

COOKING SKILLS

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2

Tempering, moulds, bonbons, caramels, mousses, advanced cakes, choux and a chocolate showpiece.

8 Chapters | Philip Osztromok | Generated with Claude

COOKING SKILLS: CHOCOLATE 2

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Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2

Chapter 1 · Tempering

SKILL GOAL

Temper chocolate so that it is glossy and snaps, and use it for bark, curls and shards.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Chocolate contains cocoa butter, which can set in several different crystal forms. **Tempering** is warming and cooling chocolate so that it sets in the right form: the one that is glossy, snaps cleanly and doesn't melt at once on your fingers. Untempered chocolate, melted and set without care, is often dull, soft and streaky (it may also bloom). In Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1 you melted chocolate gently for coating and baking, where tempering doesn't matter. Here it does.

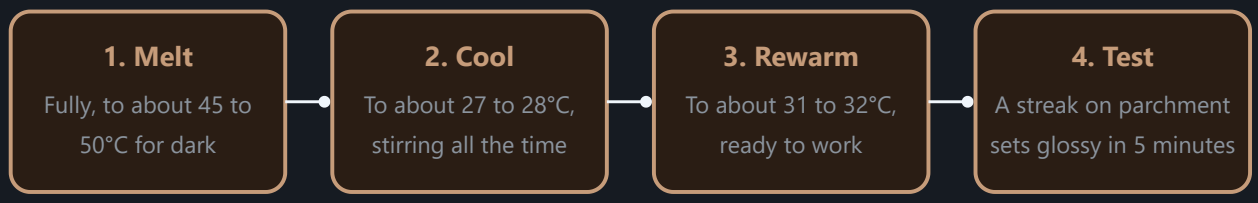


Figure 1. Tempering is a temperature journey: melt, cool, rewarm. Temperatures are approximate, so follow the packet if it gives its own.

What to know

- **Melt, cool, rewarm.** Heating destroys the unwanted crystals; cooling grows the right ones; rewarming melts any that are too large so only the right ones remain.
- **The seed method** uses chocolate that is already tempered (a good bar) to start the right crystals, and is the simplest way at home.
- **Temperatures are small and exact.** Use a digital thermometer and stir constantly.

- **Different chocolates need different temperatures.** The figures here are for dark chocolate (about 70%). Milk chocolate is usually 1 to 2°C lower throughout and white a degree or two lower again. Follow the packet if it gives numbers.
- **Test a streak** before every use, and keep the chocolate at working temperature.

CHOCOLATE	MELT TO (APPROX.)	COOL TO (APPROX.)	WORK AT (APPROX.)
Dark	45 to 50°C	27 to 28°C	31 to 32°C
Milk	40 to 45°C	26 to 27°C	29 to 30°C
White	40°C	25 to 26°C	28 to 29°C

These figures are general guidance and vary between makers: use them as a start, and rely on the test streak.

THERMOMETER, STEAM AND TEMPERING

Thermometer: use a digital probe thermometer, and clean it between uses. Temperatures for chocolate are small differences, so a degree or two matters. The figures in this course are approximate: if the chocolate packet gives its own temperatures, follow them.

Steam and hot bowls: a bowl over a pan of simmering water gets hot and steam burns. Use oven gloves or a cloth to lift it, keep your face back when you lift it off, and keep children away from the hob.

Tempering: shop-bought chocolate bars are usually already tempered, so melt only two thirds of it and stir in the rest to bring it back into temper (the seed method). Chocolate that has been overheated, or has gone dull or streaky, has lost its temper and needs to be melted and tempered again. Good tempered chocolate is shiny, snaps cleanly and doesn't melt on your fingers straight away.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

The seed method

25 minutes | enough for bark or dipping for 4 | bringing melted chocolate back into temper

Tempering makes chocolate shiny, snappy and stable. The seed method is the easiest: melt two thirds of the chocolate, then stir in the last third, chopped small, to cool it and give it the right crystal structure.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

300 g	good-quality dark chocolate bar (about 70%), chopped
1	digital probe thermometer
1	sheet of baking parchment, for the test streak

1. Weigh out 200 g of the chocolate to melt and keep 100 g of it chopped small for the 'seed'. Melt the 200 g gently in a bowl over barely simmering water, stirring, until it reaches about **45 to 50°C**.
2. Take it off the heat and stir in the seed chocolate a handful at a time. Keep stirring until it has melted and the chocolate has cooled to about **31 to 32°C**.
3. Do a test streak on parchment. If it sets glossy in about 5 minutes, it is tempered: work at once, keeping it at 31 to 32°C by warming the bowl for a few seconds over the hot water if it cools.

THERMOMETER, STEAM AND TEMPERING

Thermometer: use a digital probe thermometer, and clean it between uses. Temperatures for chocolate are small differences, so a degree or two matters. The figures in this course are approximate: if the chocolate packet gives its own temperatures, follow them.

Tempering: shop-bought chocolate bars are usually already tempered, so melt only two thirds of it and stir in the rest to bring it back into temper (the seed method). Chocolate that has been overheated, or has gone dull or streaky, has lost its temper and needs to be melted and tempered again. Good tempered chocolate is shiny, snaps cleanly and doesn't melt on your fingers straight away.

Steam and hot bowls: a bowl over a pan of simmering water gets hot and steam burns. Use oven gloves or a cloth to lift it, keep your face back when you lift it off, and keep children away from the hob.

> **The test streak:** before using the chocolate, smear a little on a piece of baking parchment. Properly tempered chocolate sets glossy and firm in about 5 minutes at room temperature. If it stays soft or sets streaky and dull, it is not in temper: warm gently and stir, or start again.

LEVEL 1 · QUICK

Microwave tempering

15 minutes | enough for dipping for 2 | melting in short bursts and seeding

A quick way to temper a small amount. Melt most of the chocolate in 20-second bursts, then stir in the rest as the seed. Stir between every burst: microwaves heat unevenly.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

150 g	good-quality dark chocolate (about 70%), chopped
1	digital probe thermometer
1	microwave-safe bowl

1. Put 100 g of the chocolate in the bowl and microwave in **20-second bursts**, stirring each time, until about **45°C** and nearly all melted.
2. Stir in the remaining 50 g of chopped chocolate until it has melted and the temperature is about **31 to 32°C**.
3. Check with a test streak on parchment. Use it quickly, and if it cools and thickens, warm it with a 5-second burst and stir.

THERMOMETER, HOT BOWL AND TEMPERING

Thermometer: use a digital probe thermometer, and clean it between uses. Temperatures for chocolate are small differences, so a degree or two matters. The figures in this course are approximate: if the chocolate packet gives its own temperatures, follow them.

Gentle heat: chocolate scorches easily and turns dull and bitter. Melt it in a heatproof bowl over (not touching) barely simmering water, or in the microwave in 20-second bursts, stirring each time. Take it off the heat when it is mostly melted and stir until smooth. Milk and white chocolate burn faster than dark, so use lower heat for them.

Tempering: shop-bought chocolate bars are usually already tempered, so melt only two thirds of it and stir in the rest to bring it back into temper (the seed method). Chocolate that has been overheated, or has gone dull or streaky, has lost its temper and needs to be melted and tempered again. Good tempered chocolate is shiny, snaps cleanly and doesn't melt on your fingers straight away.

The test streak: before using the chocolate, smear a little on a piece of baking parchment.

> Properly tempered chocolate sets glossy and firm in about 5 minutes at room temperature. If it stays soft or sets streaky and dull, it is not in temper: warm gently and stir, or start again.

LEVEL 2 · SPREAD

Tempered bark

20 minutes plus 20 minutes setting | 10 pieces | working with tempered chocolate before it cools

The same bark you made in Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 2, but tempered, so it is shinier, snaps cleanly and stays firm. Work quickly: tempered chocolate begins to thicken as it cools.

INGREDIENTS (10 PORTIONS)

1 batch	tempered chocolate (seed method, above)
50 g	mixed toppings (dried fruit, seeds, sprinkles, chopped nuts)
1 pinch	sea salt flakes (optional)
1	tray lined with baking parchment

1. Temper the chocolate and test a streak. Pour it onto the lined tray and spread thin with a palette knife, about 4 mm thick.
2. Scatter the toppings and salt at once, pressing them lightly.
3. Leave at cool room temperature for **20 minutes** until set (don't put it in the fridge), then break into pieces.

THERMOMETER, TOPPINGS AND STORING

Thermometer: use a digital probe thermometer, and clean it between uses. Temperatures for chocolate are small differences, so a degree or two matters. The figures in this course are approximate: if the chocolate packet gives its own temperatures, follow them.

Toppings: sprinkles, nuts, dried fruit and seeds should be dry and small. Whole nuts and hard sweets are a choking risk for very young children, and nuts are a serious allergen: keep a nut-free tray if anyone has an allergy.

Storing finished chocolate: keep it wrapped in a cool, dry place (about 15 to 18°C), not in the fridge unless it has a cream filling. Cold and damp make it dull and spotty (bloom), which is harmless but not pretty.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many

> coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

LEVEL 3 · CURLS

Chocolate curls and shards

30 minutes plus setting | decoration for 8 portions | setting tempered chocolate at the right moment

Curls and shards are elegant decorations for cakes and desserts. Curls are scraped from chocolate that has just set to a soft, pliable state; shards are simply thin chocolate broken into sharp pieces. Timing is everything: too soft and it smears, too hard and it splinters.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

1 batch	tempered chocolate (seed method)
1	cool baking tray or marble slab
1	palette knife and a sharp, wide scraper or metal spatula

1. Temper the chocolate. Spread a thin, even layer, about 3 mm, on the cool tray, with a spare patch of parchment for shards.
2. Leave at cool room temperature for **10 to 15 minutes**, until it is set but still slightly soft when you press the edge with a finger. Hold the scraper at an angle and push it firmly along the chocolate in a smooth stroke, so it rolls into curls.
3. For shards, let the parchment piece set fully for 20 minutes and break it into sharp, thin pieces by hand. Store both in an airtight tin.

SHARP TOOLS, COOL SURFACES AND STORING

Knife safety: chop chocolate on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath) with a large knife held firmly, and keep your guiding fingertips tucked back. A serrated knife grips a hard bar better than a smooth blade.

Cool surfaces: for curls and shards, a cool (not cold) tray or worktop is best. A tray from the fridge makes the chocolate set too quickly and crack. A warm kitchen above about 24°C makes tempering hard, so choose a cool day or room.

Storing finished chocolate: keep it wrapped in a cool, dry place (about 15 to 18°C), not in the fridge unless it has a cream filling. Cold and damp make it dull and spotty (bloom), which is harmless but not pretty.

> **Small children:** whole nuts, hard lumps and frozen pieces can be a choking risk for very young children, so keep pieces small and sit with them while they eat.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Tempered or untempered

Snap, gloss and bloom.

1. Melt a small amount of chocolate and spread half straight onto parchment without tempering. Temper the rest and spread it alongside. Compare the gloss, snap and set time, and look again after a week.

Look for: The tempered chocolate is shiny, snaps and sets in minutes; the untempered is dull, soft and slow, and may develop bloom. This is what tempering is for.

EXPERIMENT

Room temperature

Cool and warm.

1. Temper and spread a streak in a cool room and another in a warm one (or next to a warm oven).

Look for: In the cool room it sets quickly and glossy; in the warm one it stays soft and may set dull. Choose your working conditions.

EXPERIMENT

Cooling speed

Slowly or fast.

1. Cool one bowl by stirring in the seed slowly, and another quickly by standing the bowl in cold water.

Look for: The slowly cooled batch is smooth; the quickly cooled one thickens at the edges and can become lumpy. Stir steadily.

EXPERIMENT

Test streak

Reading the signs.

1. Test a streak when the chocolate is 36°C, 32°C and 28°C.

Look for: At 36°C it is thin and stays soft; at 32°C it sets glossy; at 28°C it is thick and sets dull and lumpy. The streak tells you where you are.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Seed method				
Microwave method				
Tempered bark				
Curls and shards				
Tempered or untempered				
Room temperature				
Cooling speed				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Test streak				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Dull, streaky chocolate	Not in temper, or it set in a warm room	Melt again and temper; work in a cool room
Soft, sticky set	Too warm when poured	Cool to working temperature and test a streak
Thick, lumpy chocolate	Too cool	Warm by a few degrees over hot water, stirring
White spots after a week	Bloom	Harmless; keep it cool and dry
Grainy lump	Water got in	Rescue with warm cream for a sauce; start again for tempering
Curls crumble	Chocolate too hard	Wait until just set and slightly soft

THERMOMETER, STEAM AND ALLERGENS

Thermometer: use a digital probe thermometer, and clean it between uses. Temperatures for chocolate are small differences, so a degree or two matters. The figures in this course are approximate: if the chocolate packet gives its own temperatures, follow them.

Steam and hot bowls: a bowl over a pan of simmering water gets hot and steam burns. Use oven gloves or a cloth to lift it, keep your face back when you lift it off, and keep children away from the hob.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can say what tempering does.
- ☐ I can temper chocolate by the seed method.
- ☐ I check a test streak every time.
- ☐ I can make curls and shards with the right timing.
- ☐ I store tempered chocolate cool and dry.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 2 is Moulds and Shells: moulding solid and hollow chocolates.

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2

Chapter 2 · Moulds and Shells

SKILL GOAL

Mould tempered chocolate into solid shapes and hollow shells, and build a cup and a box.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Moulding is how chocolate gets its shape. A mould coated with **tempered chocolate** gives glossy, sharp-edged pieces that release easily as they set and shrink slightly. This chapter goes from solid shapes to hollow shells, which every filled chocolate in Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 3, depends on.

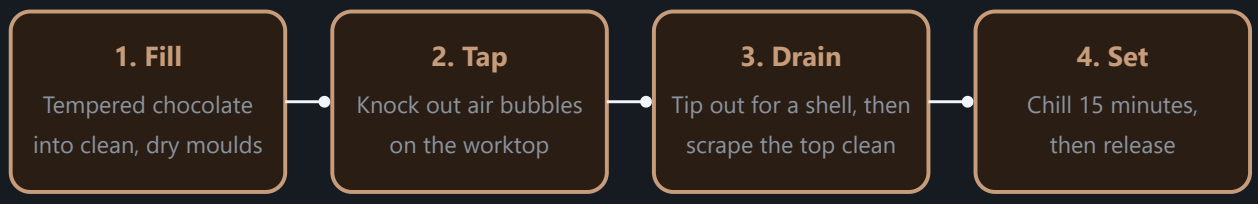


Figure 2. A shell is a mould coated, drained and chilled. The cooling does the work.

The method

- **Clean, dry, polished moulds** give the shiniest results: any water or grease shows.
- **Use tempered chocolate** at working temperature (31 to 32°C for dark).
- **Tap to release bubbles,** then drain for a shell.
- **Scrape the rim clean** so the chocolates seal and release neatly.
- **Chill briefly** (15 to 20 minutes), because a long chill causes streaks and makes the chocolate hard to release.

SHAPE	HOW	CHILL	USE
Solid	Fill and tap	15 to 20 minutes	Lollipops, simple sweets
Hollow shell	Fill, drain, second coat	30 minutes in all	Bonbons (chapter 3)
Filled shell	Shell plus cool filling and a seal	1 hour	Filled chocolates
Cup or box	Mould or cut sheets	30 minutes	Mousse, ice cream, gifts

MOULDS, RELEASING AND HANDLING

Moulds: use clean, dry moulds. Silicone moulds, polycarbonate moulds, and improvised ones (silicone ice cube trays or cupcake moulds) all work. Don't use anything chipped, and polish a polycarbonate mould with a soft cloth or cotton wool, not kitchen paper, for a shiny finish.

Releasing from the mould: chill until the chocolate has pulled slightly away from the edges and looks matt. Turn the mould over and give it a gentle flex or tap, and the chocolates will drop out. If they stick, chill for a few more minutes. Don't force or warm the mould: that causes streaks.

Fingerprints: handle finished chocolates with clean, cool, dry fingers (or cotton gloves), and by the edges. Warm fingers leave prints on the shiny surface.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Solid shapes and lollipops

20 minutes plus 20 minutes setting | 8 pieces | filling a mould and tapping out bubbles

The simplest moulding: fill a clean mould with tempered chocolate, tap out the bubbles and chill. Add a stick for a chocolate lollipop. This is the first test of your tempering: a shiny, easy-release result means the temper was good.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

150 g	tempered chocolate (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 1)
1	clean, dry silicone mould (or silicone ice cube tray)
8	wooden lolly sticks (optional)

1. Temper the chocolate and check a test streak. Spoon it into the clean, dry mould and tap firmly on the worktop 10 times to bring bubbles to the surface.
2. Add a lolly stick to each shape if using, turning it to coat. Scrape the top level with a palette knife.
3. Chill for **15 to 20 minutes** until firm, then turn out (see the box).

MOULDS, RELEASING AND STICKS

Moulds: use clean, dry moulds. Silicone moulds, polycarbonate moulds, and improvised ones (silicone ice cube trays or cupcake moulds) all work. Don't use anything chipped, and polish a polycarbonate mould with a soft cloth or cotton wool, not kitchen paper, for a shiny finish.

Releasing from the mould: chill until the chocolate has pulled slightly away from the edges and looks matt. Turn the mould over and give it a gentle flex or tap, and the chocolates will drop out. If they stick, chill for a few more minutes. Don't force or warm the mould: that causes streaks.

Lolly sticks: use clean, food-safe wooden sticks, and keep an eye on small children, who should not walk or run while eating from a stick.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many

> coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

LEVEL 2 · HOLLOW

Hollow shells

30 minutes plus 30 minutes chilling | 6 shells | coating a mould and draining the extra

A hollow chocolate shell is the basis of every bonbon, cup and Easter egg. Fill the cavities, tip out the extra and chill, then add a second coat so the shell is strong.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

200 g	tempered chocolate
1	clean, dry mould with deep cavities (or a silicone cupcake mould)
1	pastry brush or spoon

1. Fill each cavity to the top with tempered chocolate, tap to release bubbles, then **turn the mould upside down** over the bowl and tap out the extra, so only a thin coating remains.
2. Scrape the rim clean with a palette knife and stand the mould upside down on parchment. Chill for **10 minutes**.
3. Add a second coat the same way, scraping the rim again. Chill for **20 minutes**, then release.

SHELL THICKNESS, RELEASING AND MOULDS

Shell thickness: a good shell is about 2 to 3 mm thick. Two thin coats, chilled in between, are stronger than one thick coat, and the second coat patches any thin spots at the rim.

Releasing from the mould: chill until the chocolate has pulled slightly away from the edges and looks matt. Turn the mould over and give it a gentle flex or tap, and the chocolates will drop out. If they stick, chill for a few more minutes. Don't force or warm the mould: that causes streaks.

Moulds: use clean, dry moulds. Silicone moulds, polycarbonate moulds, and improvised ones (silicone ice cube trays or cupcake moulds) all work. Don't use anything chipped, and polish a polycarbonate mould with a soft cloth or cotton wool, not kitchen paper, for a shiny finish.

> **Fingerprints:** handle finished chocolates with clean, cool, dry fingers (or cotton gloves), and by the edges. Warm fingers leave prints on the shiny surface.

LEVEL 2 · FILLED

A filled shell

20 minutes plus 1 hour setting | 6 shells | filling and sealing a chocolate shell

Fill a shell with soft ganache and seal it with a thin layer of chocolate across the base. The ganache must be cool (about 30°C) or it will melt the shell, and the filling should stop about 3 mm below the rim.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

1 batch	hollow shells (above)
100 g	ganache (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 3), cooled to about 30°C
30 g	tempered chocolate, to seal

1. Make the ganache and let it cool until thick but pourable (about 30°C). Spoon or pipe it into each shell, stopping **3 mm below the rim**.
2. Let the filling set at cool room temperature for **1 hour** (or chill for 30 minutes).
3. Spread a thin layer of tempered chocolate across the top with a palette knife to seal. Chill until firm and release.

HOT CREAM, FILLING AND KEEPING

Hot cream: cream heated to steaming is hotter than it looks and burns skin. Heat it in a small pan over a medium heat until it just starts to steam at the edges, don't let it boil over, keep the handle turned in and pour with care.

Keeping: anything made with cream (ganache, bonbon fillings) should be kept covered in the fridge and used within about 5 days (general guidance). Bring it to cool room temperature 15 minutes before serving, and don't leave cream-based sweets out for more than a couple of hours.

Releasing from the mould: chill until the chocolate has pulled slightly away from the edges and looks matt. Turn the mould over and give it a gentle flex or tap, and the chocolates will drop out. If they stick, chill for a few more minutes. Don't force or warm the mould: that causes streaks.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many

> coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

LEVEL 3 · BUILD

A chocolate cup and a little box

45 minutes plus setting | 4 cups and 1 box | making a cup in a mould and building a box from sheets

A cup is a shell with a wide mouth, good for mousse or ice cream. A box is built from thin chocolate sheets cut when almost set and stuck together with melted chocolate. Both are achievable and impressive.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

250 g	tempered chocolate
1	silicone muffin mould, for the cups
100 g	tempered chocolate, spread thin for a box
1	baking parchment and a sharp knife

1. For cups: brush or spoon chocolate thickly into a silicone muffin mould, chill for 10 minutes and add a second coat. Chill for 30 minutes and release.
2. For the box: spread the 100 g of tempered chocolate on parchment to about 3 mm. When set but still pliable (about 10 minutes), cut five equal squares with a warm sharp knife and let them set completely.
3. Join the squares with a little melted chocolate: stand four on edge as walls with the fifth as the base. Hold each join for a minute until it grips. Fill with truffles.

SHARP KNIFE, MELTING AND HANDLING

Knife safety: chop chocolate on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath) with a large knife held firmly, and keep your guiding fingertips tucked back. A serrated knife grips a hard bar better than a smooth blade.

Steam and hot bowls: a bowl over a pan of simmering water gets hot and steam burns. Use oven gloves or a cloth to lift it, keep your face back when you lift it off, and keep children away from the hob.

Fingerprints: handle finished chocolates with clean, cool, dry fingers (or cotton gloves), and by the edges. Warm fingers leave prints on the shiny surface.

Storing finished chocolate: keep it wrapped in a cool, dry place (about 15 to 18°C), not in the

> fridge unless it has a cream filling. Cold and damp make it dull and spotty (bloom), which is harmless but not pretty.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Shell thickness

One coat or two.

1. Make one shell with a single coat and another with two coats, and compare their strength when released and gently squeezed.

Look for: The single-coat shell is thin and may crack; the two-coat shell is sturdier. Two thin coats are better than one thick one.

EXPERIMENT

Tapping out bubbles

Tapped or not.

1. Fill two moulds with the same chocolate. Tap one 10 times and leave the other untapped.

Look for: The tapped mould gives a smooth, bubble-free surface; the untapped one has holes and pits. Tap firmly.

EXPERIMENT

Chilling time

10 minutes or an hour.

1. Release one batch after 10 minutes and another after a full hour.

Look for: The 10-minute batch can stick; the hour-long one releases easily but can have a dull streak. About 15 to 20 minutes is the balance.

EXPERIMENT

Releasing from the mould

Gentle flex or force.

1. Release one chocolate by gently flexing the mould, and warm another mould to loosen it.

Look for: The flexed mould gives a clean release; the warmed one leaves dull, streaky chocolates. Never warm the mould.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Solid shapes				
Hollow shells				
Filled shell				
Cup and box				
Shell thickness				
Tapping bubbles				
Chilling time				
Releasing				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Chocolates stick in the mould	Not chilled enough, or mould not clean	Chill a little longer; polish moulds
Dull, streaky shells	Chocolate not tempered, or chilled too long	Temper and chill only 15 to 20 minutes

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Holes and pits	Bubbles not tapped out	Tap firmly 10 times
Shells crack	Too thin	Add a second coat
Filling leaks	Seal not complete or filling too warm	Cool the filling and seal fully across the base
Fingerprints	Warm hands	Handle by the edges, with clean cool hands

MOULDS, SHARP TOOLS AND ALLERGENS

Moulds: use clean, dry moulds. Silicone moulds, polycarbonate moulds, and improvised ones (silicone ice cube trays or cupcake moulds) all work. Don't use anything chipped, and polish a polycarbonate mould with a soft cloth or cotton wool, not kitchen paper, for a shiny finish.

Knife safety: chop chocolate on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath) with a large knife held firmly, and keep your guiding fingertips tucked back. A serrated knife grips a hard bar better than a smooth blade.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can fill a mould and tap out the bubbles.
- ☐ I can make a hollow shell with two coats.
- ☐ I scrape the rim clean and chill for the right time.
- ☐ I can fill and seal a shell.
- ☐ I can release chocolates without warming the mould.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 3 is Filled Chocolates and Bonbons: ganache, fruit and praline-style centres in a shell.

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2

Chapter 3 · Filled Chocolates and Bonbons

SKILL GOAL

Fill and seal chocolate shells with ganache, fruit and nutty centres, and pack a selection.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A bonbon is **a thin chocolate shell around a soft filling**, sealed at the base. It brings together tempering (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 1), moulding shells (chapter 2) and the ganache you made in Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 3. The skill is in the fillings: soft enough to be luscious, firm enough to stay put, and cool enough not to melt the shell.



Figure 3. A bonbon is a shell, a cool filling, a small gap and a seal.

The method

- **Make strong shells:** two thin coats, chilled between.
- **Cool the filling** to about 30°C before it goes in.
- **Fill to 3 mm below the rim,** leaving room for the seal.
- **Let the filling set** before sealing: overnight at cool room temperature is best for ganache.
- **Seal completely,** right across the base, so nothing leaks.

FILLING	TEXTURE	KEEPS (COOL OR FRIDGE)	WATCH OUT FOR
Firm ganache	Soft, creamy	About 5 days	Filling too hot, melts the shell
Fruit centre	Sharp, jammy	3 to 5 days, in the fridge	Water: cook it very thick
Praline-style	Nutty, a little crunchy	About a week	Nuts: label them
Selection box	Mixed	As the shortest-lived filling	Labels and allergens

These keeping times are general guidance, not strict limits.

HOT CREAM, FILLING AND KEEPING

Hot cream: cream heated to steaming is hotter than it looks and burns skin. Heat it in a small pan over a medium heat until it just starts to steam at the edges, don't let it boil over, keep the handle turned in and pour with care.

Filling the shells: a small piping bag with the tip cut off, or a teaspoon, fills shells neatly. Fill to about 3 mm below the rim and tap to level. A filling that is too warm melts the shell, and one that is too firm won't flow.

Keeping: anything made with cream (ganache, bonbon fillings) should be kept covered in the fridge and used within about 5 days (general guidance). Bring it to cool room temperature 15 minutes before serving, and don't leave cream-based sweets out for more than a couple of hours.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Ganache bonbons

30 minutes plus overnight setting | 6 bonbons | filling and sealing shells with a firm ganache

The classic bonbon: a hollow shell filled with soft ganache and sealed. The firm ganache here (2 parts chocolate to 1 part cream, as in Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 3) sets soft enough to bite through cleanly and holds a neat top. Let it cool before filling.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

6	hollow chocolate shells (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 2)
100 g	dark chocolate (about 70%), finely chopped
50 ml	double cream
10 g	butter, softened
30 g	tempered chocolate, to seal

1. Make the ganache: heat the cream until steaming, pour over the chopped chocolate, wait 2 minutes and stir smooth. Stir in the butter. Cool to about **30°C** (thick but pourable).
2. Fill the shells with the ganache to **3 mm below the rim**. Leave at cool room temperature overnight (or chill for 1 hour) until set.
3. Spread a thin layer of tempered chocolate over each top to seal. Chill for 15 minutes and release carefully.

HOT CREAM, FILLING AND KEEPING

Hot cream: cream heated to steaming is hotter than it looks and burns skin. Heat it in a small pan over a medium heat until it just starts to steam at the edges, don't let it boil over, keep the handle turned in and pour with care.

Filling the shells: a small piping bag with the tip cut off, or a teaspoon, fills shells neatly. Fill to about 3 mm below the rim and tap to level. A filling that is too warm melts the shell, and one that is too firm won't flow.

Keeping: anything made with cream (ganache, bonbon fillings) should be kept covered in the fridge and used within about 5 days (general guidance). Bring it to cool room temperature 15 minutes before serving, and don't leave cream-based sweets out for more than a couple of

hours.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

LEVEL 2 · FRUIT

Fruit centres

40 minutes plus setting | 6 bonbons | cooking a thick fruit filling

A thick, jammy fruit filling is sharp and fruity against the dark chocolate. It must be cooked down until very thick: a thin filling makes the chocolate soggy and spoils sooner. Cool it completely before filling.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

6	hollow chocolate shells
150 g	raspberries or strawberries, fresh or frozen and boiled as in the box
60 g	caster sugar
1 tsp	lemon juice
30 g	tempered chocolate, to seal

1. Simmer the fruit and sugar for 10 to 12 minutes, stirring, until it is thick and jam-like and leaves a trail on the pan. Add the lemon juice, sieve if you like, and cool completely.
2. Fill the shells with the cooled fruit to **3 mm below the rim**.
3. Seal each with tempered chocolate, chill for 15 minutes and release. Eat within a few days.

HOT FRUIT, BOILED FROZEN BERRIES AND KEEPING

Hot sugar: sugar syrup and caramel are far hotter than boiling water, and they stick to skin and burn badly. Use a large, heavy pan, keep the handle turned in, stand back when adding cream or bicarbonate, and keep a bowl of cold water nearby. Nothing leaves the pan until it has cooled, and children should not help with this chapter's sugar work.

Fruit: wash fresh fruit before use. If you use frozen berries, heat them until boiling and simmer for a minute before using them cold, as is usual UK advice for frozen berries (general guidance: check the pack).

Fruit centres: fruit contains water, so a fruit-filled chocolate keeps for a shorter time than a ganache one. Keep them in the fridge in an airtight tin and eat within about 3 to 5 days (general guidance). Use thick, well-reduced fruit, not runny purée, so it doesn't leak or spoil.

> **Allergens:** chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

LEVEL 2 · PRALINE

Praline-style centres

30 minutes plus setting | 6 bonbons | mixing a nutty chocolate filling with crunch

A smooth, nutty filling with a little crunch, like a praline. Stir melted milk chocolate into hazelnut paste and fold in crushed biscuit for texture. Cool until thick enough to hold its shape.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

6	hollow chocolate shells
60 g	hazelnut paste or smooth hazelnut butter (unsweetened)
60 g	milk chocolate, melted
20 g	crushed plain biscuit or toasted crushed nuts
1 pinch	salt
30 g	tempered chocolate, to seal

1. Mix the melted chocolate, hazelnut paste and salt until smooth. Fold in the crushed biscuit or nuts and cool until thick but spoonable.
2. Fill each shell to **3 mm below the rim** and tap level. Set for 1 hour at cool room temperature.
3. Seal with tempered chocolate, chill and release.

NUTS, FILLING AND KEEPING

Nuts: almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios and other nuts (and spreads made from them) are serious allergens, and some chocolate is made in factories that handle nuts. Never serve them to a guest without asking, and make a nut-free swap when anyone has an allergy.

Nut-free swap: use smooth sunflower seed butter instead of hazelnut paste (check the label for nut traces), or use a plain ganache centre.

Filling the shells: a small piping bag with the tip cut off, or a teaspoon, fills shells neatly. Fill to about 3 mm below the rim and tap to level. A filling that is too warm melts the shell, and one that is too firm won't flow.

Keeping: anything made with cream (ganache, bonbon fillings) should be kept covered in the

> fridge and used within about 5 days (general guidance). Bring it to cool room temperature 15 minutes before serving, and don't leave cream-based sweets out for more than a couple of hours.

LEVEL 3 · SELECTION

A bonbon selection

Several sessions | a box of 12 | making and presenting three kinds of bonbon together

A box of three kinds of bonbon, each decorated differently so you can tell them apart. Make them in batches, keeping the cream and fruit ones in the fridge until the box is given.

INGREDIENTS (12 PORTIONS)

1 batch	ganache bonbons, fruit centres and praline-style centres (above)
1	box and paper cases
1 pinch	sea salt flakes, cocoa and a little melted white chocolate, to decorate
1	label

1. Make four shells of each kind of filling (ganache, fruit, praline-style). Decorate each type differently before the seal sets (a pinch of sea salt, a dusting of cocoa, a white chocolate drizzle).
2. Pack in paper cases in a lined box, with a label listing the fillings, the date and allergens.
3. Keep the box in the fridge until just before serving, and bring it to cool room temperature 15 minutes before eating.

CHOOSING, LABELS AND KEEPING

Choosing a selection: give each centre a different look: a sprinkle of sea salt on one, a drizzle on another, a dusting of cocoa on a third, so you and your guests can tell them apart.

Labelling gifts: label every gift with what is in it, the date it was made, and any allergens (milk, egg, nuts, wheat, soy), and say 'keep in the fridge' on anything with cream or fruit. If you give food to someone with an allergy, check with them first.

Keeping: anything made with cream (ganache, bonbon fillings) should be kept covered in the fridge and used within about 5 days (general guidance). Bring it to cool room temperature 15 minutes before serving, and don't leave cream-based sweets out for more than a couple of hours.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many

> coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Filling softness

Firm or soft.

1. Make two small ganaches, one at 2 parts chocolate to 1 part cream and one at 1 to 1, and fill a shell with each.

Look for: The firmer filling holds a neat top and a clean bite; the softer one is luscious but can leak when the shell is bitten. Choose a ratio for the texture you like.

EXPERIMENT

Sealing

Sealed or open.

1. Seal one filled shell completely and leave another with a gap, and check each after a day.

Look for: The sealed one stays fresh and doesn't leak; the open one dries out and may leak. Seal right to the edges.

EXPERIMENT

Flavour balance

Plain and seasoned.

1. Make three small batches of ganache: plain, with a pinch of salt, and with a little orange zest. Fill a shell with each.

Look for: Salt deepens the chocolate; zest brightens it; plain is pure but flatter. Small additions have big effects.

EXPERIMENT

Shelf life

Fridge or cool cupboard.

1. Store one fruit-filled and one ganache-filled bonbon in the fridge and another of each in a cool room, and check after 3 and 5 days.

Look for: The fruit bonbon spoils fastest, especially at room temperature; the ganache one lasts longer. Keep cream and fruit chocolates cold.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Ganache bonbons				
Fruit centres				
Praline-style centres				
Bonbon selection				
Filling softness				
Sealing				
Flavour balance				
Shelf life				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Filling melts the shell	Filling too warm	Cool to about 30°C before filling
Filling leaks	Seal missing or thin	Seal right across the base
Soggy shell	Fruit filling too wet	Cook the fruit until very thick
Filling too stiff to pipe	Chilled too long	Warm gently and stir
Bonbons crack	Shell too thin or chilled too hard	Make two thin coats; chill gently
Dull finish	Chocolate not tempered	Temper again and test a streak

HOT FRUIT, NUTS AND ALLERGENS

Hot sugar: sugar syrup and caramel are far hotter than boiling water, and they stick to skin and burn badly. Use a large, heavy pan, keep the handle turned in, stand back when adding cream or bicarbonate, and keep a bowl of cold water nearby. Nothing leaves the pan until it has cooled, and children should not help with this chapter's sugar work.

Nuts: almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios and other nuts (and spreads made from them) are serious allergens, and some chocolate is made in factories that handle nuts. Never serve them to a guest without asking, and make a nut-free swap when anyone has an allergy.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can fill a shell without melting it.

☐ I can leave room and seal a bonbon completely.

☐ I can cook a fruit filling thick enough.

☐ I label nuts and keep cream and fruit chocolates cold.

☐ I can pack a selection of bonbons.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 4 is Caramels, Honeycomb and Nougat-style Sweets: hot sugar sweets, with a strong safety focus.

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2

Chapter 4 · Caramels, Honeycomb and Nougat-style Sweets

SKILL GOAL

Cook sugar to the right stage for chewy caramel and crisp honeycomb, safely.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Sugar sweets are made by **cooking sugar to a precise temperature**: the hotter and the longer it cooks, the harder it sets. Chewy caramel stops at about 118 to 122°C, honeycomb goes on to about 150°C, and a quick nut-bar caramel stops at a gentle bubble. This is the most dangerous chapter in the course: hot sugar is the hottest thing in the kitchen, so the safety boxes matter most here. Children should not help with the sugar work.



Figure 4. Different sweets stop at different temperatures. Temperatures are approximate: watch the colour and the thermometer together.

The method

- **Use a large, heavy pan** and a sugar thermometer. A big pan matters for honeycomb, which foams up.
- **Have everything ready first:** warm cream, oiled tin, sifted bicarbonate, thermometer clipped on.
- **Don't stir once the sugar has dissolved:** swirl the pan, or brush the sides with water if crystals form.

- **Stand back** when adding cream or bicarbonate.
- **Nothing leaves the pan until it is cold**, and leave caramel to set fully before you cut it.

SWEET	COOKED TO (APPROX.)	TEXTURE	KEEPS
Salted caramels	118 to 122°C	Chewy	About 2 weeks, airtight
Honeycomb	About 150°C, then bicarbonate	Light, crisp	About a week, airtight and dry
Dipped honeycomb bark	Honeycomb plus tempered chocolate	Crisp	1 to 2 weeks
Nut and caramel bar	A gentle bubble, not a high temperature	Chewy, nutty	About a week

Temperatures and keeping times are general guidance. Use the thermometer together with the colour.

VERY HOT SUGAR, FOAMING AND CREAM

Hot sugar: sugar syrup and caramel are far hotter than boiling water, and they stick to skin and burn badly. Use a large, heavy pan, keep the handle turned in, stand back when adding cream or bicarbonate, and keep a bowl of cold water nearby. Nothing leaves the pan until it has cooled, and children should not help with this chapter's sugar work.

Honeycomb foams up: when the bicarbonate goes in, the hot sugar rises to three or four times its volume in seconds. Use a large, deep, heavy pan, whisk quickly and stand back, and pour at once. Never lean over the pan, and never touch the foam.

Adding cream: warm the cream first and pour it in slowly, with the pan off the heat and your arm well back. Cold cream makes the sugar spit and seize into a lump; if it does, return it to a low heat and stir until it melts again.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Salted caramels

35 minutes plus 4 hours setting | about 25 caramels | cooking sugar and cream to a chewy set

A buttery, chewy caramel with a hint of salt. The sugar is cooked to a golden colour, the warm cream goes in carefully, and the mixture is cooked to about 118 to 122°C. The final temperature decides how soft or chewy it is.

INGREDIENTS (25 PORTIONS)

150 g	caster sugar
40 g	golden syrup
150 ml	double cream, warmed
30 g	butter
1 tsp	sea salt flakes
1	15 cm square tin, lined with parchment and lightly oiled

1. Warm the cream in a small pan and keep it nearby. Put the sugar and syrup in a large heavy pan over a medium heat, stir until the sugar dissolves, then stop stirring.
2. Cook, swirling, until it is a deep golden amber (about 5 to 7 minutes). Take it off the heat and stand back.
3. Pour in the warm cream slowly, then the butter, stirring. Return to the heat and cook to **118 to 122°C** (about 5 minutes), stirring. Pour into the tin and sprinkle the salt on top.
4. Leave for **at least 4 hours**, then lift out and cut into squares with an oiled knife. Wrap each piece in parchment.

> **VERY HOT SUGAR, CREAM, THERMOMETER AND CUTTING**
>
> **Hot sugar:** sugar syrup and caramel are far hotter than boiling water, and they stick to skin and burn badly. Use a large, heavy pan, keep the handle turned in, stand back when adding cream or bicarbonate, and keep a bowl of cold water nearby. Nothing leaves the pan until it has cooled, and children should not help with this chapter's sugar work.
>
> **Adding cream:** warm the cream first and pour it in slowly, with the pan off the heat and your arm well back. Cold cream makes the sugar spit and seize into a lump; if it does, return it to a low heat and stir until it melts again.

Sugar thermometer: use a thermometer that is rated for hot sugar (up to about 180°C), clip it to the pan without letting it touch the bottom, and put it in warm water, not cold, after use so it doesn't crack. The temperatures here are approximate: use them as a guide with the colour.

Tins for hot sugar: line the tin with baking parchment and oil it lightly, and put the tin on a heatproof board or folded tea towel. Never pour hot sugar into a plastic or glass dish, and don't move the tin until it is cold.

Cutting caramel: leave the set caramel for at least 4 hours or overnight, then cut with a large oiled knife, pressing straight down. A warm knife cuts soft caramel cleanly, and a wet or cold one drags.

Keeping: wrap caramels individually in baking parchment and keep them in an airtight tin in a cool place for about 2 weeks (general guidance). Honeycomb goes sticky in damp air: store it in an airtight tin with a sachet of silica gel or a dry slice of bread, and eat within about a week.

LEVEL 2 · FOAM

Honeycomb (cinder toffee)

25 minutes plus 1 hour setting | about 15 pieces | cooking sugar to a hard stage and foaming it

A light, crisp, golden sweet with a bubbly texture. The sugar is cooked to about 150°C, then bicarbonate of soda is whisked in: it releases bubbles that set in the toffee. It foams dramatically, so you need a big pan and a steady nerve.

INGREDIENTS (15 PORTIONS)

150 g	caster sugar
60 g	golden syrup
2 tsp	bicarbonate of soda, sifted
1	20 cm square tin, lined with parchment and lightly oiled

1. Put the sugar and syrup in a large, deep heavy pan over a medium heat and stir until the sugar dissolves. Cook without stirring until it reaches about **150°C** and is a deep golden colour (about 6 to 8 minutes).
2. Take it off the heat, add the sifted bicarbonate all at once and **whisk quickly for 3 seconds**. It will foam up. Pour straight into the tin without spreading it.
3. Leave to set for **1 hour**, untouched, then break into pieces.

VERY HOT SUGAR, FOAMING, TEETH AND KEEPING

Hot sugar: sugar syrup and caramel are far hotter than boiling water, and they stick to skin and burn badly. Use a large, heavy pan, keep the handle turned in, stand back when adding cream or bicarbonate, and keep a bowl of cold water nearby. Nothing leaves the pan until it has cooled, and children should not help with this chapter's sugar work.

Honeycomb foams up: when the bicarbonate goes in, the hot sugar rises to three or four times its volume in seconds. Use a large, deep, heavy pan, whisk quickly and stand back, and pour at once. Never lean over the pan, and never touch the foam.

Sugar thermometer: use a thermometer that is rated for hot sugar (up to about 180°C), clip it to the pan without letting it touch the bottom, and put it in warm water, not cold, after use so it doesn't crack. The temperatures here are approximate: use them as a guide with the colour.

Tins for hot sugar: line the tin with baking parchment and oil it lightly, and put the tin on a

heatproof board or folded tea towel. Never pour hot sugar into a plastic or glass dish, and don't move the tin until it is cold.

Teeth and small children: honeycomb, brittle and hard caramels are hard and can break teeth or choke very young children. Break honeycomb into small pieces and don't give hard sweets to children under 4.

Keeping: wrap caramels individually in baking parchment and keep them in an airtight tin in a cool place for about 2 weeks (general guidance). Honeycomb goes sticky in damp air: store it in an airtight tin with a sachet of silica gel or a dry slice of bread, and eat within about a week.

LEVEL 2 · DIP

Chocolate-dipped honeycomb bark

30 minutes plus 30 minutes setting | 12 pieces | combining hot-sugar sweets with tempered chocolate

A good use of honeycomb: dip pieces in tempered chocolate, or fold them through a layer of chocolate to make crunchy bark. The chocolate protects the honeycomb from damp and keeps it crisp for longer.

INGREDIENTS (12 PORTIONS)

1 batch	honeycomb pieces (above), broken small
150 g	tempered chocolate (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 1)
1 pinch	sea salt flakes (optional)
1	tray lined with baking parchment

1. Temper the chocolate and test a streak. Spread a layer on the tray, about 4 mm thick.
2. Scatter the honeycomb pieces over and press lightly. Add a pinch of salt.
3. Leave at cool room temperature for **30 minutes** until set, then break into pieces. Store airtight.

THERMOMETER, TEETH AND KEEPING

Thermometer: use a digital probe thermometer, and clean it between uses. Temperatures for chocolate are small differences, so a degree or two matters. The figures in this course are approximate: if the chocolate packet gives its own temperatures, follow them.

Teeth and small children: honeycomb, brittle and hard caramels are hard and can break teeth or choke very young children. Break honeycomb into small pieces and don't give hard sweets to children under 4.

Keeping: wrap caramels individually in baking parchment and keep them in an airtight tin in a cool place for about 2 weeks (general guidance). Honeycomb goes sticky in damp air: store it in an airtight tin with a sachet of silica gel or a dry slice of bread, and eat within about a week.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many

> coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

LEVEL 3 · BAR

A chewy nut and caramel bar

35 minutes plus 2 hours setting | 12 bars | binding nuts with a cooked caramel

A chewy bar of toasted nuts and seeds held together with a quick caramel and finished with a layer of dark chocolate. It is like a nougat-style sweet, chewy and nutty. The caramel is cooked only until it bubbles and thickens, not to a hard stage.

INGREDIENTS (12 PORTIONS)

100 g	light brown sugar
60 g	butter
2 tbsp	golden syrup or honey
2 tbsp	double cream
200 g	mixed nuts and seeds, toasted
100 g	dark chocolate, melted
1	15 cm square tin, lined with parchment

1. Heat the sugar, butter, syrup and cream in a heavy pan over a low heat, stirring, until the sugar dissolves. Bubble gently for **2 to 3 minutes**, until it looks thick and glossy.
2. Take off the heat, stir in the nuts and seeds quickly until coated, and press firmly into the lined tin with the back of a spoon.
3. Cool for 30 minutes, spread with the melted chocolate and chill for **2 hours**. Cut into bars with a sharp knife.

HOT SUGAR, NUTS, TEETH AND KEEPING

Hot sugar: sugar syrup and caramel are far hotter than boiling water, and they stick to skin and burn badly. Use a large, heavy pan, keep the handle turned in, stand back when adding cream or bicarbonate, and keep a bowl of cold water nearby. Nothing leaves the pan until it has cooled, and children should not help with this chapter's sugar work.

Nuts: almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios and other nuts (and spreads made from them) are serious allergens, and some chocolate is made in factories that handle nuts. Never serve them to a guest without asking, and make a nut-free swap when anyone has an allergy.

Nut-free swap: use only sunflower and pumpkin seeds (check the labels).

Teeth and small children: honeycomb, brittle and hard caramels are hard and can break teeth or choke very young children. Break honeycomb into small pieces and don't give hard sweets to children under 4.

Keeping: wrap caramels individually in baking parchment and keep them in an airtight tin in a cool place for about 2 weeks (general guidance). Honeycomb goes sticky in damp air: store it in an airtight tin with a sachet of silica gel or a dry slice of bread, and eat within about a week.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Cooking colour

Pale, golden and deep amber.

1. Make three tiny batches of caramel sauce (sugar and water only), cooked until pale gold, golden and deep amber, and taste a drop of each when cool.

Look for: The pale one is sweet and mild; the golden one is toasty; the deep amber one is bitter and complex. Colour changes in seconds, so watch closely and take care.

EXPERIMENT

Cream hot or cold

Warm or cold, with care.

1. Add warm cream to one small batch of caramel and cold cream to another, off the heat and standing back.

Look for: The warm cream goes in smoothly; the cold cream makes the caramel spit and seize. This is why the cream is warmed first. Take extra care with this test.

EXPERIMENT

Setting time

2 hours or overnight.

1. Cut one batch of caramels after 2 hours and another after a full night.

Look for: After 2 hours they are soft and may smear; after a night they cut cleanly and are chewy. Plan the set.

EXPERIMENT

Cutting temperature

Cold, warm and oiled.

1. Cut caramels with a cold dry knife, a warm one and an oiled one.

Look for: The cold dry knife drags and cracks; the warm or oiled one cuts cleanly. Oil and warmth help.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Salted caramels				
Honeycomb				
Dipped honeycomb bark				
Nut and caramel bar				
Cooking colour				
Cream hot or cold				
Setting time				
Cutting temperature				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Grainy sugar	Stirred after it dissolved, or crystals on the sides	Swirl, don't stir; brush the sides with water
Burnt, bitter taste	Cooked too dark	Start again; take it off at amber
Caramel seized when the cream went in	Cold cream	Warm the cream; return to a low heat and stir
Caramel too soft	Not cooked hot enough	Cook to 118 to 122°C next time; chill to firm
Caramel too hard	Cooked too hot	Cook to a lower temperature; add a splash of cream
Sticky honeycomb	Damp air	Store airtight and dry; coat with chocolate

VERY HOT SUGAR, TEETH AND ALLERGENS

Hot sugar: sugar syrup and caramel are far hotter than boiling water, and they stick to skin and burn badly. Use a large, heavy pan, keep the handle turned in, stand back when adding cream or bicarbonate, and keep a bowl of cold water nearby. Nothing leaves the pan until it has cooled, and children should not help with this chapter's sugar work.

Teeth and small children: honeycomb, brittle and hard caramels are hard and can break teeth or choke very young children. Break honeycomb into small pieces and don't give hard sweets to children under 4.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can cook caramel to a set temperature.

☐ I warm the cream and stand back.

☐ I can foam honeycomb safely in a big pan.

☐ I know children should not help with hot sugar.

☐ I can store sugar sweets dry.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 5 is Mousses and Creams: light chocolate desserts with no raw egg.

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2

Chapter 5 · Mousses and Creams

SKILL GOAL

Make four light chocolate desserts, with no raw egg, by folding air into chocolate.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A mousse is **chocolate lightened with air**: cream, or meringue, or both, folded into melted chocolate. It needs no oven and no raw egg in these recipes, but it needs care: the chocolate must be cool enough not to melt the cream, and the folding must be gentle enough not to knock the air out. This chapter builds from a simple cream to a baked custard.

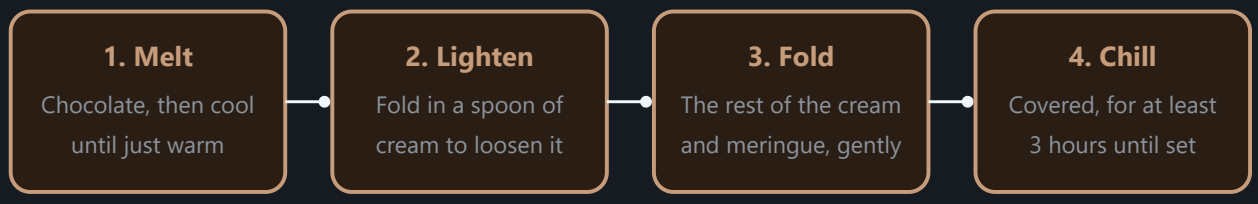


Figure 5. A mousse is air held in chocolate. Fold gently, and the air stays.

The method

- **Cool the chocolate** until just warm before it meets cream or meringue.
- **Loosen first:** fold a spoonful of the light mixture into the chocolate, then fold in the rest.
- **Whip cream only to soft peaks.** Stiff cream goes grainy when folded.
- **Fold, don't stir,** and stop as soon as the streaks vanish.
- **Chill for the full time,** and cover it.

DESSERT	LIGHTENED WITH	TEXTURE	CHILL
Eggless chocolate cream	Whipped cream	Soft, creamy	2 hours
Meringue mousse	Cream and cooked meringue	Light, airy	3 hours
Pots de crème	Baked egg yolks	Dense, silky	4 hours
Trifle glass	Layers with chocolate cream	Soft, fruity, crunchy	2 hours

COOKED MERINGUE, HOT CREAM AND CHILLING

Cooked meringue: raw egg white is not used. Whisk the whites and sugar in a clean heatproof bowl over a pan of barely simmering water (the bowl must not touch the water) until the sugar has dissolved and the mixture reaches about **71°C** on a thermometer (general guidance), then whisk off the heat until stiff and cool. Use Lion-marked eggs and a spotlessly clean bowl, and keep steam away from your hands.

Hot cream: cream heated to steaming is hotter than it looks and burns skin. Heat it in a small pan over a medium heat until it just starts to steam at the edges, don't let it boil over, keep the handle turned in and pour with care.

Chilled desserts: keep mousses, creams and pots covered in the fridge and eat them within about 2 days (general guidance). Take them out 10 to 15 minutes before serving so the flavour comes through. Don't leave them out for more than a couple of hours.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Eggless chocolate cream

20 minutes plus 2 hours chilling | 4 portions | folding whipped cream into a chocolate base

The simplest mousse-style dessert: melted chocolate loosened with hot milk, cooled, and folded into whipped cream. No egg and no raw ingredients. The chocolate base must be cool, or it melts the cream and the mousse will be thin.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

100 g	dark chocolate (about 70%), finely chopped
100 ml	whole milk
200 ml	double cream, well chilled
1 tsp	vanilla extract
4	small glasses or pots

1. Heat the milk until steaming, pour it over the chocolate, wait 1 minute and stir smooth. Add the vanilla and cool until just warm (not hot).
2. Whip the cream to soft peaks. Fold a spoonful into the chocolate to loosen it, then fold in the rest gently until no streaks remain.
3. Spoon into the glasses and chill for **at least 2 hours**.

HOT MILK, FOLDING AND CHILLING

Hot cream: cream heated to steaming is hotter than it looks and burns skin. Heat it in a small pan over a medium heat until it just starts to steam at the edges, don't let it boil over, keep the handle turned in and pour with care.

Folding: use a large metal spoon or spatula and cut down through the middle, sweep round the bowl and turn the mixture over. Stop as soon as there are no streaks: stirring knocks out the air.

Chilled desserts: keep mousses, creams and pots covered in the fridge and eat them within about 2 days (general guidance). Take them out 10 to 15 minutes before serving so the flavour comes through. Don't leave them out for more than a couple of hours.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many

> coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

LEVEL 2 · MERINGUE

Cooked-meringue chocolate mousse

35 minutes plus 3 hours chilling | 6 portions | folding chocolate, cooked meringue and cream

A lighter, airier mousse than the eggless cream, made with a cooked meringue so there is no raw egg. Three things are folded together, so go gently and in stages.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

150 g	dark chocolate (about 70%), chopped
2	Lion-marked egg whites
50 g	caster sugar
200 ml	double cream, well chilled
1 pinch	salt
6	small glasses or ramekins

1. Melt the chocolate gently and cool until just warm. Make a cooked meringue from the whites and sugar (see the box) and whisk off the heat until stiff and cool.
2. Whip the cream and salt to soft peaks. Fold a third of the cream into the chocolate to loosen it, then fold in the rest of the cream, then the meringue, in two additions.
3. Spoon into the glasses and chill for **at least 3 hours**.

COOKED MERINGUE, FOLDING AND CHILLING

Cooked meringue: raw egg white is not used. Whisk the whites and sugar in a clean heatproof bowl over a pan of barely simmering water (the bowl must not touch the water) until the sugar has dissolved and the mixture reaches about **71°C** on a thermometer (general guidance), then whisk off the heat until stiff and cool. Use Lion-marked eggs and a spotlessly clean bowl, and keep steam away from your hands.

Folding: use a large metal spoon or spatula and cut down through the middle, sweep round the bowl and turn the mixture over. Stop as soon as there are no streaks: stirring knocks out the air.

Chilled desserts: keep mousses, creams and pots covered in the fridge and eat them within about 2 days (general guidance). Take them out 10 to 15 minutes before serving so the flavour comes through. Don't leave them out for more than a couple of hours.

> **Eggs:** use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Recipes in this course never serve raw egg: yolks and whites are baked, or cooked as described. Pregnant women, babies, older people and anyone unwell should check current FSA advice before eating egg dishes, even cooked ones.

LEVEL 2 · BAKED

Pots de crème

30 minutes plus 30 minutes baking and 4 hours chilling | 6 pots | baking a chocolate custard in a water bath

A dense, silky, spoonable baked chocolate custard. The egg yolks are baked until just set, so the custard is cooked and not raw. Bake gently in a water bath: too hot and it scrambles at the edges.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

200 ml	double cream
100 ml	whole milk
100 g	dark chocolate (about 70%), chopped
3	Lion-marked egg yolks
30 g	caster sugar
6	ramekins or small pots (about 100 ml)

1. Heat the oven to 150°C (130°C fan). Heat the cream and milk until steaming, pour over the chocolate, wait 1 minute and stir smooth.
2. Whisk the yolks and sugar until just combined, then whisk in the warm chocolate cream slowly. Strain into a jug and pour into the ramekins.
3. Stand the ramekins in a roasting tin and pour hot water to halfway up. Bake for **25 to 30 minutes**, until set round the edges with a slight wobble in the middle. Cool, then chill for **at least 4 hours**.

HOT CREAM, WATER BATH, EGGS AND CHILLING

Hot cream: cream heated to steaming is hotter than it looks and burns skin. Heat it in a small pan over a medium heat until it just starts to steam at the edges, don't let it boil over, keep the handle turned in and pour with care.

Water bath: a roasting tin of hot water round the dishes keeps the custard gentle, but it is heavy and hot. Pour the hot water in after the tin is on the oven shelf, use oven gloves, and lift the dishes out with tongs or a cloth, not bare fingers.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Recipes in this course never serve raw egg: yolks and whites are baked, or cooked as described.

> Pregnant women, babies, older people and anyone unwell should check current FSA advice before eating egg dishes, even cooked ones.
>
> **Chilled desserts:** keep mousses, creams and pots covered in the fridge and eat them within about 2 days (general guidance). Take them out 10 to 15 minutes before serving so the flavour comes through. Don't leave them out for more than a couple of hours.

LEVEL 3 · LAYERS

A chocolate trifle glass

30 minutes plus 2 hours chilling | 4 portions | building neat layers of contrasting textures

A layered dessert in a glass: brownie, berries, chocolate cream and whipped cream. It puts the mousse to use and shows how contrast makes a dessert, with soft, fruity, creamy and crunchy in every spoonful.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1 batch	eggless chocolate cream (above)
150 g	brownie or chocolate cake, in small pieces (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 5)
150 g	berries, washed
100 ml	double cream, softly whipped
1 tbsp	grated or shaved chocolate, to finish
4	tall glasses

1. Put a layer of brownie pieces in the bottom of each glass, then a layer of berries.
2. Spoon in the chocolate cream, tapping the glass to settle it. Chill for **1 hour** if you want clean layers.
3. Top with whipped cream and a few berries and finish with grated chocolate. Chill for another hour before serving.

FRUIT, ALLERGENS, SMALL CHILDREN AND CHILLING

Fruit: wash fresh fruit before use. If you use frozen berries, heat them until boiling and simmer for a minute before using them cold, as is usual UK advice for frozen berries (general guidance: check the pack).

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

Small children: whole nuts, hard lumps and frozen pieces can be a choking risk for very young children, so keep pieces small and sit with them while they eat.

> **Chilled desserts:** keep mousses, creams and pots covered in the fridge and eat them within about 2 days (general guidance). Take them out 10 to 15 minutes before serving so the flavour comes through. Don't leave them out for more than a couple of hours.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Chocolate percentage

50% and 70%.

1. Make two small batches of the eggless cream, one with plain (about 50 to 60%) and one with dark (about 70%) chocolate.

Look for: The plain chocolate gives a sweeter, softer, milder cream; the dark gives a firmer, more intense one. Dark sets firmer because it has more cocoa solids.

EXPERIMENT

Folding speed

Gentle or hard.

1. Fold one batch gently and stir another quickly.

Look for: The gently folded one is tall and airy; the stirred one is flat and dense. Fold, don't stir.

EXPERIMENT

Chilling time

1, 3 and 6 hours.

1. Taste a small spoonful of the mousse after 1, 3 and 6 hours.

Look for: At 1 hour it is soft and loose; at 3 hours it is set; at 6 hours it is firm and rich. Plan to make it ahead.

EXPERIMENT

Serving temperature

Straight from the fridge or after standing.

1. Serve the same mousse straight from the fridge and after 15 minutes at room temperature.

Look for: Straight from the fridge it is dense and muted; after standing it is silkier and tastes of chocolate. Take it out 10 to 15 minutes ahead.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Eggless chocolate cream				
Meringue mousse				
Pots de crème				
Trifle glass				
Chocolate percentage				
Folding speed				
Chilling time				
Serving temperature				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Thin, runny mousse	Chocolate too warm, or over-folded	Cool the chocolate; fold gently; chill longer

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Grainy, streaky mousse	Cream over-whipped, or chocolate seized	Whip to soft peaks only; keep water away
Flat mousse	Meringue deflated	Fold the meringue in last and gently
Scrambled pots de crème	Oven too hot or no water bath	Bake at 150°C in a water bath; strain
Pots de crème not set	Underbaked	Bake a few minutes longer; chill overnight
Mousse tastes weak	Cold from the fridge	Stand 10 to 15 minutes before serving

EGGS, CHILLING AND ALLERGENS

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Recipes in this course never serve raw egg: yolks and whites are baked, or cooked as described. Pregnant women, babies, older people and anyone unwell should check current FSA advice before eating egg dishes, even cooked ones.

Chilled desserts: keep mousses, creams and pots covered in the fridge and eat them within about 2 days (general guidance). Take them out 10 to 15 minutes before serving so the flavour comes through. Don't leave them out for more than a couple of hours.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can cool chocolate before folding it into cream.
- ☐ I can fold a mousse without knocking the air out.
- ☐ I can make a cooked meringue with no raw egg.
- ☐ I can bake a custard in a water bath safely.
- ☐ I chill desserts for the full time.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 6 is Flourless and Layered Cakes: advanced chocolate cakes.

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2

Chapter 6 · Flourless and Layered Cakes

SKILL GOAL

Bake four advanced chocolate cakes, from flourless to layered.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Advanced chocolate cakes use **eggs and chocolate for structure** instead of flour: whisked whites lift a flourless cake, and a roulade is a thin sponge rolled round cream. A layered cake needs a different set of skills: levelling, filling and finishing, with everything cooled first.

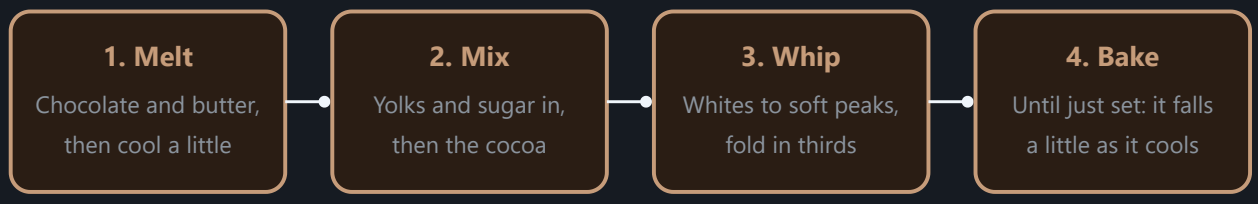


Figure 6. Flourless cakes get their lift from whisked egg whites and their richness from chocolate and butter.

The method

- **Cool the melted chocolate** before it meets the yolks.
- **Whisk whites to soft peaks,** with a spotless bowl, and fold in thirds.
- **Don't open the oven early,** and expect flourless cakes to sink as they cool.
- **Cool completely** before filling, glazing or turning out.
- **Level and chill** a layered cake before the final coat.

CAKE	LIFT FROM	TEXTURE	OVEN
Flourless cake	Whisked egg whites	Dense, fudgy	170°C (150°C fan), 30 to 35 minutes
Chocolate and orange torte	Whole eggs and ground almonds	Dense, moist	170°C (150°C fan), 30 to 35 minutes
Layered cake	Baking powder and bicarbonate	Light, moist	180°C (160°C fan), 25 to 30 minutes
Roulade	Whisked egg whites	Thin, soft, rolled	180°C (160°C fan), 15 to 18 minutes

WHISKING, HOT OVEN AND KEEPING

Whisking whites: the bowl and whisk must be spotlessly clean and dry, with no trace of yolk or grease. Whisk to soft peaks (the tips flop over), not stiff, and fold in thirds. The whites are baked fully, so there is no raw egg in the finished cake.

Hot oven: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put the tin on a heatproof surface. Don't leave the oven unattended, because chocolate bakes go from perfect to dry quickly, and every oven is a little different, so check early.

Keeping: store baked treats in an airtight tin at room temperature for about 3 to 4 days (general guidance), or freeze them wrapped for up to about a month. Anything with a cream cheese or cream filling belongs in the fridge.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Flourless chocolate cake

30 minutes plus 30 minutes baking and cooling | 10 slices | lifting a cake with whisked egg whites

A dense, fudgy, very chocolatey cake with no flour, lifted only by whisked egg whites. It is rich, so cut small slices. It rises in the oven and falls a little as it cools, which is exactly right.

INGREDIENTS (10 PORTIONS)

200 g	dark chocolate (about 70%), chopped
125 g	butter
4	Lion-marked eggs, separated
100 g	caster sugar, divided
20 g	cocoa powder, sifted
1 pinch	salt
1	20 cm round tin, greased and lined

1. Heat the oven to 170°C (150°C fan). Melt the chocolate and butter gently together, stir smooth and cool for 10 minutes.
2. Whisk the yolks with half of the sugar until pale, then stir into the chocolate with the cocoa and salt.
3. Whisk the whites to soft peaks, adding the remaining sugar a spoonful at a time. Fold into the chocolate in three additions.
4. Pour into the tin and bake for **30 to 35 minutes**, until just set with a slight wobble. Cool completely in the tin.

MELTING, WHISKING, HOT OVEN AND FALLING

Gentle heat: chocolate scorches easily and turns dull and bitter. Melt it in a heatproof bowl over (not touching) barely simmering water, or in the microwave in 20-second bursts, stirring each time. Take it off the heat when it is mostly melted and stir until smooth. Milk and white chocolate burn faster than dark, so use lower heat for them.

Whisking whites: the bowl and whisk must be spotlessly clean and dry, with no trace of yolk or grease. Whisk to soft peaks (the tips flop over), not stiff, and fold in thirds. The whites are baked fully, so there is no raw egg in the finished cake.

Flourless cakes fall: they rise in the oven and sink as they cool. That is normal, and gives the dense, fudgy centre. Cool them completely in the tin before turning out.

Hot oven: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put the tin on a heatproof surface. Don't leave the oven unattended, because chocolate bakes go from perfect to dry quickly, and every oven is a little different, so check early.

Keeping: store baked treats in an airtight tin at room temperature for about 3 to 4 days (general guidance), or freeze them wrapped for up to about a month. Anything with a cream cheese or cream filling belongs in the fridge.

Gluten-free: flourless cakes are naturally free of wheat flour, but check the labels of chocolate and cocoa, and don't say a cake is gluten-free unless you have checked everything, especially for someone with coeliac disease.

LEVEL 2 · TORTE

Chocolate and orange torte

30 minutes plus 30 minutes baking | 10 slices | making a dense torte with ground nuts

A torte is a dense, moist, nut-based cake. Ground almonds replace the flour and give a tender, almost truffle-like crumb, with orange to lift the chocolate. It keeps well and improves after a day.

INGREDIENTS (10 PORTIONS)

200 g	dark chocolate (about 70%), chopped
150 g	butter
3	Lion-marked eggs
100 g	caster sugar
100 g	ground almonds
1	orange, zest only
1	20 cm round tin, greased and lined

1. Heat the oven to 170°C (150°C fan). Melt the chocolate and butter gently, stir smooth and cool a little.
2. Whisk the eggs and sugar until pale and thick, then fold in the chocolate, the ground almonds and the orange zest until just combined.
3. Pour into the tin and bake for **30 to 35 minutes**, until the centre is set but still soft. Cool in the tin. Serve with a dusting of cocoa.

NUTS, MELTING AND KEEPING

Nuts: almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios and other nuts (and spreads made from them) are serious allergens, and some chocolate is made in factories that handle nuts. Never serve them to a guest without asking, and make a nut-free swap when anyone has an allergy.

Nut-free swap: replace the ground almonds with 60 g of plain flour and 20 g of cocoa. The torte will be slightly lighter and no longer wheat-free.

Raw batter: don't eat raw brownie, cake or cookie mixture. It contains raw egg and raw flour, which can carry harmful bacteria. Use eggs with the British Lion mark, wash your hands after

handling raw egg, and bake it fully.

Hot oven: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put the tin on a heatproof surface. Don't leave the oven unattended, because chocolate bakes go from perfect to dry quickly, and every oven is a little different, so check early.

Keeping: store baked treats in an airtight tin at room temperature for about 3 to 4 days (general guidance), or freeze them wrapped for up to about a month. Anything with a cream cheese or cream filling belongs in the fridge.

LEVEL 3 · LAYERS

Layered cake with ganache and buttercream

1 hour plus baking and cooling | 12 slices | baking, levelling, filling and finishing a layered cake

Two layers sandwiched with buttercream and finished with ganache. This is the most work in the chapter. The cake batter is the one-bowl cake from Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 6, doubled and baked in two tins. Everything must be completely cool before it is filled.

INGREDIENTS (12 PORTIONS)

300 g	plain flour
300 g	caster sugar
70 g	cocoa powder
3 tsp	baking powder
1 tsp	bicarbonate of soda
4	Lion-marked eggs
200 ml	flavourless oil
300 ml	milk
200 ml	hot water
150 g	butter, softened (buttercream)
300 g	icing sugar, sifted
40 g	cocoa powder (buttercream)
1 batch	pourable ganache (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 3), cooled thick

1. Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan). Grease and line two 18 cm tins. Mix the dry ingredients, whisk in the eggs, oil and milk, then the hot water. Divide between the tins and bake for **25 to 30 minutes**, until a skewer comes out clean. Cool completely.
2. Beat the butter until pale, then beat in the icing sugar and cocoa a little at a time, adding a spoonful of milk if it is stiff.
3. Level the cakes with a serrated knife if domed. Spread the buttercream on one layer, add the second layer upside down so the top is flat, and chill for 20 minutes.

4. Pour or spread the cooled ganache over the top and sides and leave to set for at least 30 minutes.

RAW BATTER, HOT OVEN, BUTTERCREAM AND KEEPING

Raw batter: don't eat raw brownie, cake or cookie mixture. It contains raw egg and raw flour, which can carry harmful bacteria. Use eggs with the British Lion mark, wash your hands after handling raw egg, and bake it fully.

Hot oven: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put the tin on a heatproof surface. Don't leave the oven unattended, because chocolate bakes go from perfect to dry quickly, and every oven is a little different, so check early.

Tins: grease and line the tin with baking parchment so the cake lifts out whole. Cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then on a wire rack, and never glaze or fill a warm cake.

Buttercream: beat softened butter first until pale, then add the icing sugar a little at a time (sifted, or it flies everywhere). Add milk a spoonful at a time. It keeps in the fridge for about a week, and should be brought to room temperature and re-beaten before use.

Keeping: anything made with cream (ganache, bonbon fillings) should be kept covered in the fridge and used within about 5 days (general guidance). Bring it to cool room temperature 15 minutes before serving, and don't leave cream-based sweets out for more than a couple of hours.

LEVEL 3 · ROLL

Chocolate roulade

40 minutes plus 20 minutes baking and cooling | 10 slices | baking a thin sponge and rolling it round cream

A thin, flourless chocolate sponge, rolled round whipped cream. The sponge cracks as it rolls, and that is part of its charm. Cream and fruit are the classic filling.

INGREDIENTS (10 PORTIONS)

150 g	dark chocolate (about 70%), chopped
5	Lion-marked eggs, separated
150 g	caster sugar
1 tbsp	cocoa powder, for dusting
250 ml	double cream, softly whipped
1	23 x 33 cm Swiss roll tin, greased and lined

1. Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan). Melt the chocolate gently and cool. Whisk the yolks and 100 g of the sugar until very pale and thick, then stir in the chocolate.
2. Whisk the whites to soft peaks, adding the remaining sugar a spoonful at a time. Fold into the chocolate mixture in three additions.
3. Spread in the tin and bake for **15 to 18 minutes**, until risen and just firm. Turn onto a parchment sheet dusted with cocoa, roll up while warm in the parchment, and cool.
4. Unroll gently, spread with the cream, and roll up again using the parchment. Chill for 30 minutes before slicing.

WHISKING, HOT OVEN, ROLLING AND CHILLING

Whisking whites: the bowl and whisk must be spotlessly clean and dry, with no trace of yolk or grease. Whisk to soft peaks (the tips flop over), not stiff, and fold in thirds. The whites are baked fully, so there is no raw egg in the finished cake.

Hot oven: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put the tin on a heatproof surface. Don't leave the oven unattended, because chocolate bakes go from perfect to dry quickly, and every oven is a little different, so check early.

Rolling the roulade: the sponge cracks a little when rolled, and that is expected. Roll it while

warm in a sheet of parchment, cool it rolled, then unroll gently, fill and roll again. A dusting of icing sugar hides cracks.

Chilled desserts: keep mousses, creams and pots covered in the fridge and eat them within about 2 days (general guidance). Take them out 10 to 15 minutes before serving so the flavour comes through. Don't leave them out for more than a couple of hours.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Whisking time

Soft and stiff peaks.

1. Make half a flourless cake with whites whisked to soft peaks and another half with whites whisked very stiff.

Look for: The soft-peak whites fold in smoothly and give a light cake; the stiff whites are lumpy and clump, leaving air pockets. Soft peaks are best.

EXPERIMENT

Oven temperature

170°C and 190°C.

1. Bake two small flourless cakes at 170°C (150°C fan) and 190°C (170°C fan) until just set.

Look for: The hotter cake cracks on top and is dry at the edges; the cooler one is smooth and fudgy. Gentle heat suits flourless cakes.

EXPERIMENT

Cooling

In the tin or out.

1. Cool one flourless cake in the tin and turn out another while still warm.

Look for: The cake cooled in the tin holds together and is fudgy; the warm one breaks and sags. Be patient.

EXPERIMENT

Layer thickness

Thick and thin.

1. Bake the layered cake batter in one tin for a thick layer and in two for thin layers, filling each.

Look for: The thick layer is a tall cake that can be dry at the edge; the thinner layers cook evenly and give more filling. Choose what you prefer.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Flourless cake				
Chocolate and orange torte				
Layered cake				
Chocolate roulade				
Whisking time				
Oven temperature				
Cooling				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Layer thickness				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Flourless cake sank badly	Over-whisked whites, or opened oven early	Soft peaks; keep the door shut for 25 minutes
Cracked top	Oven too hot	Lower the oven; cover with ganache or cocoa
Dry cake	Overbaked	Bake until just set
Roulade cracks badly	Cooled flat, or overbaked	Roll while warm in parchment
Buttercream split	Butter too cold or too warm	Beat on, or warm or chill the bowl briefly
Cake slides in the layers	Cake warm, or filling too soft	Cool and chill before filling

RAW BATTER, HOT OVEN AND ALLERGENS

Raw batter: don't eat raw brownie, cake or cookie mixture. It contains raw egg and raw flour, which can carry harmful bacteria. Use eggs with the British Lion mark, wash your hands after handling raw egg, and bake it fully.

Hot oven: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put the tin on a heatproof surface. Don't leave the oven unattended, because chocolate bakes go from perfect to dry quickly, and every oven is a little different, so check early.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can whisk whites to soft peaks and fold them in.

☐ I can bake a flourless cake and expect it to sink.

☐ I can level, fill and finish a layered cake.

☐ I can roll a roulade while it is warm.

☐ I cool everything before filling or glazing.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 7 is Pastry and Chocolate: a tart, profiteroles, pastry swirls and éclairs.

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2

Chapter 7 · Pastry and Chocolate

SKILL GOAL

Combine chocolate with a biscuit case, ready-rolled pastry and choux, in four simple bakes.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Chocolate and pastry go together naturally: a crisp case under a smooth filling, flaky layers wrapped round ganache, or light choux with warm sauce. This chapter uses only **a biscuit case, ready-rolled puff pastry and a simple choux paste**, so you can focus on the chocolate. Proper pastry-making is for Cooking Skills: Pastry 1 (planned).

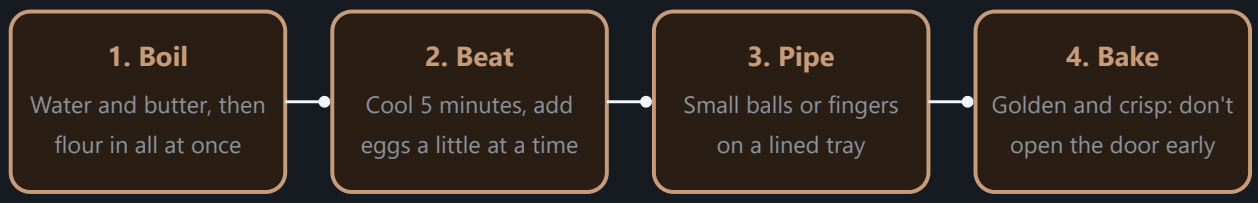


Figure 7. Choux puffs up on steam. Paste, bake hot, and keep the door shut.

The method

- **Press the biscuit case firmly** and chill it until hard.
- **Make choux in order:** boil, beat in the flour, cool, then add the eggs a little at a time.
- **Bake hot and don't open the door early,** or the buns collapse.
- **Chill puff pastry swirls** before slicing, so they hold their shape.
- **Fill choux only just before serving** to keep it crisp.

BAKE	BASE	CHOCOLATE PART	OVEN
Chocolate tart	Biscuit case	Set ganache	No bake
Profiteroles	Choux buns	Warm sauce	200°C (180°C fan), 20 to 25 minutes
Pastry swirls	Puff pastry	Ganache filling	200°C (180°C fan), 18 to 20 minutes
Éclairs	Choux fingers	Ganache glaze	200°C (180°C fan), 25 to 30 minutes

HOT PASTE, HOT OVEN AND FILLING

Choux paste is hot: the butter and water come to a rolling boil, and the cooked paste stays very hot. Beat it with a wooden spoon, let it cool for 5 minutes before beating in the eggs, and keep your face back from the steam. Don't open the oven in the first 20 minutes, or the choux collapses.

Hot oven: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put the tin on a heatproof surface. Don't leave the oven unattended, because chocolate bakes go from perfect to dry quickly, and every oven is a little different, so check early.

Filling choux: fill cooled choux just before serving, or the shells go soft. Pierce the base with a skewer or small knife, pipe in the cream, and keep filled buns in the fridge for no more than a day. Unfilled choux keep in an airtight tin for a day and re-crisp in a low oven for 5 minutes.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Chocolate tart with a biscuit case

25 minutes plus 3 hours chilling | 8 slices | pressing a biscuit case and setting a ganache filling

The simplest chocolate tart: a crisp biscuit case filled with a 1:1 ganache and chilled. No baking and no pastry skill, just a good press and a good chill. Use a clear, deep chocolate flavour: this is where it shows.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

200 g	digestive biscuits, crushed
90 g	butter, melted
200 g	dark chocolate (about 70%), finely chopped
200 ml	double cream
1 pinch	sea salt flakes
1	20 cm loose-bottomed tart tin

1. Mix the crushed biscuits and melted butter and press firmly into the base and up the sides of the tin with the back of a spoon. Chill for **30 minutes**.
2. Make the ganache: heat the cream until steaming, pour over the chocolate, wait 2 minutes and stir smooth.
3. Pour into the case, tap to level, sprinkle with salt and chill for **at least 3 hours**. Serve in small slices cut with a hot knife.

PASTRY, HOT CREAM AND CHILLING

Pastry: this chapter uses a biscuit case, ready-rolled pastry and a simple choux paste, so it needs no other pastry skill. Cooking Skills: Pastry 1 (planned) will cover shortcrust, puff shortcuts and tarts properly.

Hot cream: cream heated to steaming is hotter than it looks and burns skin. Heat it in a small pan over a medium heat until it just starts to steam at the edges, don't let it boil over, keep the handle turned in and pour with care.

Chilled desserts: keep mousses, creams and pots covered in the fridge and eat them within about 2 days (general guidance). Take them out 10 to 15 minutes before serving so the flavour comes through. Don't leave them out for more than a couple of hours.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

LEVEL 2 · CHOUX

Profiteroles with chocolate sauce

50 minutes plus cooling | 6 portions | making choux paste and baking it crisp

Little puffs of choux filled with cream and drowned in warm chocolate sauce. Choux is boiled, beaten and baked: the steam inside puffs the buns up, so it needs a hot oven and a closed door.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

125 ml	water
50 g	butter, cubed
65 g	plain flour, sifted
2	Lion-marked eggs, beaten
1 pinch	salt
200 ml	double cream, whipped, to fill
1 batch	pourable ganache (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 3), warm

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan) and line two trays. Boil the water, butter and salt in a pan, tip in all the flour at once and beat hard until the paste leaves the sides of the pan. Cool for 5 minutes.
2. Beat in the eggs a little at a time until the paste is smooth and glossy and drops off a spoon. Pipe or spoon into 18 small mounds.
3. Bake for **20 to 25 minutes**, until golden and crisp, without opening the oven for the first 20 minutes. Pierce each to let the steam out and cool on a wire rack.
4. Fill with the whipped cream and pour over the warm sauce just before serving.

HOT PASTE, STEAM, HOT SAUCE AND FILLING

Choux paste is hot: the butter and water come to a rolling boil, and the cooked paste stays very hot. Beat it with a wooden spoon, let it cool for 5 minutes before beating in the eggs, and keep your face back from the steam. Don't open the oven in the first 20 minutes, or the choux collapses.

Crisp choux: when the buns are golden, make a small slit in each with a knife to let the steam out and return them to the switched-off oven for 5 minutes. Damp, soft choux is nearly always

one that came out too early.

Hot sauce: chocolate sauce for profiteroles is poured warm, not hot. Warm it gently in a pan or the microwave, stir, and let it cool for a minute before pouring, because it burns skin and melts the cream.

Filling choux: fill cooled choux just before serving, or the shells go soft. Pierce the base with a skewer or small knife, pipe in the cream, and keep filled buns in the fridge for no more than a day. Unfilled choux keep in an airtight tin for a day and re-crisp in a low oven for 5 minutes.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Recipes in this course never serve raw egg: yolks and whites are baked, or cooked as described. Pregnant women, babies, older people and anyone unwell should check current FSA advice before eating egg dishes, even cooked ones.

LEVEL 2 · SWIRL

Chocolate pastry swirls

30 minutes plus chilling and 20 minutes baking | 10 swirls | rolling a filled pastry and slicing it

Ready-rolled puff pastry spread with a thick, chilled ganache, rolled up and sliced into spirals. They puff into flaky, chocolatey swirls. Chill the roll before slicing so the slices keep their shape.

INGREDIENTS (10 PORTIONS)

1	sheet ready-rolled puff pastry (about 320 g), chilled
100 g	dark chocolate (about 70%), finely chopped
100 ml	double cream
1	Lion-marked egg, beaten, to glaze
1 tbsp	caster sugar, to finish

1. Make a ganache with the chocolate and cream and chill for about 1 hour until thick and spreadable.
2. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan). Unroll the pastry and spread the ganache over it, leaving a 2 cm edge. Roll up tightly from a long side and chill the roll for 20 minutes.
3. Slice into 10 rounds, lay flat on a lined tray, brush with egg and sprinkle with sugar. Bake for **18 to 20 minutes**, until golden and puffed. Cool on a rack.

PASTRY, HOT OVEN AND FILLING

Ready-rolled pastry: keep it in the fridge until the last moment, and work quickly: puff pastry rises best when it is cold. Check the label for butter, wheat, and any traces of other allergens.

Hot cream: cream heated to steaming is hotter than it looks and burns skin. Heat it in a small pan over a medium heat until it just starts to steam at the edges, don't let it boil over, keep the handle turned in and pour with care.

Hot oven: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put the tin on a heatproof surface. Don't leave the oven unattended, because chocolate bakes go from perfect to dry quickly, and every oven is a little different, so check early.

Keeping: store baked treats in an airtight tin at room temperature for about 3 to 4 days

> (general guidance), or freeze them wrapped for up to about a month. Anything with a cream cheese or cream filling belongs in the fridge.

LEVEL 3 · ECLAIR

Chocolate éclairs

1 hour plus cooling | 8 éclairs | piping and baking choux fingers, filling and glazing

Choux piped into fingers, baked until hollow and crisp, filled with cream and glazed with ganache. The skills are even piping, thorough baking and an unhurried glaze.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

1 batch	choux paste (Profiteroles, above)
250 ml	double cream, whipped with 1 tbsp icing sugar
1 batch	ganache glaze (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 3), just warm
1	piping bag with a large plain nozzle

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan). Make the choux paste and pipe 8 fingers, each about 10 cm long, on a lined tray, with space between.
2. Bake for **25 to 30 minutes** until deep golden and crisp, without opening the oven for the first 20 minutes. Slit each, return to the switched-off oven for 5 minutes and cool.
3. Slice each éclair along one side, pipe in the cream, and dip the tops in the just-warm glaze. Set for 15 minutes and serve within a few hours.

HOT PASTE, PIPING, GLAZING AND FILLING

Choux paste is hot: the butter and water come to a rolling boil, and the cooked paste stays very hot. Beat it with a wooden spoon, let it cool for 5 minutes before beating in the eggs, and keep your face back from the steam. Don't open the oven in the first 20 minutes, or the choux collapses.

Piping: fill a bag halfway only, twist the top closed, and squeeze from above, not the middle. Pipe onto a lined tray with a little paste dabbed under each corner of the paper, so it stays flat.

Glazing: use the ganache glaze when it is just warm and thickly pourable (about 35°C), and dip or spoon it over cooled éclairs. Hot glaze runs off and melts the filling.

Filling choux: fill cooled choux just before serving, or the shells go soft. Pierce the base with a

> skewer or small knife, pipe in the cream, and keep filled buns in the fridge for no more than a day. Unfilled choux keep in an airtight tin for a day and re-crisp in a low oven for 5 minutes.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Chilling the pastry

Cold or warm roll.

1. Slice one pastry swirl roll after 20 minutes in the fridge and another straight after rolling.

Look for: The chilled roll slices cleanly and bakes into neat spirals; the warm one squashes and leaks. Chill before slicing.

EXPERIMENT

Choux baking time

20, 25 and 30 minutes.

1. Bake three choux buns for 20, 25 and 30 minutes, and cool each. Cut one open.

Look for: The shortest is pale and collapses; the middle is golden and hollow; the longest is dark and crisp but dry. Bake until deep golden.

EXPERIMENT

Filling temperature

Warm or cold filling.

1. Fill one choux bun with whipped cream straight from the fridge and another after the bun is still slightly warm.

Look for: The warm bun melts the cream into a puddle; the cool bun holds it. Cool the buns completely first.

EXPERIMENT

Glaze consistency

Hot, warm and cool.

1. Dip one éclair in hot glaze, one in just-warm glaze and one in cool, thick glaze.

Look for: The hot glaze runs off in a thin layer; the warm one coats evenly and sets glossy; the cool one is thick and lumpy. Aim for just warm.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Chocolate tart				
Profiteroles				
Pastry swirls				
Éclairs				
Chilling the pastry				
Choux baking time				
Filling temperature				
Glaze consistency				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Choux collapse	Oven opened early, or underbaked	Bake until deep golden; keep the door shut
Choux too flat	Paste too wet	Add the eggs gradually, stopping when it drops off the spoon in a ribbon
Soggy choux	Not dried out or filled early	Slit to release steam; fill just before serving

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Biscuit case crumbles	Too little butter, or not pressed	Press harder and chill for longer
Swirls spread flat	Pastry warm	Chill the roll before slicing and the tray before baking
Glaze dull or streaky	Too cool, or not smooth	Warm gently and stir; glaze again

HOT PASTE, EGGS AND ALLERGENS

Choux paste is hot: the butter and water come to a rolling boil, and the cooked paste stays very hot. Beat it with a wooden spoon, let it cool for 5 minutes before beating in the eggs, and keep your face back from the steam. Don't open the oven in the first 20 minutes, or the choux collapses.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Recipes in this course never serve raw egg: yolks and whites are baked, or cooked as described. Pregnant women, babies, older people and anyone unwell should check current FSA advice before eating egg dishes, even cooked ones.

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can press a firm biscuit case and set a ganache tart.
- ☐ I can make choux paste and bake it crisp.
- ☐ I can chill and slice a rolled pastry.
- ☐ I can fill and glaze an éclair.
- ☐ I fill choux just before serving.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 8 is A Chocolate Showpiece: planning and plating a chocolate dessert for guests.

Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2

Chapter 8 · A Chocolate Showpiece

SKILL GOAL

Plan, make ahead, plate and serve chocolate desserts for guests, and start your own house recipes.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

The showpiece is the capstone of both chocolate courses: **plan, make ahead, plate and serve a chocolate dessert for guests**. It uses tempering and moulding (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapters 1 and 2), bonbons and sweets (chapters 3 and 4), mousses and cakes (chapters 5 and 6) and pastry (chapter 7). The new skills are balance, planning and plating.



Figure 8. Plan backwards from the plate: make everything ahead, and leave only warming, whipping and plating for the end.

The method

- **Choose contrasts:** light and rich, soft and crisp, one fruity and one plain.
- **Work backwards** from serving time and write the plan down.

- **Make everything ahead:** only warming, whipping and plating should be left for the day.
- **Chill plates and keep desserts cold** until the last moment.
- **Plate with restraint:** one sauce, one crunch, one fresh note.

PART	MAKE	KEEP	LAST-MINUTE JOB
Mousse or pots	The day before	Fridge	Stand 10 minutes
Cake or tart	The day before	Airtight tin or fridge	Slice with a hot knife
Bonbons or truffles	2 to 5 days ahead	Fridge	Bring to cool room temperature
Sauce, curls and shards	The day before or that morning	Fridge or airtight tin	Warm the sauce just before

SERVING, HOT SAUCES AND ALLERGENS

Serving safely: keep cream-based desserts in the fridge until serving, use clean spoons and knives for each dessert, wash hands before handling food, and don't leave chilled desserts out for more than about 2 hours. Throw away anything that has stood out for longer.

Hot finishing touches: warm sauces only just before serving, in a jug with a lid, and keep caramel and other hot sugar work (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 4) out of the last hour, when guests are in the kitchen.

Allergen cards: put a small card by every dessert listing what is in it (milk, egg, nuts, wheat, soy, gluten from malt). Ask your guests about allergies before you plan, and include at least one dessert without nuts.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A plated chocolate dessert

20 minutes once the parts are made | 1 plate | arranging a dessert so it looks as good as it tastes

Plating is the last skill: arranging soft, sauced and crunchy parts on a plate so they look right and taste right together. Practise with one plate until you are happy before doing ten.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1	pot of chocolate mousse or pot de crème (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 5)
1	slice of flourless cake or brownie square
2 tbsp	chocolate or fruit sauce, warm
1	few berries and chocolate curls to finish
1	cool, clean plate

1. Chill the plate for 10 minutes. Put a spoonful of sauce off-centre and drag the back of the spoon through it for a swoosh.
2. Place the cake slice (or brownie) on or beside the sauce, and spoon or quenelle the mousse next to it.
3. Add a few berries and a curl or shard of chocolate, standing upright for height. Serve at once.

PLATING, SERVING AND ALLERGENS

Plating: use a cool, clean plate, keep the dessert off-centre, add one sauce, one crunch and one fresh note (fruit or cream), and finish with a little garnish. Less is more: empty space on the plate looks deliberate, and everything on it should be edible and good to eat.

Serving safely: keep cream-based desserts in the fridge until serving, use clean spoons and knives for each dessert, wash hands before handling food, and don't leave chilled desserts out for more than about 2 hours. Throw away anything that has stood out for longer.

Allergen cards: put a small card by every dessert listing what is in it (milk, egg, nuts, wheat, soy,

> gluten from malt). Ask your guests about allergies before you plan, and include at least one dessert without nuts.

LEVEL 2 · TABLE

A three-dessert chocolate table

Two days of making; 45 minutes to serve | 10 guests

balancing three chocolate desserts in texture and flavour

Three desserts that contrast: something light and creamy, something rich and dense, and something small and crisp. Choose different flavours (one fruity, one plain, one with salt or caramel) so there is no repeat, and a different texture in each.

INGREDIENTS (10 PORTIONS)

1 batch	chocolate mousse pots (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 5)
1 batch	flourless chocolate cake (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 6)
1 batch	bonbons or truffles (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 3 or Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1, chapter 4)
1 batch	warm chocolate or fruit sauce, curls and shards (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapters 1 and 3)
10	small plates and spoons

1. Choose three desserts from the course, one creamy (mousse or pots), one dense (cake or tart) and one small (bonbons, truffles or honeycomb bark). Write them on the plan.
2. Make the mousse and cake the day before, bonbons the day before or earlier, and the curls, shards and sauces last. Keep everything chilled.
3. An hour before serving, set out the plates, labels and allergen cards, and take the desserts out of the fridge 10 to 15 minutes before serving. Warm the sauce just before.

COLD CHAIN, HOT SAUCES AND ALLERGENS

Serving safely: keep cream-based desserts in the fridge until serving, use clean spoons and knives for each dessert, wash hands before handling food, and don't leave chilled desserts out for more than about 2 hours. Throw away anything that has stood out for longer.

Hot finishing touches: warm sauces only just before serving, in a jug with a lid, and keep caramel and other hot sugar work (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 4) out of the last hour, when guests are in the kitchen.

Allergen cards: put a small card by every dessert listing what is in it (milk, egg, nuts, wheat, soy,

gluten from malt). Ask your guests about allergies before you plan, and include at least one dessert without nuts.

Chilled desserts: keep mousses, creams and pots covered in the fridge and eat them within about 2 days (general guidance). Take them out 10 to 15 minutes before serving so the flavour comes through. Don't leave them out for more than a couple of hours.

LEVEL 2 · PLAN

Your make-ahead plan

30 minutes | 10 guests | working backwards from serving time

A written plan is the secret of a calm dessert table. Work backwards from the time you serve and give every job a day and an hour, and put the hot-sugar jobs early.

INGREDIENTS (10 PORTIONS)

1	large sheet of paper or a notes page
1	pen
1	calendar or phone timer

1. Write the time you will serve on the right of the page and the desserts down the left side.
2. For each dessert, write when it must be made, how long it needs to chill or set, and when it comes out. Put mousses and cakes the day before and sugar jobs early.
3. Add the last jobs: chilling plates, warming sauces, whipping cream, plating. Check there is fridge space and tick each job off as you do it.

PLANNING, FRIDGE SPACE AND HOT SUGAR

Plan on paper: write the timeline down with days and times, and tick each job off. Do the hot sugar jobs the day before and leave only garnish, sauce and plating for the day itself.

Hot finishing touches: warm sauces only just before serving, in a jug with a lid, and keep caramel and other hot sugar work (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 4) out of the last hour, when guests are in the kitchen.

Serving safely: keep cream-based desserts in the fridge until serving, use clean spoons and knives for each dessert, wash hands before handling food, and don't leave chilled desserts out for more than about 2 hours. Throw away anything that has stood out for longer.

LEVEL 3 · HOUSE CREATION

Your own chocolate creation

Planning 20 minutes; making depends on the recipe | 4 portions | adapting a recipe into one that is yours

Take the dessert you liked best, change one thing and make it your own: a different filling, a new flavour, a different shape. Write down the result. Over time your notebook becomes a set of house recipes.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1	notebook for your chocolate notes
1 batch	a base recipe from this course or Cooking Skills: Chocolate 1 that you like best
1	one new flavour, filling or decoration to try

1. Pick your favourite dessert or sweet from the two chocolate courses and write the recipe in your notebook with the date.
2. Change **one** thing only: the flavour, the cocoa percentage, a filling, a coating or the shape. Make a small batch.
3. Taste with someone, write down what you would change, and repeat until you are happy. Then name it and plate it your own way.

ALLERGENS IN NEW RECIPES

Allergens: chocolate contains milk (except some dark), and often soy (lecithin) and sometimes nuts or traces of them: check the label and the 'may contain' line. Cream, butter and many coatings are dairy, and cookies and biscuits contain wheat and often egg. Dairy-free dark chocolate and coconut cream can replace the dairy in many recipes, but the texture changes.

Nuts: almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios and other nuts (and spreads made from them) are serious allergens, and some chocolate is made in factories that handle nuts. Never serve them to a guest without asking, and make a nut-free swap when anyone has an allergy.

Allergen cards: put a small card by every dessert listing what is in it (milk, egg, nuts, wheat, soy, gluten from malt). Ask your guests about allergies before you plan, and include at least one dessert without nuts.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

A timed plated dessert

Plan against the clock.

1. Write the full plan for plating ten desserts, follow it, and note how long each job took.

Look for: Plating takes longer than expected, because every plate is made one at a time. Allow double the time you think, and practise first.

EXPERIMENT

Swap one dessert

Same table, one change.

1. Replace one dessert with another style, for example bonbons instead of cake, and see how the table balances.

Look for: Two dense desserts feel heavy, while a light mousse lifts the table. Write down which mix you prefer.

EXPERIMENT

Your own showpiece

One change at a time.

1. Change just one thing in your favourite dessert (the flavour, the cocoa percentage, the shape or the sauce) and make a small batch.

Look for: Changing one thing makes it clear what each change does. Write it in your notebook and name the result.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Plated dessert				
Three-dessert table				
Make-ahead plan				
Your own creation				
Timed plated dessert				
Swap one dessert				
Your own showpiece				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Desserts all taste the same	Similar flavours or textures	Choose a contrasting set
Plated dessert looks messy	Too much on the plate	Simplify: one sauce, one crunch, one fresh note
Mousse melts on the plate	Plate warm or dessert left out	Chill the plates and serve at once
Running late	No written plan	Make a timeline and do the hot sugar a day early
Sauce too hot or too thin	Not tested or rushed	Warm gently and test on a spoon
A guest has an allergy	No allergen information	Label every dessert and offer a nut-free option

SERVING, HOT SAUCES AND ALLERGENS

Serving safely: keep cream-based desserts in the fridge until serving, use clean spoons and knives for each dessert, wash hands before handling food, and don't leave chilled desserts out for more than about 2 hours. Throw away anything that has stood out for longer.

Hot finishing touches: warm sauces only just before serving, in a jug with a lid, and keep caramel and other hot sugar work (Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2, chapter 4) out of the last hour, when guests are in the kitchen.

Allergen cards: put a small card by every dessert listing what is in it (milk, egg, nuts, wheat, soy, gluten from malt). Ask your guests about allergies before you plan, and include at least one dessert without nuts.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can plate a dessert with sauce, crunch and a fresh note.
- ☐ I can choose three contrasting chocolate desserts.
- ☐ I can write a make-ahead plan, working backwards.
- ☐ I label allergens and offer a safe option.
- ☐ I have written down my own chocolate creation.

NEXT CHAPTER

This is the last chapter of Cooking Skills: Chocolate 2. Next in the series, consider Cooking Skills: Pastry 1 (planned), which will take the tarts and choux further.