape.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Jaggery can vary in moisture and texture, so dark brown soft sugar gives a more reliable home-kitchen version while still offering deep caramel flavour.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 1 week, or in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk if using butter.

Contains coconut.

For dairy-free, use vegan block butter, checking suitability.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or Muscat.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale or coconut stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Chai, coconut water or strong tea.



Chapter Closing Note

Chai, mango and coconut bring warmth, colour and optimism to the fudge tin. The key is concentration: dry spices, zest, powders, desiccated coconut, thick fruit curds and careful flavourings. Fudge enjoys bold flavour, but it does not enjoy being watered down.

Mango may be sunshine.

But too much mango purée is weather damage.

Chapter Nineteen: Matcha, Sesame and Yuzu



Bitterness, Brightness and Balance

Not all fudge needs to be cosy.

Some fudge can be clean, sharp, earthy and quietly elegant. Matcha, sesame and yuzu bring a different sort of sweetness. They do not rely on heavy caramel comfort or nursery pudding nostalgia. They bring contrast.

Matcha is powdered green tea with a distinctive grassy bitterness and deep green colour. It pairs well with white chocolate because the sweetness softens the bitterness while the matcha prevents the fudge from becoming cloying. Use culinary-grade matcha that is still fresh and bright. Old matcha turns dull, bitter and dusty. It should smell green, not like a forgotten lawn clipping.

Sesame, especially black sesame, brings nuttiness and depth. It can be used as paste, powder or seeds. Black sesame fudge looks dramatic and tastes rich, earthy and slightly savoury. It is excellent with white chocolate or dark chocolate, depending on the desired intensity.

Yuzu is a fragrant East Asian citrus with notes somewhere between lemon, mandarin and grapefruit. Fresh yuzu can be hard to find in the UK, but bottled yuzu juice, yuzu powder, yuzu zest products or yuzu extract may be available from specialist shops. Because juice adds liquid, it must be used sparingly. Yuzu powder or extract is easier for fudge.

This chapter is about balancing sweetness with bitterness, nuttiness and acidity. The results are elegant, modern and excellent for adult gift boxes. They also pair beautifully with green tea, sake-style drinks, wheat beer, sparkling wine and black coffee.

These flavours reward restraint. Matcha can become harsh. Sesame can become heavy. Yuzu can become sharp or perfumed. Measure carefully, taste thoughtfully and remember that fudge should still taste like something you want another piece of.

Recipe Ninety-Three: Matcha White Chocolate Fudge

Description

A smooth white chocolate fudge with matcha's green tea bitterness and beautiful colour. Sweet, earthy and elegant, it is ideal for small squares served with tea.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons matcha powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 1 tablespoon icing sugar for dusting with matcha

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small sieve

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Sieve the matcha powder into a small bowl to remove lumps.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir a few spoonfuls of the warm fudge mixture into the matcha to form a smooth paste.

Scrape the matcha paste back into the saucepan.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Stir until evenly green.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not add matcha directly in a clump. It will form bitter green pockets, which are not pleasant surprises.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week. Matcha colour fades with light, so keep covered.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sparkling wine or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or light saison.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Green tea, jasmine tea or iced matcha latte.



Recipe Ninety-Four: Black Sesame Fudge

Description

A striking black sesame fudge with white chocolate and tahini-like nuttiness. It is earthy, rich, slightly savoury and visually dramatic.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

400 g white chocolate, chopped

120 g black sesame paste

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

1 tablespoon toasted black sesame seeds, for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, black sesame paste and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth and evenly coloured.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Scatter with toasted black sesame seeds.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Black sesame paste may separate in the jar. Stir it thoroughly before measuring. If unavailable, blend toasted black sesame seeds in a powerful processor until paste-like, though the texture will be slightly coarser.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and sesame.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sherry or sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Porter, dark lager or stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Green tea, black tea or sesame latte.



Recipe Ninety-Five: Yuzu White Chocolate Fudge

Description

A bright, citrusy white chocolate fudge flavoured with yuzu. It is creamy, sharp and fragrant, with a clean finish that cuts through sweetness.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon yuzu extract or 1 tablespoon yuzu powder

Finely grated zest of 1 unwaxed lemon, optional, if yuzu flavour is mild

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 20 g candied citrus peel, finely chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater, if using lemon zest

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over very low heat until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the yuzu extract or yuzu powder, lemon zest if using, vanilla and salt.

Fold in candied citrus peel if using.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Yuzu products vary in strength. Add modestly first. You want fragrant citrus brightness, not a fudge that tastes like it is shouting through a lemon.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Check yuzu products for additives and allergens.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sparkling wine or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, saison or citrus pale ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Green tea, sparkling yuzu water or lemon tea.

Recipe Image Prompt

Yuzu white chocolate fudge squares with pale citrus flecks, yuzu or lemon zest, ceramic dish and soft clean daylight, elegant modern Japanese-inspired styling, no text.

Recipe Ninety-Six: Matcha Pistachio Marble Fudge

Description

A marbled fudge with green matcha, creamy white chocolate and pistachios. It is elegant enough for gifts and interesting enough to make plain squares look slightly underprepared.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

1 and a half tablespoons matcha powder

100 g pistachios, roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

Small sieve

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer or knife

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Sieve the matcha powder into a small bowl.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Spoon one-third of the fudge mixture into the bowl with the matcha and stir into a smooth green paste.

Fold most of the pistachios into the plain fudge.

Scrape the plain fudge into the tin.

Dollop the matcha fudge over the top.

Ripple with a skewer.

Scatter with remaining pistachios.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The marble effect is best when you stop early. Over-swirling creates a uniform green fudge and a small sense of artistic regret.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and pistachios.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Riesling or sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Green tea, jasmine tea or iced matcha.



Recipe Ninety-Seven: Sesame Honey Dark Chocolate Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge with honey and toasted sesame for a deep, nutty, slightly savoury flavour. It is rich, adult and excellent in small pieces.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, chopped

50 g tahini, well stirred

50 g clear honey

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, tahini, honey and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter toasted sesame seeds over the top and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Tahini and honey both soften the texture slightly, so keep this fudge chilled until serving.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and sesame.

Contains honey.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sherry or ruby port.

Beer suggestion: Porter, stout or dark lager.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Black tea, espresso or roasted barley tea.



Chapter Closing Note

Matcha, sesame and yuzu show how fudge can be more than cosy. It can be bitter, bright, earthy and poised. These flavours demand attention, but not excess. The sweetness of fudge gives them a stage; restraint keeps them from stealing the furniture.

A good square should leave you curious.

Not confused.

Chapter Twenty: Pandan, Peanut and Tropical Sweetness



The Tropical Fudge Box

Tropical flavours love fudge.

Coconut, lime, peanut, pandan, pineapple, banana, passion fruit and palm sugar-style caramel all bring brightness and richness. Many sweets across Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and island food traditions use coconut milk, condensed milk, nuts, tropical fruits and fragrant leaves in ways that naturally suit confectionery.

Pandan is especially interesting. It has a grassy, vanilla-like, slightly nutty aroma and a distinctive green colour. Fresh pandan leaves can be difficult to find in some UK areas, but pandan extract or paste is more accessible from specialist shops. Use it carefully. Good pandan is fragrant and warm. Too much can taste artificial, and the colour can become startling enough to frighten a village fête committee.

Peanut brings salt, protein and comfort. It pairs with coconut, chocolate, chilli, lime and caramel. Peanut fudge can be simple or bold, smooth or crunchy. It is also a major allergen, so clear labelling is essential.

Tropical fruits are trickier because they contain water. Fresh pineapple, banana and passion fruit are delicious but can disrupt fudge texture. Use freeze-dried fruit powders, dried fruit, concentrated curds, zests and flavourings when needed. Toasted coconut and crushed nuts help absorb moisture and add texture.

This chapter is lively and sunny, but still practical. It avoids watery fruit disasters and uses ingredients a British home cook can realistically source. The flavours are inspired by global tropical sweets rather than claiming one single tradition. The result is fudge that feels colourful, generous and slightly more adventurous than the average tea-time square.

Recipe Ninety-Eight: Coconut Pandan Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate coconut fudge flavoured with pandan. It is fragrant, green, gently tropical and beautifully different.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

80 g desiccated coconut

1 teaspoon pandan paste or pandan extract, adjusted to strength

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 30 g toasted coconut flakes for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the desiccated coconut, pandan paste, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter toasted coconut flakes over the top if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Pandan products vary greatly in strength and colour. Start with 1 teaspoon or less if your paste is intense. You want soft green, not emergency exit sign.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and coconut.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Check pandan paste for colours, flavourings and allergens.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Riesling or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, coconut stout or light fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Jasmine tea, coconut water or iced pandan milk.



Recipe Ninety-Nine: Thai Peanut Fudge

Description

A bold peanut fudge with coconut, lime and a tiny hint of chilli. It is salty, sweet, creamy and lively, inspired by the balance of Thai flavours without trying to become a sauce.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g white chocolate, chopped

150 g smooth peanut butter

50 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 1 lime

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Tiny pinch chilli powder, optional

80 g roasted salted peanuts, roughly chopped

30 g toasted coconut flakes

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, peanut butter and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the lime zest, vanilla, salt and chilli if using.

Fold in most of the chopped peanuts and coconut flakes.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with the remaining peanuts and coconut.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The chilli is optional and should be tiny. This is fudge, not a dare.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, peanuts and coconut.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Off-dry Riesling or Gewürztraminer.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, pale ale or light lager.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lime soda, Thai iced tea or coconut water.



Recipe One Hundred: Pineapple Coconut Fudge

Description

A bright tropical fudge with white chocolate, coconut and freeze-dried pineapple. It is sweet, tangy and sunny without adding fresh pineapple's troublesome moisture.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

80 g desiccated coconut

30 g freeze-dried pineapple powder or finely crushed freeze-dried pineapple

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 40 g dried pineapple, very finely chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the desiccated coconut, pineapple powder, vanilla and salt.

Fold in finely chopped dried pineapple if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Fresh pineapple contains enzymes and moisture that do not help fudge set. Freeze-dried pineapple gives flavour without chaos.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and coconut.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato or sweet Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, pale ale or fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Pineapple iced tea, coconut water or sparkling lime water.



Recipe One Hundred and One: Banana Coconut Caramel Fudge

Description

A creamy caramel-style fudge with dried banana and coconut. It has the comforting flavour of banana sweets, toasted coconut and brown sugar, without the wetness of fresh banana.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

400 g white chocolate, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

50 g light soft brown sugar

50 g unsalted butter

60 g dried banana chips, finely chopped

60 g desiccated coconut

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, milk chocolate, brown sugar and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently, stirring until smooth and the sugar has dissolved.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the dried banana, coconut, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use dried banana chips or soft dried banana, chopped very finely. Fresh banana will make the fudge unstable and shorten its life.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and coconut.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, banana bread beer or stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Banana milkshake, coffee or chai.



Recipe One Hundred and Two: Passion Fruit White Chocolate Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge with passion fruit sharpness, using freeze-dried passion fruit powder or a very restrained fruit curd ripple. It is bright, tart and elegant.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

20 g freeze-dried passion fruit powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 2 tablespoons thick passion fruit curd

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer or knife, if rippling curd

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the passion fruit powder, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

If using passion fruit curd, dot it over the top and ripple lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Passion fruit curd must be thick and used sparingly. Too much turns the top sticky and makes the squares difficult to store.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing if using curd. Without curd, freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sparkling wine or Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Saison, wheat beer or passion fruit pale ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Passion fruit soda, iced tea or sparkling water.



Chapter Closing Note

Tropical fudge is joyful, but joy still needs structure. Coconut, peanut, pandan and freeze-dried fruits are excellent allies. Fresh fruit, excess juice and enthusiasm with no plan are less helpful.

Keep the flavour bright.

Keep the moisture low.

Keep one square aside for the cook, because the cook has been through enough.

Part Five - Fudge from the Americas and the Caribbean

Chapter Twenty-One: Maple, Pecan and Peanut Butter



Big Flavours and Generous Squares

The Americas bring fudge some of its boldest, most generous flavours.

Maple syrup, pecans, peanuts, chocolate, pumpkin spice, cranberry, corn syrup-style smoothness, marshmallow, caramel, coffee and toasted nuts all belong naturally in the fudge tin. These are flavours associated with bake sales, holiday tables, candy shops, family recipes, road trips, diners, county fairs and kitchen counters crowded with tins.

Maple is one of the great fudge flavours. Proper maple syrup has complexity: caramel, wood, smoke, vanilla, minerals and autumn leaves if autumn leaves behaved better. It pairs beautifully with pecans, walnuts, brown sugar, dark chocolate and sea salt. The challenge is that maple syrup adds liquid, so it must be used in a measured way. Maple extract can help boost flavour without disturbing the set, but it should taste natural rather than artificial.

Pecans are rich, buttery and slightly sweet. Toast them. Always toast them. Untoasted pecans are pleasant enough, but toasted pecans become the sort of ingredient that makes people hover near the chopping board pretending to be helpful.

Peanut butter is another cornerstone. It gives body, salt, fat and flavour. It can make fudge smooth and creamy or chunky and robust. It also pairs beautifully with chocolate, banana, chilli, caramel, marshmallow and coconut. Peanut butter fudge is simple, popular and dangerously easy to eat.

This chapter leans into those generous flavours: maple pecan, peanut butter, chocolate peanut, salted maple, and a campfire-style fudge with marshmallow notes. These are not shy little after-dinner nibbles. They are confident squares with elbows.

Recipe One Hundred and Three: Maple Pecan Fudge

Description

A rich, creamy fudge with real maple syrup and toasted pecans. It is sweet, nutty and autumnal, ideal for gift tins and chilly afternoons.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

350 g granulated sugar

100 g light soft brown sugar

120 ml evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

85 g unsalted butter

75 ml maple syrup

1 tablespoon golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g pecans, toasted and roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small frying pan or baking tray for toasting pecans

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Toast the pecans until fragrant, then leave them to cool.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter, maple syrup and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until the sugars dissolve.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave to stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Fold in most of the pecans, reserving a small handful for the top.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter with the remaining pecans and press lightly.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use real maple syrup. Maple-flavoured syrup may be cheaper, but it often tastes like a pancake has been described to a committee.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and pecans.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port, Madeira or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, amber ale or maple stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, hot apple drink or spiced tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Four: Salted Maple Fudge

Description

A smooth maple fudge finished with sea salt for balance. It is sweet, buttery and brightened by little sparks of salt.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

375 g granulated sugar

75 g light soft brown sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

85 g unsalted butter

75 ml maple syrup

1 tablespoon golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Half teaspoon flaky sea salt, for finishing

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter, maple syrup and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and stand for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and fine sea salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Sprinkle lightly with flaky sea salt.

Leave to set fully.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

Salt on top can attract moisture, so store this fudge somewhere cool and dry. If gifting later, add the finishing salt closer to packing.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze without the flaky salt for best appearance. Add salt after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or cream sherry.

Beer suggestion: Amber ale, brown ale or stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Black coffee, breakfast tea or sparkling apple drink.



Recipe One Hundred and Five: Classic Peanut Butter Fudge

Description

A creamy peanut butter fudge with a firm set and salty-sweet balance. It is simple, satisfying and popular enough to require hiding from known grazers.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g white chocolate, chopped

200 g smooth peanut butter

50 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 80 g roasted peanuts, chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, peanut butter and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Fold in chopped peanuts if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

Use a stable, smooth peanut butter rather than a very oily natural one unless it has been stirred thoroughly. Oil separation can make fudge greasy.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and peanuts.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or sweet Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, stout or peanut butter stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cold milk, coffee or banana milkshake.



Recipe One Hundred and Six: Chocolate Peanut Butter Layer Fudge

Description

Two-layer fudge with a rich chocolate base and creamy peanut butter top. It is bold, attractive and extremely persuasive.

Makes

About 49 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

For the chocolate layer

200 g sweetened condensed milk

250 g dark chocolate, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

25 g unsalted butter

A pinch of fine sea salt

For the peanut layer

197 g sweetened condensed milk

300 g white chocolate, chopped

150 g smooth peanut butter

25 g unsalted butter

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Two heavy-based saucepans, or one saucepan washed between layers

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Make the chocolate layer first. Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate, butter and salt into a saucepan.

Warm over very low heat until smooth.

Scrape into the tin and spread evenly.

Chill for 20 minutes while making the peanut layer.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, peanut butter and butter into a clean saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla and salt.

Spread carefully over the chocolate layer.

Chill until fully firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

The first layer should be firm enough to support the second but not rock-hard. If it is too cold, the layers may separate when cut.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and peanuts.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Stout, porter or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, cold milk or hot chocolate.



Recipe One Hundred and Seven: Campfire Marshmallow Fudge

Description

A chocolate fudge with marshmallow pieces and biscuit crumbs, inspired by campfire sweets. It is chewy, crunchy and cheerful, with a toasted marshmallow suggestion.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g milk chocolate, chopped

200 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

100 g mini marshmallows

80 g digestive biscuits, roughly crushed

Optional: 30 g toasted coconut or chopped nuts

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Let the mixture cool for 3 minutes.

Fold in the marshmallows, biscuits and coconut or nuts if using.

Scrape into the tin and press level.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Let the chocolate mixture cool slightly before adding marshmallows or they will melt into streaks. This is not a disaster, but it is less campfire and more swamp.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because marshmallows change texture.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya, nuts or gelatine depending on ingredients.

Use vegetarian marshmallows if needed.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port.

Beer suggestion: Porter, stout or smoked beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Hot chocolate, coffee or cold milk.



Chapter Closing Note

Maple, pecan and peanut butter are flavours with broad shoulders. They make fudge feel generous, familiar and deeply satisfying. They do not need delicate decoration or complicated technique. They need good ingredients, proper balance and the courage to cut small pieces before everyone realises how rich they are.

The next chapter turns brighter, sharper and more sunlit, with Mexican chocolate, lime and dulce de leche bringing heat, citrus and caramel to the pan.

Chapter Twenty-Two: Mexican Chocolate, Lime and Dulce de Leche



Heat, Citrus and Caramel

Chocolate, chilli and cinnamon have a long and complex history in the Americas, far older than the modern sweet-shop bar. Cacao was cultivated and valued in Mesoamerica for centuries before chocolate became the sweetened European confection we know today. Modern fudge can respectfully take inspiration from Mexican chocolate flavours: cocoa, cinnamon, vanilla, chilli warmth and sometimes nuts or seeds.

The important word is warmth. Chilli in fudge should not be a stunt. It should sit behind the chocolate, giving a gentle glow. If the first response to a square of fudge is panic, something has gone wrong. Use mild chilli powder, ancho chilli powder or a tiny pinch of cayenne. Taste and adjust in future batches, not in a single reckless moment.

Lime brings brightness. As with lemon, zest is easier than juice because it gives flavour without much liquid. A little lime extract can help, but fresh zest is often enough. Lime pairs beautifully with coconut, white chocolate, dark chocolate, chilli and caramel.

Dulce de leche brings deep milk caramel flavour. It is made by slowly cooking sweetened milk and sugar until thick and caramelised. You can buy it in jars or tins, or make it from condensed milk using safe, tested methods. In fudge, it adds flavour and softness, so it must be balanced with chocolate or proper cooking.

This chapter offers fudge inspired by Mexican hot chocolate, key lime pie-style sweets, dulce de leche, cinnamon caramel and chilli chocolate. These recipes are lively but controlled. They bring brightness and heat without sacrificing set.

Recipe One Hundred and Eight: Mexican Hot Chocolate Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge warmed with cinnamon, vanilla and a tiny hint of chilli. It is rich, aromatic and gently fiery.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g dark chocolate, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Tiny pinch cayenne pepper or mild chilli powder

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 50 g toasted almonds, finely chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the cinnamon, vanilla, chilli and salt.

Fold in toasted almonds if using.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Start with a tiny pinch of chilli. You can increase it in future batches. Fudge should not require a glass of emergency milk.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains almonds if used.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout, porter or dark lager.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Mexican-style hot chocolate, coffee or cinnamon tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Nine: Dulce de Leche Fudge

Description

A creamy caramel fudge made with dulce de leche and white chocolate. It is smooth, sweet and deeply milky, with a caramel flavour that feels indulgent without being difficult.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

300 g dulce de leche

250 g sweetened condensed milk

450 g white chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: flaky sea salt for finishing

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the dulce de leche, condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth and thick.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and fine sea salt.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Sprinkle very lightly with flaky sea salt if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dulce de leche varies in thickness. If yours is very loose, add an extra 50 g white chocolate to help the set.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, amber ale or caramel stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, chai or hot chocolate.



Recipe One Hundred and Ten: Key Lime Pie Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate lime fudge with a biscuit crumb base or topping, inspired by key lime pie. It is tart, sweet and cheerful.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 3 limes

Half teaspoon lime extract

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

100 g digestive biscuits, crushed

35 g unsalted butter, melted, for biscuit crumb

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Mix the crushed biscuits with melted butter.

Press the biscuit mixture lightly into the base of the lined tin.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in lime zest, lime extract, vanilla and salt.

Scrape over the biscuit base and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not use lime juice in the fudge mixture. Zest and extract give cleaner flavour without adding water. The biscuit base makes this softer to store, so keep chilled.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Biscuit base may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Use gluten-free digestive-style biscuits if needed.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato or sweet sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, lime lager or citrus pale ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lime soda, iced tea or sparkling elderflower.



Recipe One Hundred and Eleven: Cinnamon Caramel Fudge

Description

A warm caramel fudge with cinnamon and brown sugar. It is simple, cosy and excellent for autumn or winter boxes.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

250 g light soft brown sugar

200 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

3 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and stand for 5 minutes.

Add the cinnamon, vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Scrape into the tin.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Cinnamon can taste dusty if old. Use fresh, fragrant cinnamon for a warm, rounded flavour.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sherry, Madeira or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, amber ale or winter ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cinnamon tea, coffee or hot apple drink.



Recipe One Hundred and Twelve: Chilli Lime Dark Chocolate Fudge

Description

A bold dark chocolate fudge with lime zest and a controlled chilli warmth. It is sharp, rich and slightly daring without becoming silly.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

550 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 2 limes

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon fine sea salt

Tiny pinch cayenne pepper or mild chilli powder

Optional: 1 tablespoon cocoa nibs for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the lime zest, vanilla, salt and chilli.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter cocoa nibs on top if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dark chocolate carries chilli strongly. Start cautiously. You want warmth at the end, not a square that behaves like a practical joke.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk unless using dairy-free dark chocolate and suitable condensed milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet red wine or ruby port.

Beer suggestion: Stout, porter or dark lager.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lime soda, black coffee or iced tea.



Chapter Closing Note

Heat, citrus and caramel give fudge a livelier edge. These flavours wake up the sweetness and make each square feel less predictable. The secret is control. Use zest instead of juice, reduced or thick caramel instead of thin sauce, and chilli as a background warmth rather than a public challenge.

Fudge should surprise people pleasantly.

Not make them remove a jumper.

Chapter Twenty-Three: Rum Raisin, Coconut and Island Heat



Sunshine, Spice and the Rum Cupboard

Caribbean-inspired fudge flavours are rich with coconut, rum, raisin, nutmeg, lime, brown sugar, ginger, tropical fruit and dark chocolate. They are warm flavours, but not all in the same way. Some are sunny and bright; others are dark, spiced and deep. Together, they make fudge that feels generous, festive and full of movement.

Rum raisin is a natural fudge flavour. Raisins bring chew and sweetness; rum brings warmth and depth. The issue is liquid. Raisins can be soaked in rum, but they must be drained and dried well before being added. Too much free alcohol softens the fudge and shortens its storage life. For alcohol-free versions, use rum flavouring or soak raisins in strong tea with vanilla and spice.

Coconut is another essential flavour. Desiccated coconut, toasted coconut flakes and coconut milk all work differently. Desiccated coconut thickens and adds chew. Toasted flakes add aroma and texture. Coconut milk can replace dairy in some recipes, but it changes the structure.

Nutmeg, ginger and allspice add island warmth. They should be used with care, especially nutmeg, which can dominate quickly. Lime zest brings brightness and balances rich coconut or chocolate.

These fudges are excellent for celebrations, summer fairs, festive hampers and after-dinner plates. Some contain alcohol; label clearly. Others are alcohol-free but keep the same warm flavour profile. Either way, the spirit of the chapter is generous: rich sweetness, spice, fruit and a little sunshine in the tin.

Recipe One Hundred and Thirteen: Caribbean Rum Raisin Fudge

Description

A rich chocolate fudge with rum-soaked raisins and warm spice. It is deep, chewy and excellent for grown-up gift boxes.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

30 minutes, plus optional soaking.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g dark chocolate, chopped

150 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

120 g raisins

2 tablespoons dark rum

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon ground nutmeg

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Alcohol-free option: replace rum with strong black tea plus half teaspoon rum flavouring, if suitable

Equipment

Small bowl

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Kitchen paper

Method

Put the raisins in a small bowl with the rum and leave for at least 30 minutes, or up to 4 hours.

Drain very well and pat the raisins dry with kitchen paper.

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in vanilla, nutmeg and salt.

Fold in the drained raisins.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dry the raisins properly after soaking. Free rum in the mixture may sound cheerful, but it can make the fudge too soft and sticky.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains alcohol if made with rum.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Raisins may contain sulphites.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or sweet Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Rum stout, porter or dark ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Strong tea, coffee or spiced hot chocolate.



Recipe One Hundred and Fourteen: Coconut Lime Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge with coconut and lime zest. It is bright, chewy and sunny, excellent for summer boxes.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

100 g desiccated coconut

Finely grated zest of 2 limes

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: toasted coconut flakes for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the coconut, lime zest, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with toasted coconut flakes if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

Lime zest gives brightness without extra liquid. Fresh lime juice belongs in drinks, marinades and squeezing over fish; it does not need to cause trouble here.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and coconut.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato or sweet Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, light lager or coconut stout.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lime soda, coconut water or iced tea.

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Recipe One Hundred and Fifteen: Dark Chocolate Coconut Rum-Style Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate and coconut fudge with rum-style warmth. It can be made with a small amount of dark rum or alcohol-free rum flavouring.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

80 g desiccated coconut

1 tablespoon dark rum, or half teaspoon rum flavouring

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 40 g toasted coconut flakes, for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the desiccated coconut, rum or rum flavouring, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with toasted coconut if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Keep actual rum to 1 tablespoon. More liquid may soften the set. Rum flavouring gives a stronger impression with less structural risk.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week if using rum, or up to 2 weeks with flavouring only.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and coconut.

Contains alcohol if made with rum.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Coconut stout, porter or dark ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, hot chocolate or coconut milk drink.



Recipe One Hundred and Sixteen: Ginger Lime Island Fudge

Description

A white chocolate fudge with ginger warmth and lime brightness. It is lively, sweet and lightly spiced.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 2 limes

1 teaspoon ground ginger

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 60 g crystallised ginger, finely chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the lime zest, ground ginger, vanilla and salt.

Fold in crystallised ginger if using.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the top.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

Crystallised ginger adds chew and heat. Chop it finely so it does not dominate the texture.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Riesling or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Ginger beer-style ale, wheat beer or pale ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Ginger tea, lime soda or iced green tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Seventeen: Brown Sugar Nutmeg Fudge

Description

A warm brown sugar fudge with nutmeg and vanilla. It is simple, fragrant and comforting, with a Caribbean-inspired spice note.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

300 g light soft brown sugar

150 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

Half teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg, or quarter teaspoon ground nutmeg

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

Fine grater if using whole nutmeg

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the nutmeg, vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Scrape into the tin.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Freshly grated nutmeg has far more aroma than old ground nutmeg. Use sparingly. Nutmeg is lovely until it becomes bossy.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, dark mild or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, spiced tea or hot chocolate.



Chapter Closing Note

Caribbean-inspired fudge brings warmth, fruit, spice and generosity. Rum, raisins, coconut, lime, ginger and nutmeg all work beautifully when handled with care. The main rule is moisture control. Soak fruit, then dry it. Use zest, not juice. Add alcohol modestly. Toast coconut when you can.

The result is fudge with sunshine in its pockets and spice in its coat.

Chapter Twenty-Four: Pumpkin, Cranberry and Fireside Fudge



Autumn in the Tin

Autumn fudge is all about warmth and contrast.

Pumpkin spice, cranberry, walnut, maple, brown sugar, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and orange bring the feeling of cooler days, darker evenings and kitchens where the oven has become popular again. These flavours are particularly associated with North American autumn and winter celebrations, but they sit happily in British kitchens too. After all, Britain understands dark afternoons and the need for something sweet beside tea.

Pumpkin itself is tricky in fudge. Pumpkin purée contains moisture and can make fudge soft. It can be used, but only in small amounts and with extra structure from white chocolate. Pumpkin spice, however, is easy and effective: cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, allspice and clove. It gives the flavour memory without the moisture problem.

Cranberries bring sharpness. Dried cranberries are best for fudge because they add chew without water. Freeze-dried cranberries bring tartness and colour. Fresh cranberries are generally too sharp and wet unless cooked down into a thick, concentrated form.

Walnuts and pecans add crunch, bitterness and balance. Toasting them is essential. Brown sugar and maple deepen the base.

These fudges are ideal for autumn boxes, winter gifts, Thanksgiving-inspired menus, Christmas hampers and fireside treats. They are cosy, spiced and generous, but not heavy if the sharp elements are used properly.

Recipe One Hundred and Eighteen: Pumpkin Spice Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge with pumpkin spice warmth and a small amount of pumpkin purée for colour and flavour. It is soft, spiced and autumnal.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

550 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

60 g pumpkin purée

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Half teaspoon ground ginger

Quarter teaspoon ground nutmeg

Tiny pinch ground cloves

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: crushed ginger biscuits for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until melted and smooth.

Stir in the pumpkin purée and cook gently for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with crushed ginger biscuits if using.

Chill until fully firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use thick pumpkin purée, not watery purée. If yours seems loose, blot it with kitchen paper before adding. The extra white chocolate helps support the set.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing due to pumpkin moisture.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains wheat and gluten if using biscuit topping.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Riesling or Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Pumpkin ale, brown ale or winter ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Chai, pumpkin spice latte or hot apple drink.



Recipe One Hundred and Nineteen: Cranberry Walnut Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge with dried cranberries and toasted walnuts. The cranberries cut through the richness, while the walnuts add depth and crunch.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g dark chocolate, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g dried cranberries

120 g walnuts, toasted and roughly chopped

Optional: finely grated zest of 1 orange

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla, salt and orange zest if using.

Fold in the dried cranberries and toasted walnuts.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dried cranberries are often sweetened, which is fine here. If using very tart freeze-dried cranberries, reduce the amount slightly or combine with dried cranberries.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and walnuts.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Dried cranberries may contain sulphites or oil.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Porter, stout or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Black coffee, cranberry tea or hot chocolate.



Recipe One Hundred and Twenty: Maple Cranberry White Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge with maple sweetness and tart cranberries. It is pretty, seasonal and excellent for gift boxes.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons maple syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g dried cranberries

Optional: 80 g toasted pecans, chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, butter and maple syrup into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Fold in dried cranberries and pecans if using.

Scrape into the tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Because maple syrup adds liquid, keep it to 2 tablespoons. If you want stronger maple flavour, add a few drops of good maple extract.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains pecans if used.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer, amber ale or fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cranberry spritz, tea or maple latte.



Recipe One Hundred and Twenty-One: Toasted Pecan Brown Sugar Fudge

Description

A brown sugar fudge with toasted pecans and vanilla. It is simple, rich and deeply comforting.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

300 g light soft brown sugar

150 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

160 g pecans, toasted and roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Toast the pecans and leave them to cool.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Fold in most of the pecans.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with remaining pecans.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

This is an excellent base for autumn gift tins. Add a pinch of cinnamon if you want a warmer flavour.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

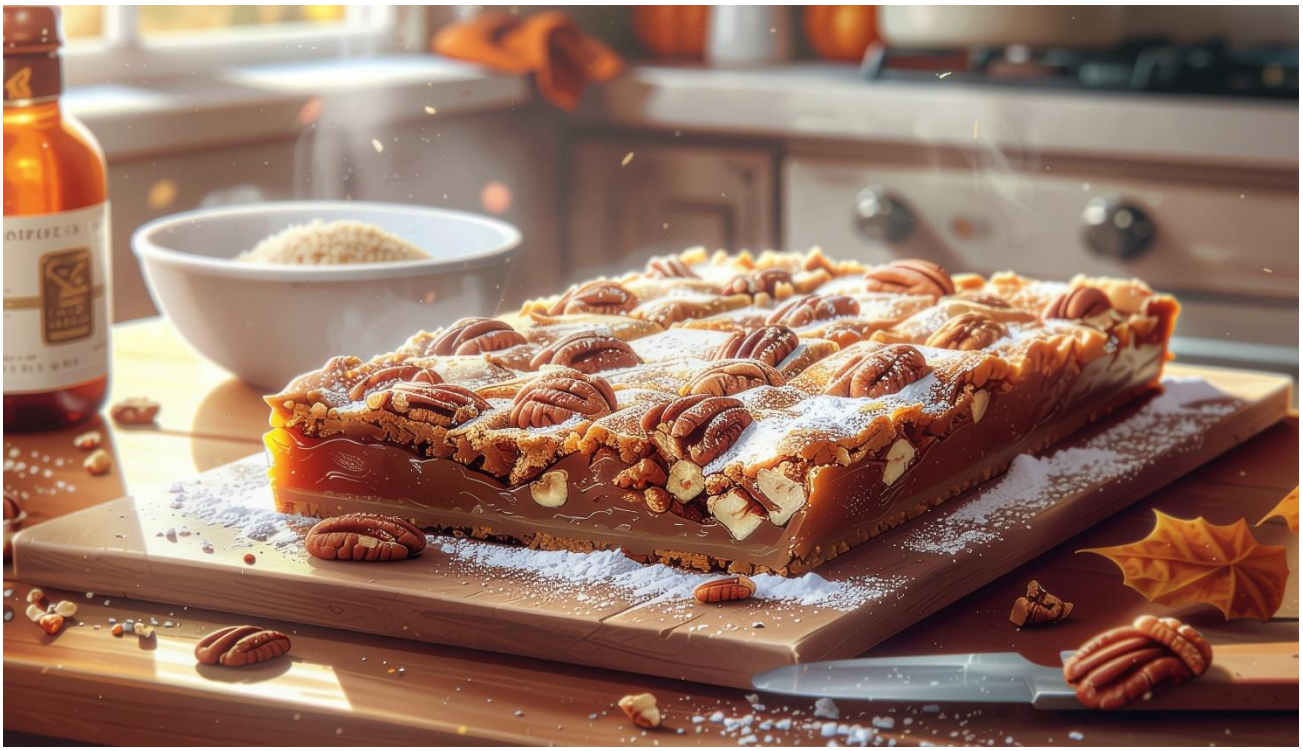
Contains milk and pecans.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, nut brown ale or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, breakfast tea or hot apple drink.



Recipe One Hundred and Twenty-Two: Fireside Chocolate Orange Cranberry Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge with orange zest, dried cranberries and a hint of spice. It is rich, sharp, fragrant and made for winter evenings.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 2 unwaxed oranges

Half teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g dried cranberries

Optional: 50 g candied orange peel, finely chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in orange zest, cinnamon, vanilla and salt.

Fold in dried cranberries and candied peel if using.

Scrape into the tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Orange and cranberry cut through dark chocolate beautifully. Keep the cinnamon gentle so it warms rather than dominates.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk unless using dairy-free chocolate and suitable condensed milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or mulled wine.

Beer suggestion: Winter ale, stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Spiced tea, orange hot chocolate or cranberry punch.



Chapter Closing Note

Autumn fudge is where sweetness puts on a jumper. Maple, cranberry, pumpkin spice, pecans, walnuts, orange and chocolate bring warmth and contrast. They are flavours for darker evenings, generous tins and kitchens that smell like someone has made an effort.

The trick is not to drown the fudge in purée, syrup or sentiment.

A little autumn goes a long way.

Part Six - Celebration Fudge

Chapter Twenty-Five: Birthday, Wedding and Party Fudge



Fudge Dressed for Company

Celebration fudge has a different duty from everyday fudge.

Everyday fudge can be slightly uneven, tucked in a tin, cut with a casual hand and eaten beside the kettle while nobody admits how many pieces have gone. Celebration fudge must behave itself in public. It needs to look pretty, cut neatly, store well, travel safely and please more than one sort of person. It may have to sit in a wedding favour box, survive a birthday table, charm a party guest, or behave in a hamper without sticking to the ribbon like an overexcited child.

The best celebration fudge is clear in flavour and practical in form. It should not be so delicate that it collapses at room temperature, nor so wildly decorated that people are unsure whether to eat it or hang it from a tree. Colours should be attractive but not alarming. Toppings should stay attached. Edible flowers must be food-safe. Sprinkles should not bleed. Alcohol must be labelled. Nuts must be declared. Gluten must be noted. If gifting to a crowd, always assume someone needs to know exactly what is in the tin.

Birthday fudge can be colourful and playful. Wedding fudge should usually be elegant, small and consistent. Party fudge can be bolder, layered, marbled or decorated. The recipes in this chapter use reliable condensed milk and chocolate bases because celebration fudge often needs predictability. Nobody wants to discover on the morning of a party that the lovingly planned favour squares have become dessert gravel or a suspicious pudding.

Presentation matters. Use a sharp knife, clean edges, parchment layers, boxes, bags or tins. Keep pieces small. Label properly. Store chilled if needed, but allow the fudge to come slightly towards room temperature before serving unless the recipe says otherwise.

Celebration fudge is still fudge, not a theatrical production. But a little polish makes it feel special. A neat square wrapped in waxed paper can say thank you, happy birthday, congratulations, well done, sorry about the weather, or please forget I borrowed your baking tin in 2019.

Fudge is surprisingly diplomatic.

Recipe One Hundred and Twenty-Three: Birthday Cake Fudge

Description

A cheerful white chocolate fudge with vanilla and colourful sprinkles. It tastes like birthday cake in sweet-shop form, minus the need to argue about who gets the corner piece.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

70 g colourful bake-stable sprinkles, plus extra for topping

Optional: quarter teaspoon almond extract for a cake-like flavour

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla, salt and almond extract if using.

Let the mixture cool for 2 minutes.

Fold in the sprinkles quickly.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter with extra sprinkles and press very lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use bake-stable or good-quality sugar sprinkles. Some sprinkles bleed instantly and turn the fudge into a muddy rainbow, which is a brave look but not always the desired one.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because the sprinkles may bleed after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Check sprinkles for gluten, colours and other allergens.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sparkling wine for adult birthdays.

Beer suggestion: Blonde ale or wheat beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lemonade, milkshake or birthday hot chocolate.



Recipe One Hundred and Twenty-Four: Champagne-Style White Chocolate Fudge

Description

An elegant white chocolate fudge with a sparkling wine note. It is designed for adult celebrations and can also be made alcohol-free using a suitable sparkling grape flavour.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

550 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

3 tablespoons dry sparkling wine, reduced to 1 tablespoon and cooled

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: edible gold shimmer suitable for food, used sparingly

Alcohol-free option: use 1 teaspoon alcohol-free sparkling grape flavouring or omit wine and add extra vanilla

Equipment

Small saucepan

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

If using sparkling wine, simmer 3 tablespoons in a small saucepan until reduced to 1 tablespoon. Cool completely.

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the cooled reduced sparkling wine, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Add a very light dusting of edible shimmer if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into neat squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not add unreduced sparkling wine. It brings too much liquid and not enough flavour. The reduction gives a subtle celebration note while keeping the fudge stable.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week if using wine, or up to 2 weeks without alcohol.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month, preferably without shimmer.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains alcohol if made with sparkling wine.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Check shimmer is edible and food-safe.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: The same sparkling wine used in the fudge.

Beer suggestion: Belgian blonde ale or wheat beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Sparkling grape juice, elderflower pressé or white tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Twenty-Five: Wedding Vanilla Almond Fudge

Description

A refined vanilla almond fudge for wedding favours, gift boxes or afternoon receptions. It is pale, neat and fragrant without being fussy.

Makes

About 64 small favour pieces.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

450 g granulated sugar

170 g evaporated milk

120 ml double cream

80 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

Quarter teaspoon almond extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

80 g toasted flaked almonds, finely crushed

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Favour boxes or bags

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the sugar, evaporated milk, cream, butter and golden syrup into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 115°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the vanilla, almond extract and salt.

Beat until thickened and less glossy.

Fold in the finely crushed toasted almonds.

Scrape into the prepared tin and smooth the top.

Leave to set completely.

Cut into small, neat favour pieces.

Pack in labelled favour boxes.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Crushing the almonds finely gives flavour without making the favour pieces hard to cut. Almond extract must be measured carefully.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 10 days before packing.

Freezer Advice

Freeze unboxed for up to 2 months. Thaw wrapped before packing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and almonds.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato, Sauternes or sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Earl Grey, white tea or sparkling elderflower.



Recipe One Hundred and Twenty-Six: Party Rocky Road Fudge

Description

A colourful party fudge packed with biscuits, marshmallows, cherries and chocolate. It is messy in spirit but tidy in square form, which is the best sort of compromise.

Makes

About 64 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g milk chocolate, chopped

250 g dark chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g digestive biscuits, roughly crushed

100 g mini marshmallows

80 g glacé cherries, rinsed, dried and halved

60 g white chocolate chunks

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Rinse and dry the glacé cherries thoroughly.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Let the mixture cool for 3 minutes.

Fold in the biscuits, marshmallows, cherries and white chocolate chunks.

Scrape into the tin and press level.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small party squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dry the cherries well and cool the mixture slightly before adding marshmallows. Otherwise, the contents may smear and melt into something less rocky road and more roadworks.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya and gelatine depending on ingredients.

Use vegetarian marshmallows if needed.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet sparkling red.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout, porter or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Hot chocolate, milk or cherry cola.



Recipe One Hundred and Twenty-Seven: Celebration Raspberry White Chocolate Fudge

Description

A pretty raspberry and white chocolate fudge for parties, afternoon teas and gift boxes. It is bright, creamy and easy to decorate.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

25 g freeze-dried raspberry powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

2 tablespoons thick seedless raspberry jam

Optional: freeze-dried raspberry pieces for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer or knife

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Spoon one-third of the mixture into a small bowl and stir in the raspberry powder.

Scrape the plain fudge into the tin.

Dollop the raspberry fudge and raspberry jam over the top.

Ripple lightly with a skewer.

Scatter with freeze-dried raspberry pieces if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use thick jam and do not over-ripple. The prettiest finish comes from a few clear swirls, not a full committee meeting of pink.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing if using jam. Without jam, freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Raspberry wheat beer or light fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Raspberry lemonade, tea or sparkling water.



Chapter Closing Note

Celebration fudge succeeds when it remembers the guest as well as the cook. It must taste good, look inviting, travel safely, cut neatly and tell people what is inside it. A pretty box cannot rescue poor texture, but good presentation can make a simple recipe feel generous and thoughtful.

Fudge is a gift that says someone stood in a kitchen and cared.

Even if they also licked the spoon.

Chapter Twenty-Six: Valentine’s, Easter and Mother’s Day Fudge



Sweet Days and Small Gestures

Some celebrations are loud. Others are gentle.

Valentine’s Day, Easter and Mother’s Day all invite a softer kind of fudge: pink ripples, pale lemon, chocolate eggs, floral notes, vanilla, berries, almond, coconut and pretty wrapping. These are recipes for affection rather than spectacle. They belong in small boxes, tea trays, spring hampers and parcels handed over with a slightly embarrassed smile.

Valentine’s fudge does not need to be heart-shaped, although it may be if you have cutters and patience. Raspberry, rose, dark chocolate, cherry and strawberry all work well. The important thing is not to turn romance into sugar fog. A little sharp fruit balances sweetness beautifully.

Easter fudge loves chocolate, mini eggs, lemon, coconut and pastel colours. The main issue with chocolate eggs and sugar shells is cutting. Large eggs crack unpredictably and can make neat squares difficult. Crushing some and leaving a few visible on top gives the best compromise.

Mother’s Day fudge often suits floral, citrus or tea-table flavours: vanilla rose, lemon, almond, lavender in very small amounts, raspberry, white chocolate and pistachio. Any floral flavouring must be restrained. A mother may love flowers; she does not necessarily want to chew a bouquet.

These recipes focus on practical beauty. They are giftable, seasonal and manageable. They do not require specialist moulds or extravagant decoration. A neat square, good ribbon and honest label are enough.

Recipe One Hundred and Twenty-Eight: Valentine’s Dark Chocolate Raspberry Fudge

Description

A rich dark chocolate fudge with raspberry sharpness and a pretty pink ripple. It is romantic without being silly, which is harder than it sounds.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

25 g freeze-dried raspberry powder

2 tablespoons thick seedless raspberry jam

Optional: freeze-dried raspberry pieces for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer or knife

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Spoon one-quarter of the mixture into a small bowl.

Stir the raspberry powder into the smaller portion.

Scrape the dark chocolate fudge into the tin.

Dollop the raspberry fudge and jam over the top.

Ripple lightly.

Scatter with freeze-dried raspberry pieces if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Dark chocolate and raspberry make excellent partners because bitterness, tartness and sweetness all keep each other in order. A relationship lesson, really, but with better snacks.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing with jam ripple.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk unless using dairy-free chocolate and suitable condensed milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé, ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout or raspberry wheat beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Raspberry tea, coffee or sparkling berry water.



Recipe One Hundred and Twenty-Nine: Easter Mini Egg Fudge

Description

A creamy chocolate fudge packed and topped with crushed mini chocolate eggs. It is colourful, crunchy and guaranteed to attract children, adults and anyone claiming to “just tidy the edges”.

Makes

About 64 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

300 g milk chocolate, chopped

200 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

180 g mini chocolate eggs, roughly crushed

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Rolling pin for crushing eggs

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the mini eggs in a bag and crush lightly with a rolling pin. Keep some larger colourful pieces.

Put the condensed milk, milk chocolate, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Let the mixture cool for 2 minutes.

Fold in two-thirds of the crushed mini eggs.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter the remaining mini eggs over the top and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not try to cut through whole mini eggs if you want neat squares. Crushing them first saves both the fudge and your patience.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because sugar shells may crack and dull.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya and nuts depending on chocolate eggs.

Check mini egg labels carefully.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sparkling wine for adults.

Beer suggestion: Milk stout or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Hot chocolate, milk or tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Thirty: Mother’s Day Lemon Rose Fudge

Description

A delicate white chocolate fudge with lemon zest and the faintest rose note. It is bright, floral and elegant, perfect for a small handmade gift box.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 2 unwaxed lemons

One eighth teaspoon rosewater

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: dried edible rose petals, food-safe and unsprayed, for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Fine grater

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the lemon zest, rosewater, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter very lightly with dried rose petals if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Rosewater should be almost a suggestion. Lemon brings freshness, rose brings fragrance, and restraint brings success.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze without rose petals for best appearance.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Check rose petals are edible and food-safe.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or delicate fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Earl Grey, lemon tea or sparkling elderflower.



Recipe One Hundred and Thirty-One: Spring Coconut Nest Fudge

Description

A white chocolate coconut fudge topped with toasted coconut and small chocolate eggs. It is playful, spring-like and ideal for Easter boxes.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

100 g desiccated coconut

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

50 g toasted coconut flakes

100 g small chocolate eggs or sugar-coated eggs, lightly crushed or halved

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the desiccated coconut, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter toasted coconut over the top.

Add halved or lightly crushed chocolate eggs, pressing gently.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Halve larger eggs where possible. Whole eggs make cutting harder and can cause cracking.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and coconut.

May contain soya and nuts depending on chocolate eggs.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato or sweet sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coconut milk drink, tea or lemonade.



Recipe One Hundred and Thirty-Two: Strawberry Cream Fudge

Description

A pretty strawberry and cream fudge using freeze-dried strawberry powder and white chocolate. It is soft pink, fruity and perfect for gentle gift boxes.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

25 g freeze-dried strawberry powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: 30 g freeze-dried strawberry pieces for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Spoon one-third of the mixture into a small bowl and stir in the strawberry powder.

Ripple the strawberry mixture back through the plain fudge, or stir fully for an even pink colour.

Scrape into the tin.

Top with freeze-dried strawberry pieces if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Freeze-dried strawberry gives flavour and colour without fresh fruit moisture. It is one of the fudge-maker's better friends.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month, though strawberry pieces may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or sweet Muscat.

Beer suggestion: Strawberry wheat beer or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Strawberry tea, milkshake or lemonade.



Chapter Closing Note

Spring celebration fudge should feel light, pretty and kind. It is not about excess. It is about small gestures: a box on a doorstep, a tin beside flowers, a plate after lunch, a square wrapped in paper and handed over with a smile.

The finest celebration fudge says, “I thought of you.”

It may also say, “I kept the untidy corner pieces for myself.”

Both are acceptable.

Chapter Twenty-Seven: Halloween, Bonfire Night and Christmas Fudge



The Darker Half of the Sweet Year

From October onwards, fudge becomes busier.

Halloween wants dark chocolate, orange, sweets, biscuit crumbs, black cocoa, green swirls, treacle and playful decoration. Bonfire Night wants dark sugar, ginger, treacle, smoke, spice and warmth. Christmas wants everything: peppermint, cranberry, orange, gingerbread, mince pie, marzipan, nuts, chocolate, rum raisin, fruitcake and enough gift boxes to suggest the cook has opened a small seasonal operation.

These celebrations suit fudge because fudge keeps well, packs nicely and feels generous. It can be made ahead, portioned carefully and varied across boxes. A Christmas tin with five flavours looks impressive, even if each recipe is simple. A Halloween batch with dark chocolate and orange sweets looks theatrical. Bonfire fudge brings old-fashioned depth.

The main issue is decoration. Seasonal toppings can be fun, but they must be edible, safe and suitable. Avoid anything not clearly food-safe. Watch coloured sweets for bleeding. Crushed boiled sweets can become sticky in humid weather. Peppermint toppings may soften. Biscuit crumbs can lose crunch. If making ahead, choose toppings that store well or add delicate decoration closer to serving.

Alcohol also appears more often in winter fudge. Rum, whisky, brandy and liqueur-style flavours all need clear labelling and careful measurement. Too much liquid affects the set. Extracts and flavourings may be more stable.

This chapter is festive, cosy and a little dramatic. These are the fudges that sit beside fireworks, pumpkins, wrapping paper, kitchen radios, late-night gift packing and the quiet horror of realising someone has eaten the batch marked “for neighbours”.

Recipe One Hundred and Thirty-Three: Halloween Black Cocoa Orange Fudge

Description

A dark, dramatic chocolate fudge with black cocoa and orange zest. It is rich, striking and ideal for Halloween boxes without requiring anything plastic or suspicious.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g dark chocolate, chopped

50 g black cocoa powder

50 g unsalted butter

Finely grated zest of 1 orange

Half teaspoon orange extract

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: orange sugar sprinkles or crushed orange sweets for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Whisk

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Whisk the black cocoa powder into the condensed milk in the saucepan until smooth.

Add the dark chocolate and butter.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the orange zest, orange extract, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin.

Add orange sprinkles or crushed sweets if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Black cocoa is intense and slightly bitter, which works beautifully with orange. If you cannot find it, use ordinary cocoa powder, though the colour will be less dramatic.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze without sprinkles for best appearance.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Check sprinkles or sweets for colours, gluten and other allergens.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Orange hot chocolate, black coffee or spiced tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Thirty-Four: Bonfire Treacle Ginger Fudge

Description

A dark treacle fudge with ginger and brown sugar, made for Bonfire Night and cold hands around warm mugs.

Makes

About 36 squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

25 to 35 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

325 g granulated sugar

125 g dark brown soft sugar

170 g evaporated milk

100 ml double cream

90 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 tablespoon black treacle

1 teaspoon ground ginger

Half teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Sugar thermometer or digital probe thermometer

Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put both sugars, evaporated milk, cream, butter, golden syrup and treacle into the saucepan.

Heat gently, stirring until dissolved.

Bring to a steady boil and cook to 116°C.

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes.

Add the ginger, cinnamon, vanilla and salt.

Beat until thick, dull and beginning to grain.

Scrape into the tin.

Leave to set fully.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

This fudge is bold and old-fashioned. If serving to children, consider reducing the ginger slightly.

Storage

Store in an airtight tin for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Mulled wine or ruby port.

Beer suggestion: Porter, stout or winter ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Ginger tea, hot apple juice or strong tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Thirty-Five: Christmas Mince Pie Fudge

Description

A white chocolate fudge with mincemeat-style dried fruit, citrus, spice and a little pastry crumb. It captures the flavour of mince pies without requiring a rolling pin or a floury disagreement.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon mixed spice

Finely grated zest of 1 orange

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

120 g luxury mincemeat, drained if very wet

60 g shortcrust pastry biscuits or plain shortbread, crushed

Optional: 1 tablespoon brandy, or half teaspoon brandy flavouring

Equipment

Fine sieve, if draining mincemeat

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

If the mincemeat is loose or syrupy, drain it briefly in a fine sieve.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the mixed spice, orange zest, vanilla, salt and brandy or flavouring if using.

Fold in the mincemeat and most of the crushed pastry biscuits.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with remaining crumbs.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Mincemeat varies in wetness. Drain very syrupy mincemeat or the fudge may become soft. Brandy flavouring is safer for structure than extra brandy.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing due to mincemeat moisture.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain nuts, suet, alcohol or sulphites depending on mincemeat.

Check labels carefully.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Mulled wine, sweet sherry or port.

Beer suggestion: Winter ale, stout or dark mild.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Spiced tea, hot apple drink or alcohol-free mulled punch.



Recipe One Hundred and Thirty-Six: Candy Cane Peppermint Fudge

Description

A smooth chocolate fudge topped with crushed candy canes or peppermint sweets. It is festive, bright and excellent for Christmas tins.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

350 g dark chocolate, chopped

200 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon peppermint extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

60 g crushed candy canes or peppermint sweets

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Rolling pin for crushing sweets

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla, peppermint extract and salt.

Scrape into the prepared tin.

Scatter crushed candy canes over the top and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Peppermint extract is strong. Do not guess. Measure it. Nobody wants fudge that tastes like it has been brushing its teeth.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days. Topping may become sticky in humidity.

Freezer Advice

Freeze without peppermint topping for best appearance.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Check candy canes for colours, gelatine and allergens.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Peppermint hot chocolate, coffee or mint tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Thirty-Seven: Christmas Pudding Fudge

Description

A rich dark chocolate fudge with dried fruit, spice, orange and a touch of brandy-style warmth. It is Christmas pudding in a neat square, without the theatrical steaming.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

400 g dark chocolate, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon mixed spice

Finely grated zest of 1 orange

Half teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g mixed dried fruit and candied peel

1 tablespoon brandy, or half teaspoon brandy flavouring

Optional: 50 g white chocolate, melted, for drizzling

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small bowl for melting white chocolate

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in mixed spice, orange zest, vanilla, salt and brandy or flavouring.

Fold in the dried fruit and peel.

Scrape into the tin and smooth.

Drizzle with melted white chocolate if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

This is rich, so small pieces are best. If using brandy, keep it to 1 tablespoon. Christmas enthusiasm is not a structural ingredient.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains alcohol if made with brandy.

Dried fruit may contain sulphites.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Port, sweet sherry or Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Winter ale, stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Spiced tea, hot chocolate or alcohol-free mulled punch.



Chapter Closing Note

The darker half of the sweet year gives fudge permission to be dramatic. Treacle, peppermint, spice, orange, dark chocolate, dried fruit and crushed sweets all bring theatre to the tin. The trick is to make sure the theatre remains edible, labelled and neatly cut.

Seasonal fudge should feel joyful.

Not like the kitchen lost a fight with a decoration box.

Part Seven - Advanced Fudge

Chapter Twenty-Eight: Layered, Marbled and Filled Fudge



When Fudge Learns a Few Tricks

Advanced fudge does not always mean difficult. Sometimes it simply means organised.

Layered fudge, marbled fudge and filled fudge use familiar bases in more deliberate ways. You make one mixture, then another. You divide and colour. You ripple carefully. You chill between layers. You add a filling that is thick enough to stay where it belongs. None of this requires professional equipment, but it does require timing and attention.

The biggest challenge is structure. Layers must stick together. Ripples must not become puddles. Fillings must not be too wet. Fudge must be firm enough to cut but not so hard that layers split. If one layer is fully chilled and the next is poured on cold, they may separate. If the first layer is too soft, the second sinks into it. The best moment is usually when the lower layer is firm but still slightly tacky.

Marbling is about restraint. A few swirls look elegant. Endless stirring turns everything into one uncertain colour. Use a skewer, knife or chopstick and stop before you think you should. Fudge, like haircuts, can be ruined by one more little adjustment.

Filled fudge works best with thick fillings: caramel spread, nut butter, chocolate ganache, thick jam, fruit curd used sparingly, marshmallow crème or biscuit paste. Wet fillings leak. Thin fillings slide. Overfilled fudge becomes messy to cut.

This chapter gives techniques that make fudge look more professional while remaining practical for home cooks. These recipes are excellent for gifts, special boxes, market stalls and celebration plates. They are also satisfying to make because they give the cook a sense of artistry without requiring sugar sculpture, edible airbrushing or a committee of pastry chefs.

Recipe One Hundred and Thirty-Eight: Vanilla Chocolate Layer Fudge

Description

A neat two-layer fudge with dark chocolate below and creamy vanilla above. It is simple, striking and excellent for gift boxes.

Makes

About 49 squares.

Preparation Time

25 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

For the chocolate layer

200 g sweetened condensed milk

300 g dark chocolate, chopped

25 g unsalted butter

A pinch of fine sea salt

For the vanilla layer

197 g sweetened condensed milk

300 g white chocolate, chopped

25 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Two saucepans or one washed between layers

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Make the chocolate layer by warming the condensed milk, dark chocolate, butter and salt over very low heat until smooth.

Scrape into the tin and spread evenly.

Chill for 20 to 30 minutes until firm but slightly tacky.

Make the vanilla layer by warming the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat and stir in vanilla and salt.

Spread carefully over the chocolate layer.

Chill until fully firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not let the first layer become icy cold and dry before adding the second. Slight tackiness helps the layers bond.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Porter, stout or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, tea or hot chocolate.



Recipe One Hundred and Thirty-Nine: Raspberry Marble Fudge

Description

A white chocolate fudge marbled with raspberry powder and thick jam. It is pretty, sharp and ideal for gift boxes or afternoon tea.

Makes

About 49 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

25 g freeze-dried raspberry powder

2 tablespoons thick seedless raspberry jam

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

Small bowl

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in vanilla and salt.

Spoon one-third of the mixture into a small bowl and stir in raspberry powder.

Scrape the plain fudge into the tin.

Dollop raspberry fudge and jam across the top.

Drag a skewer through the mixture in broad curves.

Stop while the swirls are still distinct.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Marbling improves when you stop early. The urge to keep swirling is natural and must be resisted like a second helping you know will defeat you.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing with jam ripple.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Fruit beer or wheat beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Raspberry tea, lemonade or sparkling water.



Recipe One Hundred and Forty: Salted Caramel Filled Chocolate Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge with a hidden salted caramel layer. It is indulgent, dramatic and best cut into small squares unless you wish to silence a room.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

25 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

For the chocolate fudge

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

550 g dark chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

For the filling

180 g thick caramel spread or dulce de leche

Quarter teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: flaky sea salt for finishing

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Small bowl

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Mix the caramel spread with the fine sea salt in a small bowl.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat and stir in vanilla and salt.

Spread half the chocolate fudge mixture into the tin.

Dollop the salted caramel over the surface, keeping it slightly away from the edges.

Spread the remaining chocolate fudge over the top.

Smooth carefully.

Sprinkle with a little flaky salt if using.

Chill until fully firm.

Cut into small squares with a hot, wiped knife.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Keep the caramel away from the edges to prevent leaking. Use thick caramel, not thin sauce. Thin sauce will escape like it has somewhere better to be.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because the caramel may change texture.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Tawny port or Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Stout, porter or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, strong tea or hot chocolate.



Recipe One Hundred and Forty-One: Peanut Butter Swirl Chocolate Fudge

Description

A rich chocolate fudge swirled with peanut butter fudge. It is bold, attractive and deeply popular.

Makes

About 49 squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

15 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

For the chocolate base

300 g sweetened condensed milk

400 g dark chocolate, chopped

50 g milk chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

A pinch of fine sea salt

For the peanut swirl

97 g sweetened condensed milk

150 g white chocolate, chopped

100 g smooth peanut butter

15 g unsalted butter

A pinch of fine sea salt

Equipment

Two saucepans or one saucepan washed between mixtures

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Skewer

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Make the chocolate base by warming condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate, butter and salt until smooth.

Scrape into the tin.

Make the peanut swirl by warming condensed milk, white chocolate, peanut butter, butter and salt until smooth.

Dollop the peanut mixture over the chocolate base.

Swirl lightly with a skewer.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Do not over-swirl. You want visible ribbons of peanut butter, not one uniform beige-brown compromise.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and peanuts.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Peanut butter stout, porter or brown ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cold milk, coffee or banana milkshake.



Recipe One Hundred and Forty-Two: Cherry Bakewell Filled Fudge

Description

A white chocolate almond fudge with a hidden cherry centre. It is pretty, fragrant and full of tea-table charm.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

25 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

Quarter teaspoon almond extract

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

150 g thick cherry jam

80 g toasted flaked almonds

Optional: 50 g glacé cherries, chopped and dried well

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in almond extract, vanilla and salt.

Fold in half the toasted almonds and glacé cherries if using.

Spread half the fudge mixture into the tin.

Spread the cherry jam over it, keeping slightly away from the edges.

Cover with remaining fudge.

Scatter with remaining almonds.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use thick jam and avoid the edges. Jam that reaches the edges can leak during cutting and storage.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and almonds.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Cherry beer or blonde ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Cherry tea, Earl Grey or lemonade.



Chapter Closing Note

Layered, marbled and filled fudge rewards the organised cook. Prepare tins, divide mixtures, chill thoughtfully and use fillings that know how to stay put. The result looks polished without requiring professional equipment.

It is still fudge.

It has simply learned to dress for dinner.

Chapter Twenty-Nine: Cheesecake, Brownie and Dessert Fudge



When Dessert Becomes a Square

Dessert fudge is dangerously appealing because nearly every beloved pudding can be translated into fudge.

Cheesecake brings creaminess, tang and biscuit crumb. Brownies bring cocoa, chocolate and dense richness. Tiramisu brings coffee, cocoa and cream. Banoffee brings banana, caramel and biscuit. Eton mess brings berries, cream and meringue. Apple crumble brings fruit, oats and spice. The trouble, as ever, is moisture and structure.

Many desserts include fresh fruit, cream cheese, custard, whipped cream, sauce or soft cake. Fudge does not want too much of those things. To capture dessert flavours successfully, use powders, extracts, zests, dried fruit, freeze-dried fruit, biscuit crumbs, thick caramel, cocoa and chocolate. If using cream cheese, it must be in a recipe designed for fridge storage and shorter shelf life. Cheesecake fudge is delicious, but it is not a long-storage market-stall fudge unless made with shelf-stable flavourings rather than fresh cheese.

Dessert fudge tends to be rich. Cut it small. Label it clearly. Store chilled if it contains cream cheese, fresh dairy additions or moist fillings. Do not leave cheesecake-style fudge on a warm buffet for hours while everyone debates who brought the potato salad.

This chapter is playful and indulgent. These recipes are for dessert boards, parties, gift boxes with short storage, and kitchens where someone has said, “Could that be fudge?” with the dangerous expression of a person about to learn something.

Recipe One Hundred and Forty-Three: Cheesecake Fudge

Description

A creamy white chocolate fudge with cream cheese tang and biscuit crumbs. It is soft, rich and must be stored chilled.

Makes

About 36 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

300 g white chocolate, chopped

200 g sweetened condensed milk

100 g full-fat cream cheese

35 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

100 g digestive biscuits, finely crushed

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Beat the cream cheese briefly until smooth.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Beat in the cream cheese, vanilla and salt until fully combined.

Fold in most of the biscuit crumbs.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with remaining crumbs.

Chill until fully firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

This fudge contains cream cheese and has a shorter storage life. Keep chilled and serve cool. It is softer than standard fudge.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Freezer Advice

Not recommended. Texture may become grainy after thawing.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sparkling wine or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Berry tea, coffee or lemonade.



Recipe One Hundred and Forty-Four: Brownie Batter Fudge

Description

A dense chocolate fudge with cocoa, chocolate chunks and brownie-style richness. It is fudgy in both senses of the word, which is pleasingly excessive.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g dark chocolate, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

50 g unsalted butter

30 g cocoa powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

100 g chocolate chunks

Optional: 80 g toasted walnuts

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Whisk

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Whisk the cocoa powder into the condensed milk in the saucepan.

Add the dark chocolate, milk chocolate and butter.

Warm gently until melted and smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in vanilla and salt.

Let cool for 2 minutes.

Fold in chocolate chunks and walnuts if using.

Scrape into the tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Cooling slightly before adding chocolate chunks helps them remain as chunks rather than disappearing completely into the mixture.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains walnuts if used.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or sweet red wine.

Beer suggestion: Chocolate stout, porter or dark ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, hot chocolate or cold milk.



Recipe One Hundred and Forty-Five: Tiramisu Fudge

Description

A coffee and white chocolate fudge with cocoa dusting and a creamy dessert flavour inspired by tiramisu. It is elegant, bittersweet and perfect after dinner.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

4 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g white chocolate, chopped

100 g dark chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

2 tablespoons instant espresso powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

2 tablespoons cocoa powder, for dusting

Optional: 1 tablespoon coffee liqueur, or omit

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Fine sieve

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, dark chocolate, butter and espresso powder into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in vanilla, salt and coffee liqueur if using.

Scrape into the tin.

Chill until firm.

Dust lightly with cocoa powder.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Coffee liqueur is optional and should be kept to 1 tablespoon. The espresso powder gives most of the flavour without excess liquid.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week if using liqueur, or up to 2 weeks without.

Freezer Advice

Freeze before cocoa dusting for best appearance.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

Contains alcohol if liqueur is used.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Marsala-style dessert wine or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Coffee stout or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Espresso, cappuccino or black tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Forty-Six: Banoffee Fudge

Description

A caramel and banana fudge with biscuit crumb, inspired by banoffee pie. It uses dried banana rather than fresh for a stable set.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

20 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

300 g dulce de leche

200 g sweetened condensed milk

450 g white chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

60 g dried banana chips, finely chopped

80 g digestive biscuits, crushed

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the dulce de leche, condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in dried banana, most of the biscuit crumbs, vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with remaining biscuit crumbs.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Fresh banana is too wet and short-lived for this fudge. Dried banana gives flavour and texture without causing storage drama.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month. Biscuit crumbs may soften.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet Madeira or tawny port.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, stout or banana bread beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Coffee, banana milkshake or tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Forty-Seven: Eton Mess Fudge

Description

A white chocolate fudge with strawberry, crushed meringue and vanilla cream flavour. It is pretty, sweet and best eaten fresh.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

25 g freeze-dried strawberry powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

40 g small meringue pieces, lightly crushed

20 g freeze-dried strawberry pieces

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the strawberry powder, vanilla and salt.

Let cool for 2 minutes.

Fold in most of the meringue and freeze-dried strawberry pieces.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with remaining meringue and strawberries.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Meringue softens over time, so this is best made close to serving. It is not ideal for long-distance gifting unless packed very carefully and eaten quickly.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Freezer Advice

Not recommended.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and egg.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sparkling rosé or Moscato.

Beer suggestion: Strawberry wheat beer or light fruit beer.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Strawberry lemonade, tea or sparkling elderflower.



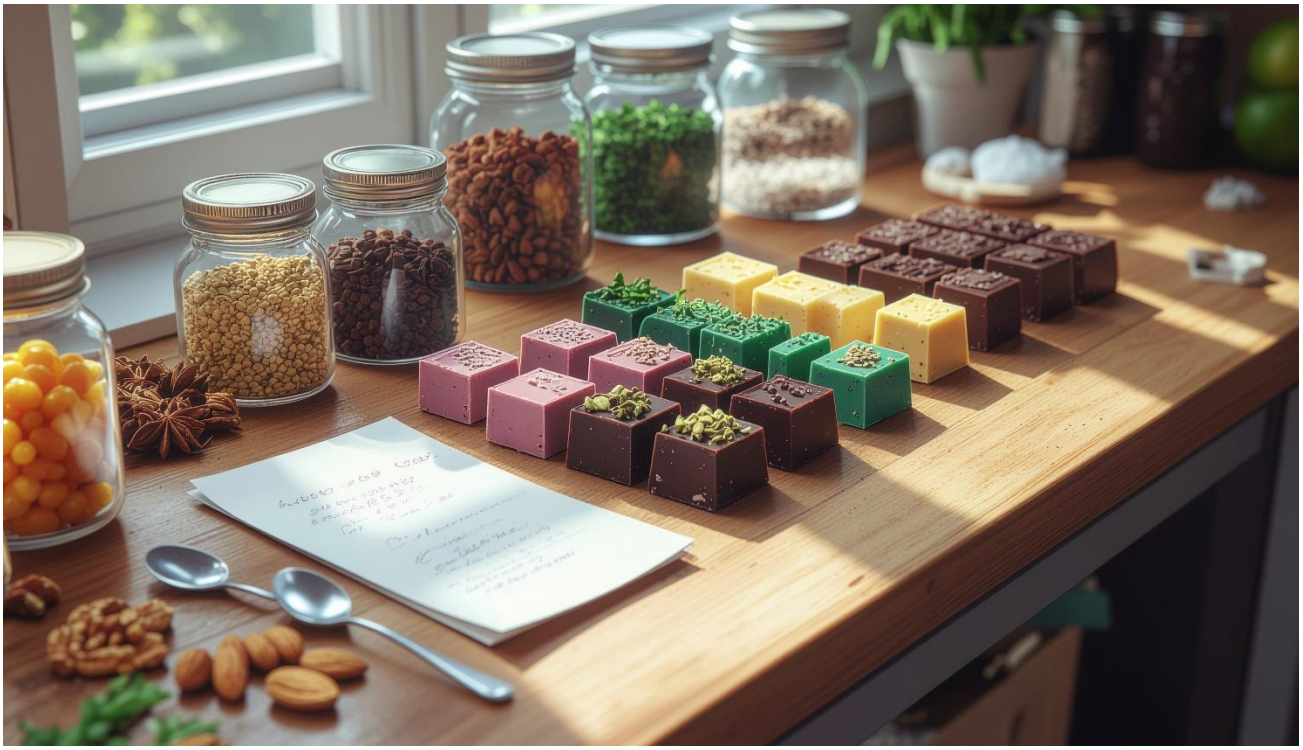
Chapter Closing Note

Dessert fudge is playful, but it must not forget the rules. Use dry flavour, thick fillings and careful storage. Keep fresh dairy chilled. Keep fruit moisture low. Keep pieces small because dessert fudge is rich enough to make even confident people blink.

A pudding may become fudge.

But it must leave some of its wet habits behind.

Chapter Thirty: Experimental Fudge Without Causing Alarm



Curiosity With a Safety Net

Experimental fudge is where the cook becomes both artist and responsible adult.

This is not always an easy combination. The artist says, “What if we put rosemary, black pepper and grapefruit in white chocolate fudge?” The responsible adult says, “Perhaps in a small batch, labelled clearly, and nowhere near the wedding favours.” Both voices are useful. One brings invention. The other prevents the neighbours from receiving a gift box that tastes like a scented candle had a disagreement with a salad.

Fudge can carry unusual flavours surprisingly well. Salt, herbs, chilli, coffee, tea, citrus, toasted spices, smoked ingredients, savoury notes, floral flavours and even certain cheeses can work if handled carefully. The secret is balance. Sweetness is powerful, but it is not a magic blanket. It cannot hide everything. If a flavour is harsh, stale, muddy or medicinal, fudge will not turn it charming. It may simply make more of it.

The best experimental fudge begins with a clear base. White chocolate is good for delicate flavours, fruits, teas, herbs and florals. Dark chocolate suits chilli, coffee, smoke, salt, nuts, bitter citrus and spices. Caramel or brown sugar bases suit malt, beer, pretzel, toasted grains, bacon-style vegetarian smoke flavours, treacle and warming spices. Peanut butter and tahini bases suit savoury-sweet ideas.

Work in small batches. Keep notes. Measure everything. Do not rely on memory unless your memory is unusually better than most people's, which it probably is not after standing over a pan of sugar. Write down the chocolate amount, condensed milk amount, flavourings, additions, setting time and result. Note whether it cut cleanly, tasted balanced and stored properly.

Avoid dangerous or unsuitable ingredients. Do not use essential oils unless they are specifically food-grade and intended for culinary use, and even then use extreme caution. Do not use decorative flowers unless they are edible, food-safe and unsprayed. Do not use unknown foraged plants in fudge. Do not use alcohol heavily. Do not add fresh herbs in large quantities if the fudge needs to keep. Do not sell experimental batches without proper allergen, ingredient and storage testing.

Experimental fudge should surprise pleasantly. It should make someone say, "Oh, that works," rather than "What have you done?"

This final recipe chapter gives a handful of unusual but controlled ideas: pretzel stout-style fudge, rosemary sea salt fudge, chilli mango dark chocolate fudge, Earl Grey lavender fudge, miso caramel-style fudge and smoky almond fudge. Each one keeps a foot firmly on the kitchen floor.

Recipe One Hundred and Forty-Eight: Salted Pretzel Stout-Style Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge with crushed pretzels, malt extract and a stout-inspired depth. It is salty, crunchy and grown-up, with beer pairing written all over it even if no beer goes into the pan.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g dark chocolate, chopped

100 g milk chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 tablespoon malt extract

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

100 g salted pretzels, roughly crushed

Optional: quarter teaspoon instant espresso powder

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate, milk chocolate, butter and malt extract into the saucepan.

Warm gently over a very low heat, stirring until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla, salt and espresso powder if using.

Fold in most of the crushed pretzels, reserving some for the top.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with remaining pretzels and press lightly.

Chill until firm.

Cut into squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Pretzels soften over time, so this fudge is best eaten within a few days. Malt extract adds depth without adding beer, making it suitable for a wider audience than alcohol-based fudge.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Freezer Advice

Not ideal for freezing because pretzels lose crunch.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk, wheat and gluten.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Malt extract usually contains barley gluten.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Stout, porter or dark ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Malted hot chocolate, coffee or strong tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Forty-Nine: Rosemary Sea Salt White Fudge

Description

A delicate white chocolate fudge infused with rosemary and finished with sea salt. It is unusual, aromatic and best served in tiny squares after dinner.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

25 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

1 small fresh rosemary sprig

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Tiny pinch flaky sea salt, for finishing

Equipment

Small saucepan

Fine sieve

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Warm the condensed milk gently with the rosemary sprig until steaming but not boiling.

Remove from the heat and leave to infuse for 10 minutes.

Remove and discard the rosemary sprig, straining if any leaves have broken away.

Put the infused condensed milk into the heavy-based saucepan with the white chocolate and butter.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and fine sea salt.

Scrape into the tin.

Finish with a very small pinch of flaky sea salt.

Chill until firm.

Cut into tiny squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Rosemary can become medicinal if overused. Infuse gently and remove the sprig. Do not chop fresh rosemary into the fudge unless you want the texture of sweet garden trimmings.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Freezer Advice

Not recommended, as herbal flavour may become dull.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sparkling wine or Sauternes.

Beer suggestion: Saison, wheat beer or herbal pale ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Lemon tea, sparkling elderflower or white tea.



Recipe One Hundred and Fifty: Chilli Mango Dark Chocolate Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge with dried mango and a controlled chilli warmth. It is fruity, rich and lively, with sweetness, bitterness and heat in balance.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

25 g freeze-dried mango powder

80 g dried mango, very finely chopped

Tiny pinch mild chilli powder or cayenne

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the mango powder, chilli, vanilla and salt.

Fold in the finely chopped dried mango.

Scrape into the tin and smooth the surface.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker’s Notes

Chop the dried mango very finely. Large pieces make cutting untidy and can pull from the fudge. The chilli should arrive at the end, not kick the door open.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk unless using suitable dairy-free ingredients.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet red wine or off-dry Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Mango pale ale, porter or dark lager.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Mango iced tea, lime soda or black coffee.



Recipe One Hundred and Fifty-One: Earl Grey Lavender Fudge

Description

A fragrant white chocolate fudge infused with Earl Grey tea and a tiny amount of lavender. It is floral, citrusy and elegant when restrained.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

25 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g white chocolate, chopped

35 g unsalted butter

2 Earl Grey tea bags

Tiny pinch culinary lavender, food-safe

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Half teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: finely grated zest of half an unwaxed lemon

Equipment

Small saucepan

Fine sieve

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Warm the condensed milk gently with the Earl Grey tea bags and tiny pinch of lavender until steaming but not boiling.

Remove from the heat and steep for 8 minutes.

Remove the tea bags, squeezing gently, and strain out the lavender if needed.

Put the infused condensed milk into the heavy-based saucepan with the white chocolate and butter.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla, salt and lemon zest if using.

Scrape into the tin.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Lavender must be used with extreme restraint. Too much and the fudge will taste like a drawer sachet. Earl Grey already has floral bergamot notes, so let that do most of the work.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Freezer Advice

Not recommended.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Use only culinary lavender from a food-safe source.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Moscato or sweet sparkling wine.

Beer suggestion: Wheat beer or floral saison.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Earl Grey tea, lemon tea or sparkling elderflower.



Recipe One Hundred and Fifty-Two: Miso Caramel-Style Fudge

Description

A sweet-salty caramel-style fudge with white chocolate, brown sugar and a small amount of white miso. It is savoury, rich and deeply moreish.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

15 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

450 g white chocolate, chopped

50 g light soft brown sugar

50 g unsalted butter

1 tablespoon white miso paste

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon fine sea salt

Optional: toasted sesame seeds for topping

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, white chocolate, brown sugar and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently, stirring until smooth and the sugar has dissolved.

Remove from the heat.

Beat in the white miso until fully incorporated.

Stir in the vanilla and salt.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with toasted sesame seeds if using.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Use white miso, which is milder and sweeter than darker miso. Do not add extra salt until tasted in future batches, as miso varies.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 1 week.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 1 month.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and soya.

May contain gluten depending on miso.

Contains sesame if topped with sesame seeds.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Sweet sherry or late-harvest Riesling.

Beer suggestion: Brown ale, dark lager or porter.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Green tea, roasted barley tea or black coffee.



Recipe One Hundred and Fifty-Three: Smoky Almond Dark Fudge

Description

A dark chocolate fudge with smoked almonds and a touch of smoked salt. It is savoury-sweet, bold and excellent with dark beer.

Makes

About 49 small squares.

Preparation Time

10 minutes.

Cooking Time

10 minutes.

Cooling and Setting Time

3 hours.

Ingredients

397 g tin sweetened condensed milk

500 g dark chocolate, chopped

40 g unsalted butter

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Quarter teaspoon smoked sea salt, plus a tiny pinch for finishing

150 g smoked almonds, roughly chopped

Equipment

Heavy-based saucepan

Heatproof spatula

20 cm square tin

Baking parchment

Method

Line the tin with baking parchment.

Put the condensed milk, dark chocolate and butter into the saucepan.

Warm gently until smooth.

Remove from the heat.

Stir in the vanilla and smoked salt.

Fold in most of the smoked almonds.

Scrape into the tin.

Scatter with remaining almonds and a tiny pinch more smoked salt.

Chill until firm.

Cut into small squares.

Fudge Maker's Notes

Smoked salt is powerful. Use lightly. The smoked almonds should provide most of the character.

Storage

Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Freezer Advice

Freeze for up to 2 months.

Allergens and Swaps

Contains milk and almonds.

May contain soya depending on chocolate.

Pairings

Wine suggestion: Ruby port or Madeira.

Beer suggestion: Smoked porter, stout or dark ale.

Non-alcoholic suggestion: Black coffee, strong tea or unsweetened cherry drink.



Chapter Closing Note

Experimental fudge should be brave, not reckless. There is a difference. Brave fudge has a clear idea, measured flavouring and a reliable base. Reckless fudge contains six extracts, fresh basil, half a bottle of liqueur and a cook saying, “Let’s see what happens.”

By all means, see what happens.

Just do it in a small tin.

Appendix One: Fudge Temperature Guide

Fudge-making often depends on how concentrated the sugar syrup becomes as it boils. Temperature is the easiest way to judge that concentration.

For many traditional fudge recipes, the target is usually 114°C to 116°C. This is the soft-ball stage. At this point, a little syrup dropped into cold water forms a soft ball that can be pressed between finger and thumb.

Below this range, fudge may not set properly. It may remain soft, sticky or sauce-like.

Above this range, fudge may become firmer, drier, harder or more crumbly. At higher temperatures, it begins moving towards firmer sweets, tablet, toffee or caramelised sugar textures.

A thermometer should measure the syrup, not the bottom of the pan. If using a clip-on thermometer, make sure the bulb sits in the mixture. If using a probe, hold it in the syrup without touching the base.

Remember that temperature can continue rising briefly after the pan is removed from heat, especially in a heavy pan. Remove promptly when the target is reached.

Cold-Water Test

Drop a tiny amount of boiling syrup into a bowl of cold water.

Let it cool for a moment.

If it dissolves, it is not ready.

If it forms a soft ball that squashes easily, it is at soft-ball stage.

If it forms a hard ball, it has gone too far for standard fudge.

Always use caution. Hot sugar burns badly.

Appendix Two: Troubleshooting by Texture

Soft and Sticky Fudge

Likely causes include undercooking, too much liquid, insufficient chocolate in quick fudge, humid storage or not enough chilling.

Possible fixes include rechilling, freezing briefly before cutting, dusting with icing sugar, or returning traditional fudge to the pan and boiling again to the correct temperature.

If it cannot be rescued, use it as a sauce, ice cream ripple or dessert filling.

Dry and Crumbly Fudge

Likely causes include overcooking, overbeating or too much dry ingredient.

Use as crumble topping, ice cream topping, brownie pieces or hot chocolate stir-ins.

Greasy Fudge

Likely causes include overheated chocolate, split fat, oily nut butter or poor emulsification.

Try beating firmly while warm. If it does not come together, chill and use as baking chunks.

Grainy Fudge

Some grain is intended in crumbly fudge. Unpleasant graininess may come from undissolved sugar, stirring at the wrong stage or crystallisation on the side of the pan.

Next time, dissolve sugar fully before boiling and avoid scraping crystallised sugar from the sides into the mixture.

Fudge Will Not Cut Cleanly

It may be too warm, too soft, too full of large additions, or not fully set.

Chill it longer. Use a hot, dry knife. Cut additions smaller next time.

Fudge Tastes Too Sweet

Add more salt in future, use darker chocolate, include nuts, citrus zest, coffee, bitter cocoa, tart fruit powders or spice.

Fudge Tastes Flat

It may need salt, better vanilla, fresher spices or stronger base ingredients.

Appendix Three: Allergen Notes and Swaps

Common Allergens in Fudge

Milk appears in butter, cream, condensed milk, evaporated milk, milk chocolate, white chocolate, cream cheese and many flavourings.

Nuts appear in almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios, walnuts, pecans, peanut butter, nut spreads and some chocolates.

Peanuts are a separate major allergen and must be labelled clearly.

Sesame appears in tahini, sesame paste and sesame toppings.

Gluten appears in biscuits, pretzels, malt extract, some flavourings, some oats and some decorations.

Egg may appear in meringue, some marshmallow products, marzipan or decorations.

Soya may appear in chocolate, spreads, flavourings and vegan products.

Sulphites may appear in dried fruit.

Alcohol appears in recipes using rum, whisky, brandy, liqueur, wine or reduced sparkling wine.

General Swap Guidance

For dairy-free fudge, use recipes designed for dairy-free ingredients rather than directly swapping cream and butter in traditional boiled fudge.

For gluten-free fudge, use gluten-free biscuits, avoid malt extract, check chocolate labels and avoid cross-contamination.

For nut-free fudge, avoid nut ingredients and check chocolate, sprinkles, flavourings and manufacturing warnings.

For alcohol-free fudge, use extracts or flavour notes rather than direct liqueur additions, checking suitability.

For vegan fudge, use vegan condensed milk, dairy-free chocolate and vegan block butter. Check sugar, flavourings, decorations and alcohol suitability.

Always label carefully when gifting or selling.

Appendix Four: Storage, Freezing and Gifting

Room Temperature Storage

Traditional boiled fudge can usually be stored in an airtight tin at cool room temperature for 1 to 2 weeks, depending on ingredients.

Avoid heat, humidity and direct sunlight.

Fridge Storage

Chocolate-set fudge, condensed milk fudge, dairy-free fudge and fudge with softer fillings often benefits from fridge storage.

Bring chilled fudge towards room temperature briefly before serving for better texture, unless it is very soft.

Short-Life Fudge

Fudge containing cream cheese, fresh dairy additions, moist jam ripples, mincemeat, fresh purée or meringue may have a shorter life. Follow individual recipe guidance.

Freezing

Many fudges freeze well for 1 to 2 months.

Wrap tightly in parchment and then in airtight freezer-safe packaging.

Thaw wrapped at room temperature or in the fridge to reduce condensation.

Add delicate toppings after thawing where possible.

Gifting

Pack fudge in parchment layers, waxed paper, small boxes, tins or food-safe bags.

Include flavour, date made, storage instructions and allergen information.

Do not gift alcohol fudge without clear labelling.

Do not claim “free from” unless ingredients and kitchen conditions support that claim.

Appendix Five: Scaling Recipes Up and Down

Scaling fudge requires care.

For condensed milk and chocolate fudges, scaling is usually straightforward. Keep the ratios consistent and use a tin size that gives the desired thickness.

For traditional boiled fudge, large batches may behave differently because they take longer to heat and cool. The beating stage may also become harder. It is often better to make two separate batches than one enormous batch unless you have suitable equipment.

Half batches can work well, but use a smaller tin so the fudge is not too thin.

When scaling, write down the new quantities before starting. Do not attempt mental arithmetic over hot sugar. Hot sugar is not the place to discover your multiplication has become imaginative.

Appendix Six: Small-Batch Selling Notes

If selling fudge, check local food safety requirements, labelling laws, hygiene rules, allergen regulations and any necessary registrations or inspections.

Use consistent recipes and batch records.

Label all allergens clearly.

Include net weight if required.

Use food-safe packaging.

Keep records of ingredient suppliers and batch dates.

Test shelf life before claiming it.

Avoid high-risk ingredients in long-storage products.

Do not sell alcohol-containing fudge without checking relevant rules.

Keep samples from each batch where practical.

Presentation matters, but safety matters more. A beautiful box cannot compensate for unclear allergens or poor storage.

Glossary

Beating

Stirring cooked fudge firmly as it cools to encourage crystallisation and texture.

Bloom

A pale or streaky appearance on chocolate caused by fat or sugar crystals rising to the surface. Usually safe, but less attractive.

Boiled Fudge

Fudge made by cooking sugar, dairy and fat to a target temperature before cooling and beating.

Condensed Milk

Sweetened milk cooked down into a thick, sweet ingredient used in many easy fudge recipes.

Crystallisation

The formation of sugar crystals. Controlled crystallisation gives fudge its texture.

Dulce de Leche

A thick caramelised milk spread used in sweets and desserts.

Evaporated Milk

Unsweetened milk cooked down to reduce water content. Not the same as condensed milk.

Golden Syrup

A thick amber invert sugar syrup used for flavour and smoother texture.

Marbling

Swirling two colours or flavours of fudge together lightly.

Soft-Ball Stage

The sugar stage around 114°C to 116°C, where syrup dropped into cold water forms a soft ball.

Splitting

When fat separates from the mixture, often due to overheating or poor emulsification.

Setting

The process of fudge becoming firm enough to cut.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to every traditional sweet shop, seaside counter, family tin, school fête, church hall, market stall and kitchen experiment that helped keep fudge alive in the public imagination.

Thanks also to the patient cooks who learned the hard way that sugar remembers everything, thermometers are useful, and “just one more stir” can sometimes change destiny.

About the Author

Robin Wickens writes practical, warm and imaginative books for readers who enjoy food, folklore, history, stories and the small pleasures of a well-stocked kitchen. Through Rob's Books, he creates accessible titles designed for browsers, home cooks, curious readers and anyone who likes useful knowledge served with a little humour.

His cookbooks favour British English, practical methods, metric measurements, achievable ingredients, global inspiration and clear guidance without unnecessary fuss. He believes good food writing should help the reader feel capable, entertained and hungry in roughly equal measure.

More Books from Rob's Books

Discover more cookbooks, folklore titles, children's stories, mysteries and creative projects from Robin Wickens and Rob's Books.

Epilogue: The Last Square in the Tin

There is always a last square.

It sits in the tin pretending not to be noticed. It may be slightly smaller than the others, or larger in a way that suggests poor planning. It may have an uneven edge, a stray nut, a little salt, a raspberry ripple, a corner of biscuit or the faint mark of the knife. It waits while people insist they are full. It waits through tea being poured, plates being cleared and someone saying, “No, honestly, I couldn’t.”

Then someone takes it.

This is the fate of good fudge.

Fudge is not grand food. It does not require a silver dome or a serious face. It belongs to hands, tins, parcels, counters, kettles, paper bags, gift boxes and kitchen tables. It is small enough to share and rich enough to remember. It can be plain vanilla or dark chocolate, crumbly or creamy, British or American-style, flavoured with cardamom, rose, maple, coconut, chilli, coffee, treacle, lemon, peanut butter, matcha, pistachio or whatever careful idea the cook dares next.

The making of fudge teaches useful things. Patience. Precision. Observation. Respect for heat. The value of salt. The importance of reading a recipe before boiling sugar. The wisdom of lining the tin. The humility of discovering that even a confident cook can be defeated by humidity, overenthusiasm or a thermometer placed against the bottom of the pan.

But it also teaches generosity.

Fudge is made to be cut. Wrapped. Given. Packed. Posted. Shared. Hidden, occasionally, but usually shared. It is one of those foods that turns ingredients into affection. A box of fudge says, “I thought of you.” A tin of fudge says, “Stay a while.” A kitchen full of fudge says, “I may have misjudged the batch size, but matters are under control.”

Mostly.

May your sugar dissolve properly, your chocolate melt gently, your flavours behave, your knife cut cleanly and your tins return empty.

And if a batch fails, remember this: almost every fudge mistake can become sauce, topping, baking chunks or a private spoonful eaten over the sink.

That is not failure.

That is research.

Thank you for reading The Fudge Maker's Handbook.

If this book helped you make a successful batch, rescue a stubborn pan, fill a gift tin or simply understand why sugar behaves like it has legal representation, please consider leaving a review. Reviews help other readers discover the book and help independent authors continue creating useful, enjoyable titles.

For more cookbooks, stories, folklore, history and creative titles, look for more work by Robin Wickens and Rob's Books.

If you enjoyed this book, a short review would be greatly appreciated.

You might mention:

Whether the recipes were clear

Which fudge you made first

Whether the troubleshooting helped

Which flavour you want to try next

Whether the book worked well for gifts, family treats or seasonal cooking

Even a few words can help another reader decide whether this is the fudge book for their kitchen.

Author Note

Fudge-making is one of those kitchen skills that rewards practice. The first batch teaches you timing. The second batch teaches you texture. The third batch teaches you that the cook should always keep the corner pieces.

Thank you for joining me in the sweet kitchen.

Robin Wickens