

FROM CRAZY SWEET DESSERTS BY ANN REARDON

# CRAVING CHOCOLATE





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Everyone loves chocolate. In fact, worldwide consumption has increased to a mountainous eight million metric tons of chocolate per year! It's no wonder then that some of my biggest crowd-pleasers involve heaps of the stuff. But before we get into all that, there's some important things you need to know... Firstly, not all chocolate is actually chocolate.

## REAL VS. FAKE CHOCOLATE

It's important to know the difference between real and fake chocolate in the kitchen. The fail-safe way to know is to simply flip over the packet and read the ingredients. If it contains cocoa butter, you have real chocolate. However, if the ingredient list includes vegetable fat, then it's compound chocolate, or as I call it, fake chocolate.

The main difference between vegetable fat and cocoa butter is the melting point. Cocoa butter melts at just below body temperature, which means it melts in your mouth, allowing the chocolate flavor to hit your taste buds. In comparison, the higher melting point of vegetable fat means that compound chocolate doesn't melt quickly at body temperature, instead leaving a fatty layer on the roof of your mouth, with the result that less flavor reaches your taste buds before you swallow it.

So why would anyone use compound chocolate? Well, it's usually less expensive (which is why those packets of cheap Easter eggs don't taste very nice). It is also easier to work with compound chocolate, allowing bakers to melt and then reset it without the need for any extra steps. And this brings us to tempering.

## TEMPERED VS UNTEMPERED

If you were to watch through a microscope as real chocolate was heated up, you'd see all the fat crystals in the cocoa butter melt. Then, as the chocolate cooled and set again, you'd see the fat reforming into one of six different arrangements. The shape of the fat crystal structure affects the melting point and texture of the chocolate.

Think about the cocoa butter in chocolate like a wall built from Lego bricks. The wall can be broken into individual bricks and rebuilt into different patterns of wall design, some of which are stronger than others.

If left to its own devices, melted chocolate sets into an unstable crystal (untempered chocolate), meaning that it remains soft and dull at room temperature. It tastes great, but it melts at 18°C (64°F). You can make it set by putting in the fridge, but as soon as you bring it back to room temperature, it will become soft again, with the result that it will melt in your hands and will not hold its shape.

The good news is that it is possible to encourage stable fat crystals to form so that the chocolate is shiny and crisp at room temperature. This process is called tempering.

## HOW DO YOU TEMPER CHOCOLATE?

You can encourage the chocolate crystals to form a stable structure by using one of the following processes. With all methods, it is best to let the chocolate set

at room temperature as this allows more of the stable crystal structure to form.

## Freeze-dried Cocoa Butter Method

Completely melt your chocolate either in the microwave or a double boiler. If using a microwave, for 300 g (10.6 oz) of chocolate, microwave on high for 30 seconds, then stir, microwave again for 10 seconds, stir, and repeat in 10-second bursts until it is completely melted. Cool until it comes down to the following temperature:

White chocolate: cool to 29–30°C (84–86°F)

Milk chocolate: cool to 31–33°C (88–91°F)

Dark chocolate: cool to 32–35°C (90–95°F)

You can put the bowl of chocolate into a sink full of water to speed up the cooling process, but be careful not to splash any water into the chocolate. Once it is at the right temperature, add in a teaspoon of freeze-dried cocoa butter per 7 ounces (200 g) of chocolate. Stir it through using a spatula. The freeze-dried cocoa butter has the stable crystal structure that we want, and it sets an example for the cocoa butter in the melted chocolate to follow.

Adding the cocoa butter at the right temperature is very important. If you add it when the chocolate is too hot, it will completely melt and you will lose the example pattern. If you add it when it's too cold, the freeze-dried cocoa butter won't mix in and you'll get little white dots in your chocolates.

## Block Seeding Method

Set aside a chunk of your tempered chocolate. Melt the rest, then cool to 34°C (94°F). Add in a large piece of tempered chocolate. Stir continuously until the

chocolate cools to 32°C (91°F); at that point, remove any of the solid chocolate that hasn't yet melted.

## Tabling Method

Completely melt your chocolate. Tip approximately two thirds onto a cool surface such as a marble bench top. Using an offset spatula, spread the chocolate out, then scrape it all back up into a pile, repeating these two steps continuously until the chocolate flows down off the spatula and forms ribbons that stay on top of the pile of chocolate. This step helps to keep the chocolate at an even temperature; as it cools, it will start to thicken. Scrape the cooled chocolate back into the bowl with the rest of the chocolate and stir through.

## Microwave Method

This is not technically tempering, but it keeps the chocolate in temper by not completely melting the fat crystals. Finely grate 300 g (10.6 oz) of milk chocolate and put it into a microwave safe plastic bowl. Do not use a glass or melamine bowl as they get hot in the microwave and will make the temperature too high for this method. Microwave on high for 20 seconds, stir, microwave 10 seconds, stir, microwave 10 seconds, stir, microwave 10 seconds and stir.

Use a candy thermometer as you carefully raise the temperature of the chocolate. (If it gets too hot, the fat crystals will be completely melted.) Use the following temperatures as a guide.

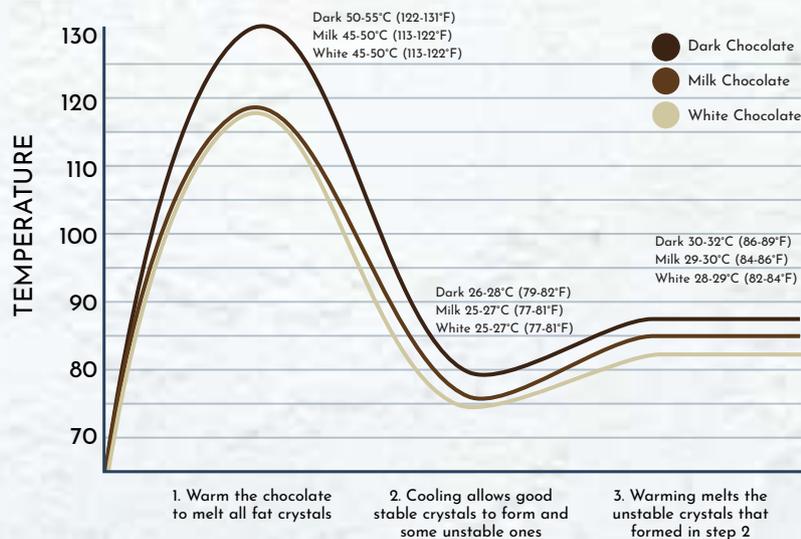
White chocolate: do not go over 29°C (84°F)

Milk chocolate: do not go over 30°C (86°F)

Dark chocolate: do not go over 32°C (90°F)

## Tempering Using a Machine

Automatic tempering machines melt the chocolate, allow it to cool to a precise temperature, then reheat it again while slowly stirring it. Taking the chocolate through an exact temperature curve tempers the chocolate. The machine then keeps the chocolate at a constant temperature so it remains liquid and in temper. This allows chocolatiers to work with large amounts of chocolate over several hours without the need to constantly melt and temper chocolate.



## WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

### Seized Chocolate

Water and chocolate do not get along! If you get any water-based liquid in your chocolate, it will turn into a lumpy, crumbly mess. This is called seized chocolate. Your only hope at this point is to add more liquid, like some cream or milk, and whisk it in to make a ganache instead. You will need to add at least one third of the weight of your chocolate in liquid.

### Burnt Chocolate

Chocolate will burn if you heat it above 55°C (130°F). Depending on how burnt it is, chocolate will form a thick crumbly paste and then turn black and start to smoke.



# WARM CHOCOLATE MELTING CAKE

Cruising is a terrific way to travel with the family, visit amazing places, and, of course, eat to your heart's content. While on board the Carnival Imagination some years back, I had the privilege of touring the huge ship's kitchen. The pastry chefs, who make literally thousands of these desserts every day, were only too pleased to show me how to make their most popular recipe, the warm chocolate melting cake. Below is a scaled down version perfect for home cooks.

Makes 6 desserts.

## CHOCOLATE DECORATION

3.5 oz (100 g) milk chocolate

0.7 oz (20 g) white chocolate

## MELTING CAKE

8 oz (230 g) dark chocolate

1 cup (220 g / 7.8 oz) unsalted butter

7 eggs (315 g / 11.1 oz)

6 tablespoons (80 g / 2.8 oz) sugar

½ cup (80 g / 2.8 oz) plain or  
all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon icing sugar or powdered  
sugar for dusting

## TO SERVE

Cookie crumbs

Vanilla ice cream

Icing sugar or powdered sugar

## CHOCOLATE DECORATION

Temper the milk chocolate (see page 48) and spread it out on some foil. Give the foil a little shake to smooth the top. Melt the white chocolate and put it into a Ziploc bag. Cut off a tiny corner and drizzle it across the milk chocolate. Leave it to set, then break into six large shards.

## MELTING CAKE

Preheat the oven to 175°C (350°F). Melt the chocolate and butter in a pan, then set aside to cool.

In a bowl whisk 4 of the eggs with the sugar and the flour until smooth. Add in the remaining 3 eggs and beat to combine. Mix in your chocolate mixture.

Pour into individual ramekins. At this point, you can keep them covered in the fridge for up to 24 hours. Shortly before you're ready to serve, place in a deep baking pan or dish and add water until it is halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Bake for 10–15 minutes or until it is set on the outside but still soft in the middle.

## TO SERVE

Add a spoonful of crumbs to one side of a plate. Place a small scoop of vanilla ice cream onto the crumbs and poke a chocolate decoration into the top of the ice cream. Then place a hot dessert alongside, sprinkle with powdered sugar through a sieve, and serve immediately.

## EGG SAFETY



Raw eggs, like meat and chicken can contain salmonella, a bacteria that causes food poisoning. It is important to heat eggs, and recipes containing eggs, to at least 63°C (145°F) for a minimum of 15 seconds to kill bacteria.

In this recipe, the liquid center should be 63–67°C (145–153°F) when you take it out of the oven.

Video tutorial for this recipe can be found at [howtocookthat.net/cookbook](http://howtocookthat.net/cookbook)



# CHOCOLATE OBSESSION

Make this incredibly luxurious dessert for a chocolate lover and you'll have a friend for life.

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Makes 6.

## CHOCOLATE WAVE

10.6 oz (300 g) milk chocolate

Piece of marble or Corian cutting board

## STRAWBERRIES

2 tablespoons (30 mL / 1 fl oz)

Marsala or brandy

1 ½ cups (200 g / 7 oz) strawberries, finely diced

2 tablespoons (26 g / 0.9 oz) sugar

## CHOCOLATE CRUMBLE

3.5 oz (100 g) milk chocolate

¾ cup (80 g / 2.8 oz) hazelnut meal

## CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

1 ½ teaspoons powdered gelatin, or 2 gelatin sheets

Bowl of water if using gelatin sheets

½ cup (100 mL / 3.4 fl oz) heavy cream (35 percent fat)

¼ cup (50 g / 1.8 oz) butter or margarine

7 oz (200 g) milk chocolate, melted

Video tutorial for this recipe can be found at [howtocookthat.net/cookbook](http://howtocookthat.net/cookbook)

## CHOCOLATE WAVE

Place your marble or Corian board in the freezer for at least 4 hours, preferably overnight.

Melt the milk chocolate, then quickly spread some out in a thin layer on the cold board. Cut three long rectangles of chocolate, each measuring 1½ x 8½ inches (4 x 22 cm). Stack them together, then stand them up on their sides and gently shape into a wave. If it sets too quickly to bend, just take it off the cold surface for a moment to soften and then bend the stack again. Separate them slightly, then immediately place them into the fridge and leave for 2 hours to firm up. Repeat for each dessert.

## STRAWBERRIES

Dice the strawberries into small cubes. Place in a pan with the sugar and Marsala. If you prefer, you can leave out the alcohol and use water instead. Simmer for about one minute or until the berry cubes are soft and the sugar is dissolved. Remove from the heat and leave to cool.

## CHOCOLATE CRUMBLE

Melt the chocolate in the microwave on high for 1 minute, then stir, microwave 30 seconds, stir, and repeat 30-second bursts stirring each time until melted. Add the hazelnut meal and stir through well. Place in the fridge for 30 minutes. Squash any large clumps to make an even chocolate hazelnut crumble.

## CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

Place the gelatin sheets into the bowl of water and leave to soak. If using powdered gelatin, mix with half of the cream and set aside to soften.

Heat the butter and cream in a saucepan until the butter is melted. Squeeze the water out of the gelatin sheets and add them to the pan, or add the softened powdered gelatin, and stir well. Remove from the heat. Pour in the chocolate, leave for a couple of minutes, then whisk together until you have a smooth and even mixture. Cover and cool to room temperature.

Take the cooled chocolate mixture and whip it using electric beaters until it becomes pale and thick. Place into a piping bag and cut about ⅜ inch (1 cm) off the end. Use immediately so that it does not set in the piping bag.

## ASSEMBLY

Place one wave of chocolate upright on its side on a plate. At one end, pipe two lines of mousse up the chocolate, leave a 1-inch (2.5 cm) gap, and then pipe two more lines. Add a second chocolate wave, pressing it slightly into the mousse. Make sure you still have a gap between the chocolate where there is no mousse. Repeat and add the third wave.

Add cooled strawberry mixture into the gaps between the chocolate mousse. And finally, spoon chocolate crumble into the ends of the waves. Store in the fridge until ready to serve.



# MAGIC CHOCOLATE FLOWER

Bring a theatrical touch to the dining table with this lovely dessert. As you pour the hot *crème anglaise* into the bowl, the chocolate petals fall open to reveal the delights hidden inside.

## CHOCOLATE FLOWER

### Per chocolate flower:

3.5 oz (100 g) dark chocolate

Chocolate flower petal template  
(page 180)

3 sheets of acetate

Silicone hemisphere mold, each  
cavity  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup (80 mL / 2.7 fl oz)

1 edible flower

### For each inside:

1 small macaron (page 132)

1 raspberry

8 blueberries

1 chocolate truffle

## CRÈME ANGLAISE

### (Enough for 4 flowers)

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup (50 g / 1.8 oz) sugar

5 egg yolks (90 g / 3.2 oz)

1 vanilla bean or 1 teaspoon vanilla  
extract

1 cup (250 mL / 8.5 fl oz) heavy cream  
(35 percent fat)

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (125 mL / 4.2 fl oz) milk

## CHOCOLATE FLOWER

Using the chocolate flower template, cut a row of petal-shaped holes out of one sheet of acetate. Place it on top of a second sheet of acetate.

Temper the chocolate (see page 48), then spread a thin layer over the top of the sheet of acetate with the holes. Remove the cut sheet of acetate so that you leave behind just the chocolate petals on the bottom sheet. Working quickly before the chocolate hardens, roll it so that the petals are curved in a half circle. Use cookie cutters or something cylindrical to hold the acetate in place while the chocolate sets. Repeat to make 12 petals for each flower.

Spread out more chocolate on another piece of acetate. When it starts to harden, cut out a 2.5 cm (1 inch) circle for each dessert. Cut each circle in half.

## ASSEMBLY

Use a little melted chocolate to secure a macaron to the top of a chocolate truffle. Then, using more chocolate, arrange the fruit on top of the macaron.

Position half the chocolate petals around a silicone hemisphere mold. Use chocolate to add a half circle at the base to hold the petals together. Repeat for the other half of the flower and leave to set.

Take one half of the flower off the silicon hemisphere mold. Put it into a bowl, using some melted chocolate to “glue” it there. Add the assembled chocolate macaron into the center. Carefully add the other half of the flower, using more melted chocolate to fasten it in place.

## CRÈME ANGLAISE

Whisk together the sugar and egg yolks in a bowl. Scrape the vanilla bean, then add the seeds and the pod to a saucepan with the cream and milk. Heat until it starts to boil, then remove from the stove and pour about half a cup of hot cream into your egg yolks and whisk well. Pour this egg yolk mixture into the pan of hot cream, whisking as you do so. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

When you're ready to serve, reheat the *crème anglaise* on low heat to 85°C (185°F). Immediately pour through a sieve into a jug. Take the dessert to the table and pour hot *crème anglaise* into the bowl. As the chocolate base melts, the flower petals fan open beautifully, creating a dessert experience to delight your senses.

Video tutorial for this recipe can be found at [howtocookthat.net/cookbook](http://howtocookthat.net/cookbook)

