

Cooked Candies

Homemade candies are a delicious treat and are often the special ingredient in other recipes.

Caramel

Caramel is a versatile candy that may be used as an ingredient in desserts, cut into squares and dipped in chocolate, to wrap apples or to use in any recipe that calls for caramel. This recipe may be modified to give a variety of flavors.

1 cup butter

2¼ cups light brown sugar

Pinch of salt

1 cup light corn syrup

14 ounce can sweetened condensed milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Line an 8" pan with parchment paper. In a sauce pan melt butter over medium heat. Stir in brown sugar, salt and corn syrup. Add sweetened condensed milk. Stir constantly until the mixture reaches 248° F. Remove the pan from the stove top. Once it has stopped bubbling, stir in the vanilla. Pour the caramel into the pan. Allow several hours to firm. Lift the parchment out of the pan and cut with a greased dough cutter.

Soft Caramel

Use the above ingredients, but cook at a lower temperature. Line an 8" pan with parchment paper. In a sauce pan melt butter over medium heat. Stir in brown sugar, salt and corn syrup. Add sweetened condensed milk. Stir constantly until the mixture reaches 235° F. Remove the pan from the stove top. Once it has stopped bubbling, stir in the vanilla. Pour into a mixing bowl.

Marshmallows

Nothing compares to homemade marshmallows. They are great for making s'mores, adding to ice cream and hot chocolate and are simply delicious on their own.

2 tablespoons unflavored gelatin

1/2 cup water, divided

1¼ granulated sugar

3/4 cup invert sugar

3/8 cup light corn syrup

Butter

Butter a 9 x 13" pan. In a bowl, mix gelatin with 1/4 cup of water. In a sauce pan combine 1/4 cup water, granulated sugar and invert sugar. Heat to 210° F and quickly pour into the gelatin, beating slowly. Gradually add the corn syrup and vanilla. Turn the mixer on medium/high and whip until the marshmallow is fluffy, white and doubled. It should have a soft peak when the beater is lifted. Pour the mixture into the buttered pan and spread evenly. Allow to set for several hours. Butter a dough cutter and loosen the sides of the pan with the cutter. Remove the marshmallow from the pan and place on a surface that has been sprayed lightly with cooking oil. Cut the marshmallows into squares. Be sure to keep the dough cutter buttered to prevent sticking. Roll pieces in powdered sugar to prevent them from sticking to each other.

Sugared Marshmallows

Roll squares of marshmallows in various shades of colored sanding sugar instead of powdered sugar for a fun variation and a bit of crunch.

Molded Marshmallows

After mixture has doubled in bulk, spray candy molds with a cooking spray. Spoon marshmallow into a pastry bag and pipe into sprayed cavities. You will need to work quickly because the marshmallow will set as it cools down. Allow to set for about an hour. Remove from molds and roll in colored sugar. Dry candy for a few hours, then pack tightly in covered containers.

Saltwater Taffy

Slightly chewier than caramel, making salt water taffy can be a workout! Pulling the taffy can be a challenge so grab a friend or family member and make it together. You'll enjoy the results.

1¾ cups water

1 cup light corn syrup

2 cups granulated sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoon butter

1/4 cup marshmallow cream

1 teaspoon concentrated flavor

Food color

Butter a marble slab or a 10 x 15" pan (refrigerate until the syrup is ready). In a heavy sauce pan combine water, corn syrup, sugar and salt. Stir constantly over medium high heat. Bring to a boil and cook to 245° F and remove from heat. Pour the hot syrup on the marble slab or chilled pan. Place the butter, marshmallow cream, flavor and color on top of the hot syrup. Let the taffy cool until it is lukewarm then use a dough scrapper that has been sprayed with cooking spray to fold the ingredients into the syrup to loosely incorporate. Once you are able to handle the taffy, use your hand or put on gloves, butter them, and begin to pull and fold taffy for about 15 - 20 minutes. Taffy is done when it lightens in color, takes on a sheen, and becomes too hard to pull. Roll and pull into a rope and cut into one inch pieces. Cooking sheers sprayed lightly with cooking spray work well. Wrap individual pieces with waxed paper to prevent pieces from sticking together.

Calibrating a Thermometer

When making any of the above treats, it is very important to have a calibrated thermometer. Whenever a thermometer is to be used for the first time, it must be calibrated. Thermometers also need calibrated whenever they are dropped or when going from one temperature extreme to another.

Ice Point Method: Fill a container with crushed ice and water. Ensure that the container has enough crushed ice to provide an environment of 32° F. This may require additional ice be added during the process. It will take about four to five minutes for the mixture of water to be stabilized. Then insert the thermometer away from the bottom and sides of the container to avoid error. If your thermometer is not accurate at 32° F, adjust the recipe temperature accordingly.

Boiling Point Method: Fill a container with water and heat it. After the temperature of the water has reached the boiling point, insert thermometer. Be sure to leave at least a two inch gap between the thermometer sensing element and the bottom and sides of the container to avoid error. If your thermometer is not accurate at 212° F, adjust the recipe temperature accordingly.