



# Holiday Flavors

Hard Candy Christmas

Sugary Recipes for your Holiday Table

# Fudge

Fudge is a type of candy that's made by mixing sugar, butter, milk and usually chocolate, then heating it to 240 degrees, or the soft-ball stage, then beating it as it cools to form a smooth, creamy candy.

Even though fudge is usually chocolate, it can take on many flavors, including brown sugar, peanut butter and vanilla. It can also be enhanced with fruits, nuts and other flavors after the candy is made but before it sets. Fudge shouldn't be hard and never crackly or crisp. Also, when you're cooking, resist the urge to scrape the sides of the pot into your candy mixture. This can interfere with the proper crystallization of the candy. It could not set up properly or be too brittle and hard.

## FANTASY FUDGE

Recipe is from Kraft. Makes about 40 servings.

- 3 cups sugar
- 3/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1 5-ounce can evaporated milk, or about 2/3 cup
- 3 4-ounce packages semi-sweet baker's chocolate, chopped, or 12 ounces chocolate chips
- 1 7-ounce jar marshmallow creme
- 1 cup nuts, optional



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- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1. Line a 9-inch square pan with foil. Leave the ends extending over the sides.
- 2. In a three-quart saucepan over medium heat, add the sugar, butter and evaporated milk. Bring to a rolling boil,

- stirring constantly. Cook for four minutes, or until a candy thermometer reaches 234 degrees, stirring constantly.
- 3. Remove from heat and add the chocolate and marshmallow creme. Stir until melted, then add the nuts or other add-ins and vanilla, and mix well.

- 4. Pour into prepared pan and spread to cover. Cool completely. Use the foil handles to remove the fudge easily, then cut into 1-inch squares.

**Tip:** Interesting flavor combinations to try include white chocolate with peppermint extract, dark chocolate with

orange extract and zest, and milk chocolate with mint extract. Caramel and cappuccino chips, if you can find them, also work great. Be careful when adding liquor or any other liquids; you don't want to upset the delicate balance of the candy.

# Lollipops

If there are visions of jewel-colored candies dancing through your heads, look no further than this easy lollipop recipe.

You'll need a little more specialized hardware for making lollipops. A candy thermometer is a must. You can let it slide with the fudge recipe, but you'll be cooking this concoction to the hard-crack stage.

The hard-crack stage is around 300-310 degrees and it means the dried sugar concoction will crack. If you don't have a candy thermometer and want to try this recipe anyway, you can test the syrup by putting a small amount of sugar into a cup of cold water. If it's ready, the syrup will form threads and you may actually hear a cracking sound. Be really careful with sugar syrup that's this hot. It's sticky and can cause severe burns.

You'll also need molds, or you can pour freeform on a non-stick baking sheet or waxed paper. When you're looking for molds, avoid hard-sided ones in favor of bendy silicone molds that are easy to pull the finished candy out of. Lastly, you'll need sticks. You can find all of those things at a well-appointed grocery or hobby store.

Package your finished treats in festive treat bags festooned with clouds of curling ribbon.



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## OLD-FASHIONED LOLLIPOPS

Recipe is from Taste of Home.

1 cup light corn syrup

2/3 cup sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons flavored extract of your choice

1/8 teaspoon food coloring of your choice

1. Place the lollipop sticks in hard candy molds or arrange them three inches apart on your nonstick baking surface.

2. In a heavy saucepan, combine the

corn syrup and sugar. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cover and cook for three minutes to dissolve the sugar crystals. Uncover and cook over medium-high heat without stirring until a candy thermometer reads 300 degrees — the hard-crack stage.

3. Remove the candy from the heat, then stir in flavoring and food coloring. Keep back from the mixture as the smell may be strong. Immediately pour into molds or over the ends of your lollipop sticks. Let cool completely before removing.

# Divinity

Divinity is a marshmallow-like vanilla confection that is a fluffy white cloud of deliciousness. It's often dotted with dried fruit or nuts, usually pecans or walnuts. It originated in the early 1900s in the U.S. and is popular in the South.

These treats are really sensitive to humidity, which may also lead to its popularity at Christmas, when humidity tends to be lower in the South. Higher humidity means the candy won't set properly and will stay sticky and gooey. Properly done, divinity should be soft and dry to the touch.

## DIVINITY

Recipe is from Betty Crocker.

2 2/3 cups sugar  
 2/3 cup light corn syrup  
 2 egg whites  
 1 teaspoon vanilla  
 2/3 cup coarsely chopped nuts

1. Cook sugar, corn syrup and water (if it's humid, reduce water by a tablespoon) in a two-quart saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly, until the sugar is dissolved.

2. Continue to cook, without stirring, until the candy reaches 260 degrees on a candy thermometer or until a small amount of mixture dropped into very cold water forms a hard ball that holds its shape while remaining pliable.

3. Beat egg whites in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form. Continue beating while pouring hot syrup in a thin stream into the egg whites, beating constantly on medium speed. For the best results, you'll need an electric stand mixer and a ceramic or glass bowl, not metal. Add the vanilla and continue to beat until it holds its shape and becomes slightly dull. It may become too stiff for the mixer.

4. Gently fold in nuts, then drop from a buttered spoon onto wax paper or nonstick foil. Work quickly; the candy starts to set up fast. Let stand at room temperature for at least 12 hours, turning candies once, until they feel firm. Store in an airtight container.

**Tip:** For an added boost of flavor, lightly toast the nuts before adding them to the candy. If folding in the nuts is too difficult, consider scooping the candy out and topping each piece with a whole pecan or pressing chopped walnuts into the surface of the candy. Remember that these candies will be extremely hot and sticky, and you need to work quickly but carefully to avoid burns.



# Peanut Brittle

With peanut brittle, we're going back to hard candies. Brittle is a thin layer of candy studded with nuts, usually pecans, cashews, almonds or peanuts. In other parts of the world, brittle is made with pistachios or sesame seeds.

No matter what nut you choose, the basic process is the same. So go nuts and whip up cheerful batches of this easy-to-make candy. The good news here is that you're not scooping piping hot, sticky candy. Brittle is mixed and then poured out onto a flat surface until cool, then broken into pieces.

## **GOLDEN BUTTERY PEANUT BRITTLE**

Recipe is from Land O Lakes butter. It makes just over two pounds of candy.

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 cup butter, cut into chunks
- 2 cups raw peanuts
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

1. Butter two 15x10x1-inch baking sheets and set aside.

2. Combine sugar, corn syrup and water in a heavy saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 8-12 minutes or until the sugar is dissolved and the mixture comes to a full boil.

3. Add the butter and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, for 15-25 minutes or until a candy thermometer reaches 280 degrees or a small amount of candy dropped into ice water forms a hard but pliable strand.

4. Stir in the peanuts. Continue cooking, stirring constantly, for 10-12 minutes or until the candy reaches the hard-crack stage. This is greater than 300 degrees on the candy thermometer or until a small amount of candy

dropped into ice water forms a hard, brittle strand. You may hear a cracking sound from the candy when it's dropped into the cold water.

5. Pour the mixture immediately into the prepared baking sheets. Spread it

evenly to about 1/4-inch in thickness. Cool completely.

6. Break the candy into pieces and store in an airtight container with a tight lid.

**Tip:** Peanut brittle makes a great gift.



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# Peppermints

There are few things more jolly and Christmas-y than a bundle of tasty peppermint candies. In more recent years, it seems like every flavor has shown up in the shape of a candy cane. Do we really need dill pickle candy canes?

This recipe brings you back to the holidays of yore. It's not colored, either, so it's up to you to pick the colors for your minty candy treats. Peppermint candies and lollies can soothe a sore throat and tame a winter's cold. And they're just tasty.

Remember to be very careful with this mound of minty molten sugar. Candy this hot can cause severe burns.

## PEPPERMINT HARD CANDY

Recipe is from Taste of Home.

1 tablespoon butter  
2 cups sugar  
1 cup light corn syrup  
1-1 1/2 teaspoons peppermint extract

1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
6-8 drops of food coloring, optional

1. Line a 13x9 pan with foil. Grease the foil with a tablespoon of butter and set aside.

2. In a large, heavy saucepan, combine sugar and corn syrup. Bring to a



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boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cover and cook for three minutes to dissolve the sugar crystals.

3. Uncover and cook over medium-high heat, without stirring, until a candy thermometer hits 300 degrees. You can also drop a small amount of

the candy into ice water. If it's ready, it'll form a brittle thread and you may also hear a cracking sound.

4. Remove from heat and stir in the peppermint extract and food coloring. You can divide the candy into batches and color each one differently, swirling

them in the pan, or you can pour the candy into silicone molds. Just remember to hold your head back away from the pot when you add the extract; the smell can be pretty strong.

5. Break the candy into pieces or unmold it. Store in airtight containers.

**Tip:** Dip stirring sticks into the candy and allow to dry on wax paper. Gift a bundle of the sticks to stir into a throat-soothing cup of tea. You can also use this recipe in your lollipop molds for a twist on the traditional recipe.

# Pralines

The difference between brittle and pralines is a subtle one, but it comes down to two things: the lower cooking temperature and the addition of cream or milk to the recipe.

Pralines can refer to many different kinds of candies. In Belgium, it's a chocolate candy with a soft filling. In France, it's a harder candy made with almonds. But here in the U.S., a praline is a creamy cross between brittle and fudge.

French settlers brought their praline recipe to Louisiana in the 19th century. Cooks, usually free Black women, skipped the almond in favor of the more plentiful pecan. The women sold the candies on the street as a way to make extra money. Food historians say pralinieres would walk up and down the streets, singing songs about their homemade candy to bring in customers. In some parts of the Bayou State, the name praline is dropped altogether for pecan candy.

## PRALINES

Recipe is from the New Orleans School of Cooking. It makes 25-50 pralines, depending on size.

1 1/2 cup sugar  
6 tablespoons butter



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1 1/2 cup pecans (roasted optional)  
1/2 cup milk  
1 tablespoon vanilla

1. Lay wax paper over a towel, newspaper or a baking sheet. You can also use nonstick foil or parchment paper. Grease

the paper with a thin layer of butter.

2. Combine all ingredients in a large saucepan over medium heat. Stirring constantly, bring it to the soft ball stage, 238-240 degrees on a candy thermometer or when the candy forms a soft ball when dropped into ice water.

3. Remove the candy from the heat and keep stirring until the mixture thickens and turns creamy and cloudy. The pecans should be suspended in the mixture.

4. Spoon the candies out onto the buttered paper. Work quickly; the candy

sets up fast. Let the candies cool and store in an airtight container.

**Tip:** To roast your pecans, bake them on a sheet pan in a single layer at 275 degrees for 20-25 minutes. The nuts should be slightly browned and fragrant.

# Chocolate Bark

With this candy, you're limited only by your imagination. If our other recipes seem intimidating, try this one on for size.

Chocolate bark takes minutes and there are thousands of flavor combinations for you to try. When you're making your bark, think of how the colors can go together. White chocolate, for example, with green pistachios and jewel red cherries or cranberries make for a gorgeous holiday palette. You can also pair milk chocolate with chunks of dried fruit, which look like sweet jewels. You can swirl different kinds of chocolate or combine chocolate with other candies.

## BARK FOUR WAYS

Recipe is from Ghirardelli Chocolate.

For the chocolate bark base:

3 60% cacao baking bars, or 12 ounces, chopped

### For the peppermint bark base

1 10-ounce package peppermint baking chips, divided, or chunks of crushed peppermint candies

2 ounces white chocolate, chopped or chips

### For the orange pistachio bark

1 teaspoon orange zest

3/4 cup coarsely roasted, salted and shelled pistachios

Orange peel strips

### For the great tea and sea salt bark

12 ounces white chocolate, chopped



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or chips

1 tablespoon matcha

2-3 teaspoons sea salt or kosher salt

### For the deconstructed candy bar bark

3/4 cup honey-roasted peanuts, divided

3/4 cup sweetened shredded coconut, divided

1/2 cup caramel baking chips

1 teaspoon shortening

1. Line a baking sheet (one sheet per batch) with parchment paper. Set aside.

2. To make chocolate bark base,

place chocolate in the top pan of a double boiler over hot but not boiling water. You can also make a double boiler by placing a glass or metal mixing bowl on top of a saucepan half filled with water. Allow the chocolate to melt, stirring occasionally.

3. Remove from heat and let stand for 15 minutes. Stir again until smooth.

4. To make peppermint bark, stir in half the peppermint baking chips or chunks of peppermint candies. Pour

into the prepared sheet and spread evenly. Top with the remaining chips, chunks or candies. Melt the white choc-

olate and drizzle over the bark.

5. To make the orange pistachio bark, stir orange zest into the chocolate base. Pour the mixture onto a prepared baking sheet and sprinkle with pistachios and orange peel strips.

6. To make the green tea and sea salt bark, make the chocolate base but substitute white chocolate. Divide the chocolate and half and add matcha to one half. Spread both chocolates onto the baking sheet and swirl with a spatula, then spread evenly. Sprinkle with salt.

7. To make the candy bar bark, make

the chocolate bark base. Stir in 1/2 cup peanuts and 1/2 cup coconut. Pour the mixture onto the baking sheet and spread evenly. Top with remaining peanuts and coconut. Combine the caramel chips and shortening in a microwave-safe bowl, then microwave on medium power for one minute. Remove and stir; return to the microwave if not melted. Drizzle the melted caramel over the bark.

8. Chill the bark for 30 minutes or until firm. Use parchment to lift the bark, then break into pieces and store in airtight containers.