

Chocolate Truffles

A really quick, easy and impressive homemade Christmas present. Homemade is the best – hand-rolled chocolate truffles, the ultimate token of your love (and they're dead cheap!) I've also included the Crooked Billet's ever-popular fudge recipe, which would compliment the homemade Christmas present. My aunty Marjorie's coconut ice recipe would complete your Christmas confectionary. I've taken to also giving homemade sloe gin, "Bailey's" style Irish liqueur also nutmeg and cinnamon vodka as Christmas presents – all of which have gone down well.

Chocolate truffles- makes 30

375g dark chocolate, 70% cocoa solids broken up into pieces

300ml double cream

Cocoa powder or white chocolate

Put the chocolate in a glass bowl with the double cream. Bring a saucepan of water to simmer, place the bowl over the water, melt the chocolate, stirring it with the cream until you have a smooth mixture.

Place the mixture in a food processor and beat until cool and thick. Roll the mixture into balls and cool slightly. If you like your truffles rich, dip them in melted white chocolate or roll them in cocoa powder.

Crooked Billet Fudge

1 litre double cream

1kg caster sugar

250g glucose

250g unsalted butter

250g white chocolate

Grease a large tin – 30x40cm. Put the sugar, cream and glucose in a heavy-based saucepan over a gentle heat. Stir constantly over low heat until the sugar dissolves. Bring to the boil and do not stir – allow it to boil for 5 minutes – if you have a sugar thermometer, until it reaches 120°C. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the butter and chocolate and leave the pan to stand for 5 minutes, then beat the mixture until it is thick and creamy. Immediately pour into the greased tin and leave until completely cold before portioning. Substitute the white chocolate with smooth peanut butter if you fancy.

Aunty Marjorie's Coconut Ice – makes 400g

Oil for greasing

125ml water

300g granulated sugar

1 x 2.5ml spoon liquid glucose

100g desiccated coconut

A few drops pink food colouring

Grease a 15cm square tin well. Put the water and sugar into a saucepan and dissolve the sugar gently. Add the glucose, bring to the boil, and boil to the softball stage (115°C). Remove the saucepan from the heat and add the coconut. Stir as little as possible, but shake the pan to mix the syrup and coconut together. Pour the mixture quickly into the prepared tin and leave to set. Do not scrape any mixture left in the saucepan into the tin, as it will be sugary.

Make a second quantity of mixture, adding a few drops of pink food colouring just before 115°C is reached. Pour on top of the set white mixture and leave to set, then cut into squares.

Cooking time 20 minutes.

Note: Make 2 separate quantities of ice rather than adding food colouring to half the first mixture, as the extra stirring will make the mixture 'grain'.