



CHOCOLATE ALCHEMY

A Bean to Bar Primer

Creating Your Own Truffles, Candies,
Cakes, Fudge and Sipping Chocolates

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Chocolate-and-Caramel-Coated Apples

Makes 1 dozen small candied apples

Choose small apples for this recipe. Their sweeter and tarter taste balances well with the dark chocolate. My favorite apples to use are lady apples because they're so tiny. If not available, use another crisp apple. You can roll the coated apples in nuts or dust them with cinnamon sugar to change it up, if you like. Sprinkles make a fun topping, too.

Be sure to let the caramel harden on the apple before you dip it in melted chocolate, then let the apple drip off any excess on a sheet of parchment. If you use too much chocolate or caramel, you'll end up with too much of a "foot" at the bottom the finished treat.

12 small crisp apples, such as lady apples

1 recipe Caramels (see next page). Do not pour and cool.

19 ounces 70% Cacao Base Chocolate or highest-quality store-bought chocolate bars, coarsely chopped (2 cups), melted and tempered, for coating

2 cups finely chopped nuts, such as peanuts, walnuts, or pecans

12 (6-inch) lollipop sticks

Remove the stems from the apples and insert a lollipop stick into the core of each, pushing the sticks halfway though. Set the apples aside on a parchment-lined baking sheet.

Make the caramel in a medium saucepan as instructed. Allow the caramel to cool for just 30 seconds, then holding the apples by the sticks, dip each one into the caramel to coat. Scrape excess caramel off onto the side of the pot, then place the caramel-coated apples upside down on the parchment, with the sticks pointing upward. The caramel will pool at the bottom of the apple just slightly. If it's pooling too much, let the apple drip a bit more over the pot prior to letting it set.

Once the caramel has set and can be easily lifted from the parchment, about 20 to 30 minutes, prepare the chocolate coating and other toppings.

Put the nuts on a plate with a small lip. Temper the chocolate as instructed, remove it from the heat to the countertop, then dip each apple into the warm chocolate, as deep as you would like to go depending on how you want the finished apple to look (half covered in chocolate, or completely covered). Hold each chocolate-coated apple on the side of the pan for 10 to 15 seconds to allow for excess chocolate to drip back into the pot. Just before the chocolate sets, roll the apples in the nuts and return them, sticks pointing up, to a fresh piece of parchment. Let the coated apples set for several more minutes before serving them.

Caramels

Makes about 9 dozen 1-inch squares

This is my basic recipe for caramels. Add sea salt and it becomes Fleur de Sel Caramels. See below for other tempting variations to make.

Vegetable oil, for oiling the parchment
and pizza cutter

3 cups cane sugar

2 cups sweetened condensed milk

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1 cup glucose

1½ cups invert sugar

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into cubes,
at room temperature

Line a 9 x 12-inch baking pan with a piece of parchment paper large enough to cover the sides of the pan. Use a pastry brush to coat the parchment paper with 1 tablespoon oil until well greased.

In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat, bring the cane sugar, sweetened condensed milk, and vanilla to a boil, stirring constantly. Add the glucose and invert sugar, insert a candy thermometer, and cook over medium heat, scraping the sides down occasionally with a silicone spatula if sugar crystals collect there, until the temperature reaches 220 F. The mixture will still be fairly liquid, not thick enough at this point to coat the back of a spoon. Stir in the butter and continue cooking until the temperature reaches 244 F and thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. Immediately remove the pan from the stovetop and carefully pour the hot caramel onto the prepared baking pan. Set the caramel aside to cool at room temperature for 2 to 3 hours until firm.

Using a lightly oiled pizza cutter or sharp knife, cut the caramel into 1-inch squares or desired shapes and sizes.

The caramel can be refrigerated in an airtight container lined with waxed or parchment paper (and between the layers), for up to 1 week.