

A Sweet Little Book

Edible
Gifts
To Make
With
Your Kids



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As a child, I loved to spend time in the kitchen

cooking alongside my mother and aunt. Like most kids, I had a sweet tooth and especially loved making candies and cakes.

When the annual school fete came around, my mother would make batches of toffees and lollipops to sell at the sweet stall – my job was to decorate and package them. I'd help make the coconut ice, spoon the chocolate crackle mixture into paper cases, and break up the honeycomb when it had set.

As I grew older, I would often bake a cake or make a batch of fudge to give to friends as gifts for their birthdays or for Christmas. They were always well appreciated.

Receiving something handmade is a real joy, don't you think?

In our frenetic, fragmented lives, a gift of food made at home with love and care is so special, no matter how simple or inexpensive the ingredients. An exquisite box of sweets or a cake made with your own hands can give enormous pleasure – and it's so easy!

Today, the art of making candies, cakes and sweets for that special someone has almost become one of life's forgotten delights. Yet these gifts can inspire us to be more creative and to think of new ways of saying "I love you". To make something yourself, to use your hands to transform simple ingredients into a unique gift, can be deeply satisfying.

Every year presents us with many reasons to celebrate – whether it's the birth of a child, a wedding, Easter, Rosh Hashanah (Jewish new year), Eid Al-Fitr (the end of the fasting period of Ramadan), Christmas, Mother's Day or Father's Day. Each of these occasions can be acknowledged with a particular gift, each person remembered on his or her day with something made by you and your children. Homemade sweets are also a lovely way to say thank you.

No matter what size or shape, this kind of gift will always have your own personal stamp. Experiment, be inventive – you'll find such sweet kindness will be warmly received.

Let's get started with **SOME HANDY TIPS**

Sweet making is fun. But to do it successfully, it's important to follow a few essential rules.

MAKE SURE YOU INVOLVE THE KIDS

as they can easily carry out a number of tasks that won't require constant supervision.

On wet, grey days, it can be very cheery to work together in a warm, cosy kitchen.

Young ones can roll truffles in cocoa or chopped nuts, set out paper patty cases, toss marshmallows in coconut and help with gift wrapping or drawing fancy gift cards. Older children can help with measuring ingredients, melting chocolate and mixing cakes and biscuits.

Candy Making

♥ Sugar must be dissolved in water or liquid at a low temperature before it is brought to the boil. This can take some time. A lid on the saucepan can help prevent the formation of crystals, but it must be removed before the syrup begins to boil. Brushing the crystals down from the side of the pan with a brush dipped in warm water also helps. If the candy involves butter, you can butter the sides of the saucepan to prevent crystallisation.

♥ Do not stir the candy after it has come to the boil unless the recipe calls for it.

♥ Use moderate heat when the mixture includes milk and higher heat for water-based syrups.

♥ Weather plays an important role – on humid days, the candy will need longer cooking and ingredients must be brought to heat at least 1-2 degrees higher than on cool days.

♥ When pouring candy out from a saucepan don't scrape the bottom of the pan because there is a difference in the crystallisation rate between the top, free-flowing portion and the other portion near the bottom.

♥ Kids can help up to a point, but the following steps require an adult as sugar syrup is very hot and you don't want to risk anyone getting burnt.

♥ Check temperatures carefully by thermometer or by the less accurate method of dropping the syrup into water (see below). Heat rises slowly to 106°C, then takes off with a spurt, so it is best to remove the saucepan from the heat at 2-3 degrees before the correct temperature is reached and plunge the base of it into a basin of cold water. Be careful not to leave it in the cold water too long as the mixture will begin to solidify.

♥ **Fudges** For firm fudges, the syrup should be beaten as soon as it is removed from the heat. It will form

large crystals if beaten while hot and produce a coarse, granular fudge. For a smoother fudge, leave the syrup to cool – it will crystallise on its own and form smaller, more regular crystals.

♥ For creamy candies, don't jostle the saucepan when you remove it from the heat as this will cause sugaring. Allow it to cool to 50°C, or until the base of the saucepan feels lukewarm to touch, before you start to beat it.

♥ Brown sugar can cause milk to curdle, so stir the mixture constantly when using this combination in order to prevent curdling.

Testing the hardness of different syrups

THREAD 106-113°C: Take a teaspoonful of syrup out of the pan and tip it over a bowl. If it forms a fine, thin thread, it has reached the thread stage.

SOFT BALL 112-116°C: Drop a small quantity of the syrup into a bowl of iced water – if it forms a ball which flattens but does not disintegrate between your fingers, it has reached the soft ball stage. It will be very sticky.

FIRM BALL 118-121°C: When the syrup is dropped into iced water, it holds its shape when moulded into a ball, but feels pliable and sticky.

HARD BALL 121-130°C: When the syrup is

dropped into iced water, it will hold its shape easily after being moulded and feel resistant to pressure. It will still be quite sticky.

SOFT CRACK 132-143°C: The syrup will separate into hard threads when dropped into iced water and stretched between your fingers. The strands will be hard but elastic. The syrup will now be slightly sticky.

HARD CRACK 149-154°C: When the syrup is dropped into the iced water and then removed, it will snap easily. It will no longer be sticky and will have a golden tinge.

CARAMELISED SUGAR 160-177°C: Sugar will turn dark golden, but will taste bitter and turn black after 177°C. Pale caramel occurs at the lower temperature, dark caramel at the higher temperatures.

Cake Making

♥ Make sure you measure ingredients carefully when baking – you can use cup measures but scales are more reliable.

♥ Make sure to grease and line your tins (non-stick baking paper is indispensable) before spooning in the batter.

♥ If you have a convection oven, the circulation of heat is improved by the fan, which means baking time will be shorter and you might want to set the oven at a lower temperature. Check the manufacturer's instructions about this. Every oven has a style of its own and you need to get to know its quirks.

♥ Creaming the butter and sugar is an important first step in many cake recipes – use softened butter and beat until it turns a creamy colour and the sugar has dissolved.



EQUIPMENT

SAUCEPANS A heavy-based saucepan will help prevent candies from sticking and burning. The saucepan used should be large. One that will hold four times the volume of the candy mixture is ideal. Copper, stainless steel and aluminium saucepans are all good, but enamel will not stand up to the high temperatures needed in candy making.

WOODEN SPOONS Long handled wooden spoons are best for candy-making as the wood does not conduct heat and the long handle will help prevent you being splattered.

SPATULAS These should also be long handled. They are useful for scraping down the sides of the pan and cleaning out bowls.

PALETTE KNIFE Can come in handy if it has a flexible steel blade for lifting and shaping sweets.

TINS A square 17.5cm or 20cm tin with straight sides is used for many of the recipes. A lamington tin (28cm x 18cm) is also very handy.

MARBLE SLAB Very useful, though not essential. Marble absorbs heat quickly and evenly but not so quickly as to affect crystallisation adversely. Many sweets need to be poured onto a cold surface for shaping and marble is ideal for this. Or you can use a baking sheet.

BRUSHES Useful for brushing down sugar crystals which develop on the sides of the saucepan when sugar is being dissolved. Dip the brush first in warm water.

WOODEN BOARD Handy for chopping nuts and dried fruits.

FOOD PROCESSOR Very handy for pulping and processing both raw and cooked foods; also for slicing and grating.

CANDY THERMOMETER For successful candies and sweets, this is essential.

You can purchase one that clips onto the side of the pan or one that can sit on the bottom of the pan. Make sure you can read it clearly. Thermometers must never be plunged straight into the boiling syrup. When you start to dissolve the sugar, put the thermometer in another saucepan of water and bring it to the boil – it should register 100°C (212°F), which is a good test of its accuracy. If the thermometer reads above or below 100°C, take this difference into account when measuring the temperature of the sugar syrups. Once the sugar is dissolved and the syrup brought to the boil, insert the thermometer and watch the temperature carefully as it rises. It will rise very quickly during the last few minutes of cooking, so be alert.

It's a good idea to have one large heavy-based saucepan and a candy thermometer for making these sweet treats. You won't need to buy any other special equipment.

BOWL OF COLD WATER

To plunge a saucepan full of hot toffee or candy into to stop further cooking. Use a steel bowl and put in several cubes of ice.

ALSO USEFUL

Paper patty cases

Available in different colours, patterns and sizes.

Paddlepop and cookie

sticks From kitchenware shops.

Dipping forks Useful for dipping centres into chocolate or toffee.

Wire racks Handy for cooling.

Scissors

Oiled scissors are useful for cutting toffees.



INGREDIENTS

SUGARS Ordinary white sugar, caster, brown and raw sugar are used in these recipes.

BUTTER Unsalted butter is recommended in candy- and cake-making. It's best not to substitute margarine.

GLUCOSE This is a thick clear syrup made from wheat starch to help prevent crystallisation in confectionery. Made in Australia, it can be purchased in liquid or powdered form from supermarkets and healthfood shops.

CORN SYRUP A runny, sweet syrup made from corn (maize) starch, available light or dark. Made in the USA.

COPHA A solid fat derived from solidified coconut oil. You can use

Here are some of the essentials you're likely to need. As with the equipment, you'll already have most of them in your kitchen pantry and should only need to purchase a few.

vegetable shortening (such as Crisco) or butter or solidified coconut fat, available in Asian food stores.

CREAM OF TARTAR This also helps to prevent crystallisation, but should be added after sugar has dissolved as it can inhibit the sugar melting. Lemon juice and vinegar can be used as a substitute: Use 1 tablespoon lemon juice or vinegar for 1 teaspoon cream of tartar.

MILK Evaporated and condensed milk are often used in candy and sweet recipes and are worth keeping in your pantry. They are not interchangeable, so make sure you use the one specified.

FOOD COLOURING Kitchenware shops stock a wider variety of colours of edible food colouring than supermarkets, and many also stock edible fruit gels. Add a few drops at a time.

OTHER INGREDIENTS Nuts (*almonds, macadamias, walnuts, pistachios, pecans, pine nuts*); seeds (*sesame, sunflower*); dried fruits (*sultanas, raisins, apricots*); glacé fruits (*cherries, apricots, ginger*); flavouring

extracts (*vanilla, peppermint oil, almond essence*); couverture chocolate; milk; eggs; liqueurs; coconut; citrus juices; and cream cheese.

DECORATIONS 100s and 1000s, cocoa, chocolate sprinkles, coconut, silver balls (*cachous*), angelica, glacé cherries, crystallised flowers and petals, grated chocolate, chopped nuts.



I well remember the first time my daughter made coconut ice for me for Mother's Day. She had invited a friend over to help and they kept giggling and shooing me out of the kitchen with their pink stained fingers.

Like most mums, I have a bit of a sweet tooth; and like most kids, she knew the way to my heart. Coconut ice is one of the easiest confections to make and a good one to teach young children.

Every mother appreciates being pampered on Mother's Day and there is nothing nicer than treating her to something lovingly homemade – especially if it is presented in a pretty box and tied with a bow.

Mother's Day



Soft, snowy white, homemade marshmallows are a real treat.

If you prefer coloured ones, add a few drops of food colouring to the mixture.

The kids can help with tossing them in the coconut or icing sugar.

Marshmallows

4 tablespoons gelatine

1 cup cold water

4 cups sugar

2 cups boiling water

2 teaspoons vanilla

2 teaspoons lemon juice

Icing sugar/cornflour or toasted shredded coconut for coating

♥ Sprinkle gelatine over cold water, making sure all the gelatine becomes wet.

♥ Put the sugar and boiling water into a large heavy saucepan and stir over moderate heat until sugar is dissolved. Add the gelatine mixture and boil for 20 minutes, uncovered. Remove from the heat and cool to lukewarm.

♥ Pour the mixture into the bowl of a large electric mixer, add the vanilla and lemon juice and beat rapidly until thick and white – this will take about 20 minutes. It's a good idea to cover your mixer with a wet tea-towel when doing this so that the mixture doesn't splatter all over the benchtop.

♥ Pour into 2 x 20cm square tins or 2 lamington tins lined with baking paper. Refrigerate until set.

♥ Cut into squares with a wet knife, then toss each piece in a mixture of ½ icing sugar/½ cornflour or toasted coconut.

Variation For a truly luscious gift, add

¼ cup finely chopped glace ginger,

½ cup diced dried apricots and

½ cup chopped toasted macadamias

(or blanched almonds) to the marshmallow mixture after beating

for 15 minutes. Beat for 5 minutes more before pouring into trays.

Makes 30-40 pieces

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To toast coconut, spread it out over a baking sheet and toast in a moderate oven (180°C) for 8-10 minutes or until lightly golden. Check two or three times to make sure it isn't browning too quickly and stir with a wooden spoon.



Get the kids to help make these. They might need a helping hand with separating the egg whites – and with the piping.
When making meringues, it's a good idea to open a new bag of sugar to ensure there's no extra moisture in it.

Meringues

4 egg whites

Pinch salt

¼ teaspoon cream of tartar

1½ cups caster sugar

½ teaspoon vanilla essence

- ♥ Preheat oven to 120°C (110°C if using fan-forced).
- ♥ Line a baking tray with baking paper.
- ♥ Beat the egg whites and salt on low speed of electric mixer until they are frothy. Add cream of tartar.
- ♥ Gradually add the caster sugar a tablespoon at a time, beating between each addition until the mixture is glossy before adding the next tablespoon. Continue until mixture is very stiff. Add the vanilla essence or other flavouring – eg, coffee, hazelnut and so on.
- ♥ Place spoonfuls (or use a piping bag with size 11 tip, or shape between two spoons) onto trays lined with baking paper.
- ♥ Bake for one hour. Ease meringues with a spatula and leave in the oven another 30 minutes or until dry. Store in an airtight container in a cool dry place.





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For a richer cake, pour a little warm brandy or dark rum over the cake when it comes out of the oven. Use a skewer to make a few holes between the nuts, so it will seep through easily.

Rich luscious fruit cakes have a connection with Mother's Day dating back to 16th-century England when child apprentices would be given the day off to visit their mothers. They would take gifts of fruit cake decorated with wildflowers gathered on their way. This boiled fruit cake is easy to make, requiring just one saucepan. The addition of crushed pineapple helps to keep it moist. It's an easy one for older kids to make.

Boiled Pineapple Fruit Cake

500g mixed dried fruit (sultanas, raisins, mixed peel, halved glace cherries and chopped glace ginger)

1 cup brown sugar

150g butter

1¼ cups crushed pineapple

2 x 60g eggs

1 cup plain flour

1¼ cups self-raising flour

1 teaspoon mixed spice

1 teaspoon cinnamon

¼ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

Whole pecans

- ♥ Preheat oven to moderate (180°C/160°C fan-forced). Line the base and sides of an 18cm round or square cake tin.
- ♥ Place the fruit, sugar, butter and pineapple (including the juice) in a medium-large saucepan and bring to the boil. Simmer gently for five minutes.
- ♥ Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly. In a small bowl, lightly beat the eggs and stir through the cooled fruit mixture.
- ♥ Sift together the flours, spices and bicarbonate of soda and fold them through the fruit mixture.
- ♥ Spoon the cake into the prepared tin. Smooth top and stud with whole pecans in decorative pattern.
- ♥ Bake in preheated oven for 1½ - 1¾ hours or until cooked – test by inserting a skewer, which should come out dry. Cover cake with aluminium foil halfway through cooking to prevent pecans becoming too dark.



Candied citrus peel, whether it's orange, lemon, grapefruit or lime, is delicious added to cakes, biscuits and puddings. It's also good to use as decoration. The homemade variety is full of flavour and makes a lovely gift for mum. A number of steps are involved, so make sure to allow plenty of time.

Candied Citrus Peel

Peel of 6 oranges, lemons, grapefruits or limes

4 cups sugar

2 cups water

Caster sugar

- ♥ Wash and dry the fruit thoroughly. When peeling, include the white pith which clings to the outer skin as it turns translucent in the syrup.
- ♥ Boil the peel in plenty of water in a saucepan until tender.
- ♥ Drain and boil again in fresh water for 20 minutes.
- ♥ In another saucepan, bring the sugar and water to the boil, stirring to make sure the sugar is dissolved. Put in the peel and boil until syrup has almost disappeared, stirring to prevent burning (it's a good idea to use a simmer pad).
- ♥ Remove peel from saucepan and spread on trays lined with baking paper. Leave to dry – outside in the sun is best, or in a cool oven (about 53°C) – for 30-45 minutes. Be careful not to over-dry.
- ♥ Roll peel in caster sugar when dry and store in airtight jars.
- ♥ Use slivers of candied peel to decorate cakes.

Young children love dipping the strawberries into the melted chocolate (under adult supervision).

Chocolate Dipped Strawberries

330g dark, milk or white chocolate, broken into pieces

2-3 punnets fat plump strawberries

♥ Place the chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pan of simmering water. Now line a baking tray with non-stick baking paper. Hold the strawberries by their green leafy tops and dip each one into the chocolate until it comes halfway up the strawberry. Place carefully on the baking tray. When you have dipped all the strawberries, place the tray in the refrigerator until they have set, about 1 hour.



A bunch of grapes, frosted with caster sugar, makes a lovely simple gift.

Frosted Fruits

♥ Choose a perfect bunch of either green or black grapes. Whisk an egg white with a pinch of salt until just foamy (be careful not to whisk to soft peak stage). Dip the grapes into the egg white, then sprinkle with sugar. Leave to dry on a tray lined with baking paper, then place in tissue paper in a box.



Ask the kids to help you prepare the fruit. Older ones can help watch the jam and pour it into jars. The rising perfume of apricots from the cooking jam will fill any cook with joy.

Apricot Jam

1kg apricots

750g white sugar

Apricot kernels

- ♥ Wash the apricots and cut into halves. Remove the stones and cut again into quarters. Crack open some of the kernels and reserve them (but not if they are bitter).
- ♥ Put the apricots into a medium-sized bowl and mix with half the sugar. Cover well.
- ♥ The following day, drain the juices into a large pan. Warm the remaining half of the sugar in the oven, then add to the juices.
- ♥ Bring to a boil, making sure all the sugar is dissolved. Add the fruit and simmer gently for about 30 minutes, until the apricots are soft and translucent. Stir occasionally with a wooden spoon.
- ♥ Test for setting by putting a little on a cold saucer. Split reserved apricot kernels in half and add a couple to each jar. Let cool, then pour into sterile jars.

Makes 1 litre

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For a more full-bodied flavour,
add 40-60ml brandy when the jam
has reached setting point and
simmer for another
5 minutes.

This pretty confection is an old favourite and an easy one for young kids to make.

Coconut Ice

400g tin condensed milk

340g icing (confectioner's) sugar, sifted

340g desiccated coconut

A few drops red food colouring

- ♥ Line a 20cm square tin with baking paper.
- ♥ Pour the condensed milk into a mixing bowl and add the icing sugar. Beat well to combine. Add the desiccated coconut – it will be quite firm, but persevere.
- ♥ Spoon half the mixture into the tin and spread out evenly using a spoon (it helps if you dip the spoon in warm water).
- ♥ Add a few drops of red food colouring to the remaining mixture and mix well – you will need to use your hands for this step. Dip them in warm water beforehand and knead well until an even pink colour. Spread the pink mixture over the white layer and smooth with a spoon.
- ♥ Place in the fridge for 4-5 hours or overnight, covered with plastic wrap. Cut into cubes when set.
- ♥ Store in an airtight jar. Keeps for up to a month.



**What Dad doesn't enjoy something sweet?
Especially if it's made for him by
one of his children.**

**Fathers love to be spoilt. On Father's Day,
treat him to a jar of Cumquat Marmalade to
spread on his breakfast toast, some delectable
Chocolate Orange Fudge – or give him a
Blind Date (but don't tell Mum)!**

**If you're feeling wicked, make him the Bon
Vivant Cake – it will be a gift he never forgets.**

Father's Day



A Conversion Table for Metric to Imperial is on page 91

This delectable fudge is just the thing to give Dad on Father's Day. It's also easy to make.

Chocolate Orange Fudge

2 cups sugar

½ cup milk

125g dark chocolate, broken into small pieces

125g butter

Grated zest and juice of 1 orange

- ♥ Line the base and sides of a 17.5cm x 20cm square tin with baking paper.
- ♥ Put all the ingredients into a large, heavy-based saucepan and stir over low heat until the sugar has dissolved. Brush down any crystals on the side of the pan with a brush dipped in warm water.
- ♥ Insert a candy thermometer and bring the mixture to the boil. Boil over moderate heat until it reaches the soft ball stage (112-116°C). Stir occasionally to prevent sticking.
- ♥ Remove from the heat and let cool five minutes, then beat rapidly until it becomes thick and creamy.
- ♥ Spoon mixture into the prepared tin. As it sets, cut into squares.
- ♥ The fudge squares can be wrapped individually or packaged between sheets of greaseproof paper in a box. Best stored in the refrigerator.



**Cumquat marmalade is absolutely delicious.
Dad will love it on his toast for breakfast.**

Cumquat Marmalade

Freshly picked cumquats

Water to cover

Sugar

♥ Wash the cumquats and cut them into halves. Remove the seeds and put into a cup covered with water.

♥ Put halved cumquats into a preserving pan and just cover with water. Put on a lid and let them sit overnight. Next day, measure the cumquat/water mixture and put into a preserving pan.

♥ For every 250ml, allow 185g sugar. Strain the seeds through a muslin cloth, tie up the seeds in the muslin and put into the pan with the cumquats and water. Bring to a boil on the top of the stove, turn down heat and simmer for 30 minutes.

♥ While the cumquats simmer, heat the sugar in a large tray in a moderate (180°C) oven. Pour the sugar into the pan and stir well with a wooden spoon. Bring back to boiling point. Simmer, uncovered, 30-40 minutes, until the jam reaches setting point.

♥ Turn off the heat, remove muslin bag and ladle into warm, sterile jars. Cover with a tight lid.

BUSY BEE SAYS



You can also use cumquat marmalade as a glaze (with brown sugar and five-spice powder) for the Christmas ham, or stirred into the juices of a roast loin of pork with a little stock, reduced and served as a sauce.





**This is an easy one for kids to help make –
and Dad will be thankful because they're full of healthy goodness.**

Apricot Balls

200g dried apricots

2 tablespoons sugar

Water, to cover

90g softened cream cheese

Finely grated zest of 1 orange

2-3 teaspoons orange juice

½ cup desiccated coconut

Toasted coconut, for rolling

♥ In a medium saucepan, cook the apricots with the sugar and water, simmering gently over moderate heat, for 30 minutes. Drain and allow to cool.

♥ Tip the apricots into the food processor, add the cream cheese, orange zest, juice and coconut and process until smooth.

♥ Place mixture in fridge and let it set for about 30 minutes. Remove and shape into balls about the size of a walnut, then roll in the toasted coconut. These are pretty placed in small patty cases or in a Chinese bamboo steamer.

Makes 15 x 25g balls

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*If you would like a more orange
flavour, cook the apricots in orange
juice instead of water.*



**These delicious candy snaps make great little snacks.
Get the kids to help toast the seeds and tip them into the toffee –
and to snap it into pieces when cold.**

Sesame Snaps

1 cup sesame seeds

1 cup white sugar

- ♥ Toast the sesame seeds in a medium hot non-stick frying pan, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Remove and cool.
- ♥ Lightly oil a baking tray. Place sugar in a frying pan and cook over low-moderate heat until it begins to turn golden, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon. Pick the pan up and swirl it around then return to the heat – continue doing this until the sugar turns into liquid gold.
- ♥ Add the toasted sesame seeds and stir until they are covered in the toffee. Remove pan from heat and pour immediately onto the baking tray – spread the mixture out to 5mm thickness.
- ♥ When cold, snap it into pieces.

These are very easy to assemble. Children from the age of about 4 will be able to help put them together. Use the oily peanuts, not the dry-roasted ones. Dad will be pleasantly surprised by the unusual combination of sweet and salt.



Blind Dates

Dried dates

Salted oily peanuts

Caster sugar

- ♥ Remove the stones from the dates and fill each pocket with 2-3 peanuts.
- ♥ Roll the dates in the sugar. Pack in layers between tissue or greaseproof paper in small boxes or tins.
- ♥ A good-quality crunchy peanut butter can be substituted for the peanuts.

Rum Balls

250g dark chocolate, broken into pieces

30g unsalted butter

1/3 cup cream

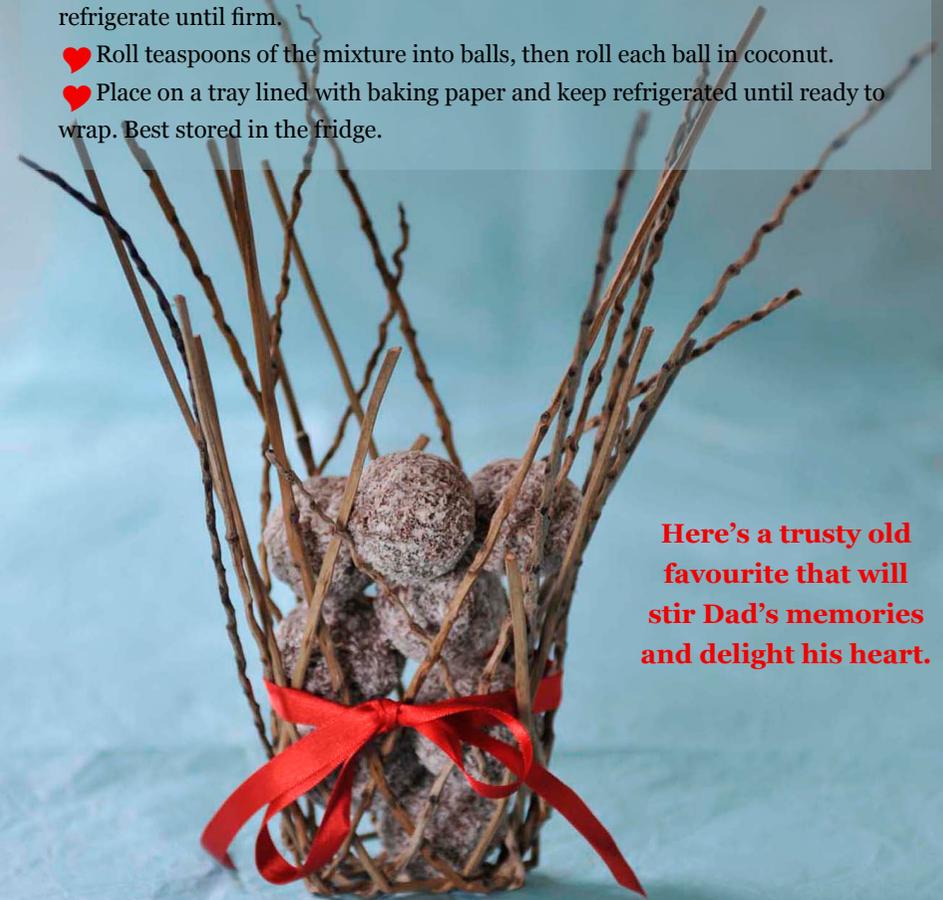
1-2 tablespoons dark rum

1 1/2 cups chocolate cake (or chocolate mud cake) crumbs

1/2 cup blanched almonds, toasted and chopped

Desiccated coconut

- ♥ Place the chocolate, butter and cream in a heatproof bowl over a pan of boiling water and stir until smooth.
- ♥ Remove pan from heat, stir in the rum, cake crumbs and nuts. Cover and refrigerate until firm.
- ♥ Roll teaspoons of the mixture into balls, then roll each ball in coconut.
- ♥ Place on a tray lined with baking paper and keep refrigerated until ready to wrap. Best stored in the fridge.



Here's a trusty old favourite that will stir Dad's memories and delight his heart.

Could any Dad resist a luscious chocolate cake? This one is made in two parts: hazelnut chocolate meringue on the bottom, creamy chocolate mousse on the top. Older kids can make the base quite easily, but you will need to supervise the making of the mousse.

Bon Vivant Cake

Chocolate Hazelnut Base

4 egg whites, at room temperature

Pinch of cream of tartar

100g caster sugar

150g ground hazelnuts

2 tablespoons dark cocoa powder, sifted

Chocolate Mousse

250g dark chocolate (70% cocoa), broken into pieces

4 egg yolks, at room temperature

60g caster sugar

300ml thickened cream (cream thickened with gelatine)

♥ Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan-forced).

♥ Line base and sides of a 23cm springform pan (or 3 x 12cm tins) with baking paper.

♥ In a large dry bowl, whisk the egg whites with the cream of tartar until stiff, then gradually whisk in the sugar, a tablespoon at a time.

♥ Using a large perforated spoon, stir through the ground hazelnuts and sifted cocoa powder. Spoon into the prepared tin or tins and smooth the top. Bake for 15 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the middle comes out clean. Remove from oven and set aside until cold.

For the mousse Melt the chocolate pieces in a heatproof bowl over gently simmering water. Remove and allow to cool a little.

♥ In a mixing bowl, beat the egg yolks with the sugar until pale and thick. Heat 60ml of the cream to boiling point then beat it into the egg yolks, whisking continuously. Fold in the melted chocolate and leave to cool for about 10 minutes.

♥ Whisk remaining cream until peaks form. Fold cream through the chocolate mixture. Spoon mousse mixture over the top of the hazelnut meringue. Smooth the top, cover with foil or plastic wrap and refrigerate for several hours or overnight.

♥ Remove springform pan and paper. Dust top with cocoa. Wrap in cellophane and tie with a bow (a circular cake board at the base will help to keep it stable).



I remember how my children's eyes would light up when they were given a lolly bag after a birthday party. When I hold "Mini Chef" cooking parties, sometimes I send the kids home with a lollipop or cake pop wrapped in cellophane and tied with a bow; other times I make a batch of cupcakes or candied popcorn balls for them to take home.

Birthday Parties



This simple basic mixture is very versatile because it can be used to make cupcakes, patty cakes or a slab cake.

Easy Peasy Butter Cake

22cm round cake tin

125g very soft butter

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar

2 eggs, at room temperature

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup self raising flour, sifted

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk

Pinch salt

1 teaspoon vanilla essence

Chocolate Frosting

60g softened unsalted butter

185g softened cream cheese

1 teaspoon vanilla

Approx. 250g sifted icing sugar

1-2 tablespoons cocoa

♥ Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan-forced).

♥ Grease and line a 22cm cake tin. (I used a silicon mould with a 'happy birthday' imprint to make the one pictured here.)

♥ Put all the ingredients into a mixing bowl and, using electric beaters, beat on high speed for three minutes.

♥ Spoon mixture into tin and bake 40-45 minutes or until risen and a light golden colour. Remove from oven and set aside to cool. Leave in tin for 10 minutes before turning out.

♥ Spread with chocolate frosting and sprinkle with hundreds and thousands.

For the frosting In a mixing bowl, beat the butter and cream cheese together until well combined. Add the vanilla. Sift in the icing sugar and cocoa – use enough to achieve the consistency you like.

Serves 12





These cupcakes are so named because they're served on the red carpet to the stars, and also because of their texture and moistness.

Red Velvet Cupcakes

1½ cups caster sugar

1½ cups vegetable oil

2 free range eggs, at room temperature

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 teaspoon cochineal (red food colouring)

2½ cups plain flour

3 tablespoons cocoa

1 teaspoon salt

¾ teaspoon baking powder

1 cup buttermilk

2 teaspoons white vinegar

¾ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

Frosting

60g softened butter

185g softened cream cheese

1-2 teaspoons vanilla essence

1½ cups (250g) sifted icing sugar

- ♥ Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan-forced).
- ♥ Line 2 x 12-hole muffin tins with paper cases.
- ♥ Beat together the sugar and oil on high speed until combined. Add eggs one at a time. Add vanilla and food colouring.
- ♥ Scrape down sides of mixing bowl with a spatula when necessary.
- ♥ In a separate bowl, sift the flour, cocoa, salt and baking powder. Add this to sugar mixture in three batches, alternating with the buttermilk. Beat well after each addition.
- ♥ In a small bowl, stir together the vinegar and bicarbonate of soda until it foams. Add to the sugar and flour mixture and beat well to combine.
- ♥ Spoon the batter into prepared muffin cups, filling each three-quarters full. Bake for 20 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean.
- ♥ Meanwhile, make the frosting by beating the butter and cream cheese together until well combined. Add vanilla essence. Mix in the icing sugar — use enough to achieve the consistency you like. Spread cupcakes with frosting when they are done.

Makes 1½ cups

**These are very sweet and very wicked,
and make lovely birthday gifts.**

White Chocolate and Macadamia Blondies

300g white chocolate, broken into squares

75g unsalted butter, chopped

3 free range or organic eggs, at room temperature

90g caster sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest

2/3 cup plain flour

2/3 cup self-raising flour

75g toasted macadamias, roughly chopped

75g white chocolate chips

Icing sugar, to dust

♥ Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan-forced). Line the base and sides of a 20cm x 30cm slab tin with baking paper.

♥ Place the chocolate squares and butter in a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water – don't let bowl touch the water. Stir with a wooden spoon to combine well. Remove from heat when melted and set aside to cool.

♥ In a mixing bowl, whisk the eggs with the caster sugar, vanilla extract and orange zest until light and fluffy. Stir in the cooled melted chocolate mixture, then fold in the sifted flours. Stir through the chopped nuts and white chocolate chips.

♥ Spoon mixture into the prepared pan, spreading out evenly with a spatula. Bake for 20-25 minutes until top has a firm crust. Leave to cool in the pan, dust with icing sugar, then cut into squares.

Makes 24





Kids love these cute little ‘cakes’ on a stick. Make sure you have a Styrofoam block to stick them into so that they sit up and the air can circulate around them while they set.

Cake Pops

250g shortbread or sweet plain biscuits

2 tablespoons caster sugar

1 teaspoon cinnamon

125g cream cheese

1-2 tablespoons freshly squeezed orange juice

200g dark or milk chocolate, broken into pieces

Chocolate sprinkles, cachous, 100s & 1000s

10-12 lollipop or cookie sticks

♥ Place the biscuits, sugar and cinnamon in the food processor and process until the biscuits have turned into medium-fine crumbs. Add the cream cheese and 1 tablespoon of the orange juice. Process until mixture forms a ball around the blades – you might need to add another tablespoon of orange juice to it.

♥ Remove mixture from the processor bowl and roll into balls about the size of a walnut. Place the balls on a tray lined with baking paper and refrigerate until firm – it will be quicker if you place them in the freezer.

♥ Kids can complete these up to this stage. An adult will need to help with the next.

♥ Place the chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pan of steaming water. Stir until smooth and melted.

♥ You will need to work quickly now and do these one at a time. Insert the tips of the lollipop sticks into the chocolate (this ensures that the stick and cake ball is secure enough to start dipping).

♥ Dip the balls one at a time into the chocolate and then decorate. Enclose each one in a cellophane bag and tie with a ribbon or colourful elastic band.

Makes 10-12

Kids love hearing the corn go ‘pop’ – if you have a glass lid, they can also watch it popping. An adult will need to supervise the making of the caramel but get the kids to roll them into balls, once cool enough to handle.

Candied Popcorn Balls

5 tablespoons vegetable oil

½ cup popping corn

Caramel

2 cups brown sugar

½ cup glucose

½ cup water

1 teaspoon white vinegar

¼ teaspoon salt

60g softened butter

8-10 lollipop or cookie sticks

♥ Cover the bottom of a large frying pan (with lid) or 2-litre saucepan with the oil. Heat slowly – you will know when it’s ready when you drop in a couple of the grains. If they spin slowly, the oil is hot enough.

♥ Add the popping corn to the hot oil, cover with a lid. Shake the pan regularly until popping stops.

♥ Remove from the heat and pour into a large bowl to cool.

To make the caramel Place the sugar, glucose, water, vinegar and salt in a medium-large saucepan. Stir well until sugar has dissolved. Bring to the boil and boil until it reaches soft ball stage (112-116°C).

♥ Reduce heat to low and stir in the butter until melted and well combined. Leave to cool slightly.

♥ Pour the syrup over the popcorn and keep stirring until all the popcorn is well coated. Leave to cool slightly.

♥ Butter your hands (with softened butter, or use vegetable oil) and shape into balls. Insert a lollipop stick into the middle of each ball, pressing the corn in firmly around the stick.

Makes 8-10





**Pop these in the lolly bags at the next birthday party.
Get the kids to help you insert the stick and wrap and tie them
once they have set.**

Lollipops

Vegetable oil

250g white sugar

120ml water

2 teaspoons liquid glucose

Pink food colouring

Lollipop or cake pop sticks

- ♥ Lightly brush a marble slab or large tin with vegetable oil.
- ♥ Place the sugar, water and glucose (or corn syrup) into a medium saucepan. Stir until sugar dissolves. Bring to the boil and boil to 147-148°C. Add a few drops of the food colouring and boil to 149°C.
- ♥ Remove the pan immediately from the heat. Using a dessertspoon (or teaspoon for smaller lollipops), pour out 3-4 small pools of the syrup, inserting a lollipop stick into each one before it hardens – you will need to work quickly as the syrup sets very fast.
- ♥ Continue until all the syrup is finished. Make sure the sticks are firmly secured by spooning a few drops of syrup over the embedded end of each stick. Leave them to cool and set hard.
- ♥ Using a metal spatula, carefully loosen the lollipops from the oiled surface. Wrap each one in a rectangle of cellophane and tie with a bow.

**BUSY
BEE SAYS**



*You can make these in different
colours – blue, green, yellow
or orange – with different food
colourings.*

Many of us enjoy exchanging gifts with our families and friends at Christmas. It can be a less expensive time if you make your own edible gifts. Many of the gifts here can be made 2–3 weeks before Christmas and stored in airtight jars or tins, or frozen. Wrap them in the colours of Christmas: gold, silver, red and green. Tie them with a ribbon and insert a piece of holly. Make sure to involve the children – you’ll be surprised by the things they can do and create. Just watch their eyes sparkle!

Christmas



This is an easy one for kids of all ages to make as long as you supervise the melting of the chocolate.

White Christmas

200g white chocolate, broken into pieces

50g Copha

100g mini marshmallows

50g toasted desiccated coconut

200g Turkish delight, coarsely chopped

1 cup rice bubbles

150g toasted macadamias or almonds, chopped

♥ Place the white chocolate and Copha in a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Stir until melted. Remove from heat.

♥ Stir through remaining ingredients. Spoon the mixture into mini muffin tins or into a small cake tin (12cm-15cm) lined with non-stick baking paper. Refrigerate until firm. Decorate with cachous.



BUSY BEE SAYS

You can also make Christmas trees with this mixture. Spoon it into conical moulds lined with non-stick baking paper. Refrigerate until set.

Remove from moulds, take off the baking paper and decorate.





The kids can help make the dough, but you will need to help them with rolling out and stamping shapes.

Christmas Angels and Stars

250g softened butter *1 teaspoon vanilla*
150g caster sugar *375g plain flour*
1 egg *Pinch salt*

♥ Cream together the butter and sugar. Beat in the egg and vanilla. Sift the flour and salt and add gradually to the butter mixture. Wrap in plastic wrap or greaseproof paper and chill for 2-3 hours in the fridge.

♥ Preheat oven to moderate (180°C/160°C fan-forced). Grease two biscuits trays or line with baking paper.

♥ Remove from fridge. It will feel brittle. Soften it by kneading gently with floured hands. Flour it liberally then roll out onto a lightly floured surface and cut with angel- and star-shaped cutters. (Or roll the softened dough out between two sheets of baking paper, then cut.) Use a stainless steel spatula to transfer the shapes to the tray.

♥ Bake for 12-15 minutes or until lightly coloured. Remove from oven. Cool biscuits on cake racks before dusting with icing sugar or decorating with white frosting and silver cachous and M&Ms.

♥ You can also make other shapes such as hearts with this pastry.

Makes about 40-50

Children love helping with the frosting and decorating.

White Frosting

500g icing sugar, sifted
2 egg whites
Juice of 1 lemon
1-2 drops glycerine (optional)

♥ Sift the icing sugar. Whisk egg whites until stiff and gradually add the sifted icing sugar, lemon juice and glycerine. Keep beating until thick. Cover tightly with plastic wrap until ready to use – or put into a plastic container with tight-fitting lid (the frosting dries out quickly when exposed to air).

♥ Attach a small fine nozzle to a piping bag and fill with the frosting. Decorate angels and stars with your own designs.

Let the children help to roll out the dough, stamp out the shapes and decorate gingerbread. Make whatever shape you like – men of all sizes, cockatoos, bells, stars or hearts.

Gingerbread Men

250g softened butter

185g brown sugar

2 organic, or free range eggs

300ml honey

Approx 750-800g plain flour

Pinch salt

3 teaspoons ground ginger

2 teaspoons cinnamon

½ teaspoon allspice

3 teaspoons bicarbonate of soda dissolved in ½ cup boiling water

♥ Cream together the butter and sugar until light. Beat in the eggs one at a time then add the honey.

♥ Sift together the dry ingredients and add to the creamed mixture alternately with dissolved bicarbonate soda. If the dough feels too soft, add a little more flour. Shape into a ball and wrap in greaseproof paper or plastic wrap. Refrigerate two hours or overnight.

♥ Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan-forced).

♥ Divide the gingerbread into four so you can work with one piece at a time, putting the remainder back (wrapped) into the refrigerator. Roll out onto a lightly floured board and stamp out shapes with a cutter. Lift carefully onto greased baking trays.

♥ Bake for about 15 minutes or until browned. Remove with a spatula to cool on a wire rack. Decorate with smarties and cachous.

♥ Or spoon White Frosting (recipe, page 31) into a piping bag with a small nozzle and pipe squiggles over the men or other shapes.

Makes about 20 men



Christmas Decorations

If you are using the gingerbread men or stars and angels for Christmas decorations and you intend to hang them from the tree, make a small hole near the edge so that a ribbon or string can be pushed through. To prevent the holes closing up, insert a short length of bamboo skewer into each one and leave there while baking. Remove skewers when biscuits are cool.

You can also make Christmas wreaths and canes with this biscuit dough. Divide dough in two, colour one half with a few drops of cochineal (red food colouring). Roll heaped teaspoons of dough into 15cm log shapes. Twist a piece of uncoloured dough together with a piece of the red dough and shape into wreaths or canes.



BUSY BEE SAYS

If you don't have time to make the White Frosting, you can use small tubes of writing icing, available in different colours from the supermarket. It sets dry quickly and the tubes are easy for children to hold.



Easy and delicious, this is a good one to make for edible Christmas gifts. Wrap the pieces in a cellophane bag and tie with a green, red or gold bow. Get the kids to help stir in the nuts and cranberries and to spread it out on the tray.

White Chocolate Bark

250g white chocolate, broken
125g toasted chopped walnuts
60g dried cranberries

- ♥ Line a baking sheet with baking paper.
- ♥ Melt chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pan of simmering water (don't let bowl touch water). Stir until smooth, then stir through most of the nuts and cranberries.
- ♥ Spread onto baking sheet. Sprinkle with remaining nuts and cranberries.
- ♥ Leave to set and break into pieces. Keeps for up to a week in an airtight container.

Serves 6-8



BUSY BEE SAYS

You can also use milk or dark chocolate to make the bark. Experiment with other nuts such as halved macadamias and almonds or pistachios, and fruits such as dried cherries and goji berries.



These are easy for older kids to make, though you will need to supervise toasting the coconut. The lemon myrtle (an Australian native herb) is optional but lends a fabulous flavour.

Lemon Myrtle Coconut Macarons

4 egg whites, at room temperature

1/8 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar

3/4 cup caster sugar

2 teaspoons ground lemon myrtle (optional)

3 cups toasted shredded coconut

♥ Preheat oven to 170°C.

♥ Whisk the egg whites, salt and cream of tartar together in a large, clean bowl until soft peaks form. Add the sugar a spoonful at a time, whisking well after each addition.

♥ Keep whisking for 2-3 minutes or until mixture is thick and glossy.

♥ Add the lemon myrtle and whisk to combine. Add the toasted coconut and use a large metal spoon to fold in until just combined.

♥ Spoon mixture onto lined trays, one heaped tablespoon at a time, leaving some room between each one to allow for spreading.

♥ Bake in preheated oven 15-20 minutes or until light golden and firm.

♥ Remove from oven, leave to cool on the trays for 10 minutes then transfer to a wire rack to cool.

♥ Store in an airtight container.

Makes about 20





This nougat-like cake, rich in nuts, candied peel and spices, is a Christmas specialty of Siena in Italy. Kids can help with the fruit and nut mixture but will need supervision with the honey/sugar mixture.

Ideally the tins should be lined with edible rice paper. If you can't find any, use non-stick baking paper or aluminium foil lightly brushed with vegetable oil.

Panforte

125g hazelnuts, toasted, skinned and roughly chopped

150g blanched almonds (or unsalted macadamias),
toasted and roughly chopped

150g mixed peel

60g plain flour sifted with 25g cocoa

3 teaspoons cinnamon

½ cup caster sugar

½ cup honey

♥ Preheat oven to 150°C. Line a 20cm flan ring (or 4 x 12.5cm flan rings) with rice paper and lightly oil the sides.

♥ In a mixing bowl, combine the nuts, peel, sifted flour, cocoa and cinnamon. Put the sugar and honey into a small saucepan and bring to simmering point. Leave to simmer for 2-3 minutes (watch it carefully) then pour over the fruit/nut mixture.

♥ Stir well with a wooden spoon to combine – it will be very sticky.

♥ Spoon into the prepared tin, pressing down firmly (as it is a very sticky mixture, it will help if you dip your hands in milk to do this). Put another layer of rice paper on top, if you're using it.

♥ Bake for 30-35 minutes. Allow to cool. Turn out and sprinkle with sifted icing sugar. Cut into wedges and wrap in foil or cellophane.



This is an easy one for kids to make on their own.

Shortbread

250g unsalted butter

1/3 cup icing sugar

1/3 cup cornflour

1/4 cup caster sugar

2 1/3 cups plain flour

1/2 teaspoon vanilla essence

- ♥ Preheat oven to 180°C. Line a 26-27cm fluted flan tin (with removable base) with non-stick baking paper. (It helps if you lightly spray or grease the tin first.)
- ♥ Melt butter over low heat. Allow to cool slightly.
- ♥ Sift the dry ingredients into a mixing bowl. Make a well in the centre. Pour in the melted butter and vanilla and mix well to combine. Press mixture into the tin and smooth the top with the palm of your hand. Mark into 12 wedges with a knife and prick all over with a fork dipped in flour. You can also use the fork to mark around the edges.
- ♥ Bake for 30 minutes or until a pale golden colour. Cut into wedges while still warm.



Here's an easy, yummy one for kids to make for an edible gift. If you use homemade shortbread, it will be even richer.

Hedgehog slice

360g dark chocolate, broken into pieces

60g unsalted butter, chopped

3 tablespoons golden syrup

250g sweet plain biscuits

¼ cup shredded coconut

¼ cup pistachio kernels

¼ cup sultanas or raisins

100g cranberries (or halved glace cherries)

♥ Line a standard loaf tin or 20cm square cake pan with baking paper, allowing a 2cm overhang on all sides (it helps if you lightly spray or grease the tin first).

♥ Melt chocolate, butter and golden syrup in a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Stirring occasionally, cook for 8-10 minutes until melted and smooth.

♥ Remove from heat. Break shortbread or biscuits into small chunks. Add biscuits, coconut, pistachios, sultanas (or raisins) and cranberries (or cherries) to the melted chocolate. Stir to combine.

♥ Spoon into prepared pan. Smooth surface. Cover. Refrigerate overnight or until firm.

♥ Remove from fridge and let stand for 20-30 minutes. Slice ready for packaging.

Makes 12-16 pieces



As a child, I loved to help stir the dried fruits and nuts into the cake batter. Children can help at all stages with making these all-time favourites.

Traditional Christmas Cakes

750g mixed dried fruit	Finely grated zest of 1 orange and 1 lemon
200g diced dried apricots	
185g macadamias, coarsely chopped	5 eggs
150g green & red glacé cherries, halved	250g plain flour
100g mixed peel	1 teaspoon baking powder
125ml brandy	2 teaspoons mixed spice
250g softened butter	125ml orange juice
250g brown sugar	

Decoration for top

Whole macadamias

Whole green and red glacé cherries

Apricot jam or marmalade

- ♥ Place mixed fruit, apricots, cherries and peel in a bowl. Pour over the brandy and leave to macerate for a few hours or overnight.
- ♥ Preheat oven to 150°C. Brush 4 x 13cm cake tins with melted butter and line with non-stick baking paper.
- ♥ Cream butter and sugar until light. Add orange and lemon zest. Add eggs, one at a time, creaming well after each addition. Sift together the flour, baking powder and mixed spice alternately with the orange juice, starting and ending with dry ingredients.
- ♥ Spoon batter onto fruit and nut mixture. Mix well to combine. Spoon into prepared tins, smoothing the top. Tap pans a couple of times to settle mixture. Bake for 1-1½ hours. Test with a skewer inserted into the middle of the cake. It should come out clean.
- ♥ Cool cakes in the pans and turn out when completely cold.
- ♥ Decorate tops with whole macadamias and red and green maraschino cherries.
- ♥ Glaze with apricot jam or marmalade: Warm ½ cup jam or marmalade in the microwave or in a saucepan. Remove pan from stove and pour jam through a sieve. Brush warm sieved jam over the nuts and cherries.

Makes 4 x 13cm cakes (approx 600g each)



When my children were little, they took great delight in searching for Easter eggs hidden in the garden. They also enjoyed helping to pour melted chocolate into Easter bunny and Easter egg moulds.

Although most people associate Easter with bunnies and eggs, there is no reason you can't give other types of gifts – especially if they are made from chocolate!

Chocolate Almond Rocher is an easy one for children to make, as is the Snaky Road. Grownups will love the Chilli Chocolate Truffles.

EASTER





Easter Bunnies

- ♥ To make these you will need to purchase special moulds. Roberts Confectionery (www.robertsconfectionery.com.au) is a good online store to order from. Their moulds are 100% Australian Made using high grade food-quality plastic.
- ♥ Before each use, polish the inside of each mould lightly with cotton wool or a paper towel dipped in a little flavourless vegetable oil. Don't place it in the dishwasher or microwave or wash it with detergent. Just rinse with warm water.
- ♥ Depending on how many you want to make, you will need 300-500g dark, milk or white chocolate. Break the chocolate up into squares and place in a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water.
- ♥ Spoon the melted chocolate into each of the separate containers, filling to the top. Tap the mould gently to release any air bubbles. Allow to set at room temperature. If you are in a hurry, you can use the fridge. The chocolate is set when it looks dull from underneath and has retracted away from the sides of the mould.
- ♥ Turn the mould over onto a flat surface and tap gently to remove pieces. If they don't release easily, let them set for a bit longer.

Easter Eggs

- ♥ Polish the inside of each mould as described above. This ensures a highly polished finish to the chocolate and also helps to release the set chocolate from the mould.
- ♥ Pour spoonfuls of the chocolate into each mould. Working quickly, swirl around until coated or use the back of a teaspoon to spread the chocolate evenly over the inside of both sides of the mould.
- ♥ Leave to set, flat side down on a tray covered with non-stick baking paper. Fill each mould in the same way. Repeat the process another two or three times to build up a good layer of chocolate in each mould.
- ♥ Wait for about 20 minutes for the chocolate to set in between layers. Draw the flat edge of a knife across the chocolate to ensure a clean edge every time you add another layer. This is important so that the two sides of the egg stick together evenly. Allow to set at room temperature or place in the fridge.
- ♥ Carefully un-mould the egg halves and place on a clean surface. Try not to handle the chocolate too much as it will start to melt from the heat of your hands. White cotton gloves are handy to use for this.
- ♥ To stick the two halves of an egg together, heat a baking tray then place the edges of two halves on it for a few seconds. Gently push the edges together.
- ♥ Wrap your eggs in cellophane and label them with gift tags or place them in a basket.

Young children love making these – and licking the spoon afterwards! You just need to supervise the melting of the copha.

Chocolate Crackles

4 cups rice bubbles
1 cup icing sugar, sifted
3 tablespoons cocoa
1 cup desiccated coconut
250g Copha

♥ Combine dry ingredients in a mixing bowl. Melt the Copha gently, taking care to just melt it. Don't let it get hot or you will cook the rice bubbles, which will make them soggy – they are meant to be crackly.

♥ Cool slightly. Pour into dry ingredients and mix well. Spoon into paper patty cases.

♥ Chill until set.

Makes about 12–24, depending on the size of your paper cases

BUSY BEE SAYS

Copha is a solid fat derived from solidified coconut oil. You can use vegetable shortening (such as Crisco) or butter or solidified coconut fat, available in Asian food stores.



**Quick and easy to make and also very delicious.
Kids will love helping make them as long as you
supervise the melting of the chocolate.**

Chocolate Almond Rocher

125g slivered or flaked almonds

150g good quality chocolate (dark, milk or white), broken into squares

♥ Spread the almonds out on a baking tray and toast in a moderate oven until just turning golden, about 10 minutes. Remove from oven.

♥ While almonds are in the oven, put the chocolate pieces into a stainless steel bowl.

♥ Place the bowl over a pan of simmering water – don't let the base touch the water.

♥ Stir occasionally until smooth and melted. Remove bowl from heat. Tip in the almonds and stir until well coated with the chocolate.

♥ Using a teaspoon, spoon mixture onto a tray lined with non-stick baking paper. Place in refrigerator until set.

Makes 12–15 irresistible morsels

One lovely way to package Easter gifts is in a basket filled with sprouted wheat. Wrap your sweets in cellophane and insert them in the wheat so they look like eggs in a nest.



Buy some wheat seeds from your local healthfood shop and soak them in water for a day or two until they begin to sprout. Line a pretty basket with thick plastic, scatter over a 2.5cm thickness of potting mixture. Lay in the wheat sprouts and sprinkle over a further 0.5cm of potting mix. Kids will love helping with this.

Put the basket in a warm sunny spot for a few days and watch the wheat grow. Water occasionally. When the wheat is about 7.5cm high, insert the 'eggs' (or candies). Wrap up the basket in clear cellophane and tie with a beautiful bow.



**These are very rich and have a slight chilli hit
at the back of the throat.**

**Once you've made and refrigerated the chocolate mixture,
the kids can help with rolling the balls.**

Chilli Chocolate Truffles

350g dark chocolate (70% cocoa), broken into squares

1 cup cream

15g softened unsalted butter

½ teaspoon ground hot chilli

Approx. 1 cup dark cocoa

♥ Place the chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of boiling water and stir until melted over medium heat. Warm the cream slightly in a small pan or in the microwave. Add cream to chocolate and stir well. Add the butter and stir until combined.

♥ Sprinkle the powdered chilli into the mixture, stir in using a whisk. Mix until smooth.

♥ Remove mixture from the heat. Pour into a flat baking pan. Cover and refrigerate at least four hours or overnight.

♥ To make the truffles, ensure your hands are as cold as possible (place palms on a cold surface or in freezer). Using a teaspoon, scoop some of the firm mixture and shape into a small ball in palms of your hands – this will be quite sticky and you might need to wash your hands occasionally. Rinse them with cold water.

♥ Sift cocoa into a bowl. Roll each truffle in the cocoa. Place finished truffles on a flat tray lined with greaseproof paper. Refrigerate until firm.

Makes 40 x 12g truffles. If you like, you can make larger balls, but they are very rich! They can be frozen for 2-3 weeks. Roll them in more cocoa if needed.





This yummy colourful version of Rocky Road is easy for kids to make as long as you supervise the melting of the chocolate. You can use jelly babies instead of snakes, if you prefer, and if you don't like nuts, use smarties or M&Ms.

Mix 'n match according to your taste, and have fun with it. Individual muffin-size ones make great edible gifts, wrapped in cellophane and tied with a bow.

Snaky Road

200g large pink & white marshmallows (or Turkish Delight), cut into halves

200g snakes, cut into 5cm pieces

½ cup shredded coconut

100g toasted macadamias, chopped (optional)

200g milk chocolate, broken into squares

200g dark chocolate, broken into squares

♥ Line a 20cm square tin with non-stick baking paper – or use 12 x ⅓-cup muffin tins lined with paper cups.

♥ In a medium mixing bowl, combine the marshmallows, snakes, coconut and nuts (if using), and toss until combined

♥ Place the chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Stir with a wooden spoon until melted and smooth. Remove from heat and pour the chocolate over marshmallow/snake mixture. Mix well to combine.

♥ Spoon into the lined cake tin or into 12 x ⅓ cup muffin tins and refrigerate until set.

All Wrapped Up

An array of **different sized and shaped boxes** can be purchased from specialty stationery or florist shops, but **making some yourself** is easy. Cut down children's shoe boxes and cover with pretty paper or fabric glued on with spray-on adhesive.

- **Biscuit boxes, chocolate boxes, old wooden boxes** can all be used. Raid your local markets and fetes! If they're unattractive, paint or cover them with something eye-catching, or make a collage out of photos, greeting cards, stickers or pressed flowers.

- **Clear plastic boxes** are attractive for displaying colourfully wrapped sweets. You can pick them up at florists and kitchen specialty shops.

- **Baskets** are wonderful for packing homemade gifts. Make sure they're not

too large and cushion the sweets or candies or cakes with napkins or tissue paper. Wrap them with cellophane and tie with a bow or ribbon.

- **Jars of all shapes and sizes** are ideal for storing most sweets and candies. You can buy new ones from the hardware store or kitchenware shops or recycle old jam jars, coffee jars, peanut butter jars and the like. These should be well washed out and labels removed in hot soapy water – stubborn labels can be removed with eucalyptus oil or nail polish remover. Check that the lids screw on tightly. Cover the tops with circles of brown paper or

The way your candies and cakes are presented will make your gift-giving all the sweeter. Here are some ideas that won't break the bank.

pretty patterned fabrics, then tie on with ribbon or string.

- **Terracotta flower pots** can be purchased from the local nursery and make unusual containers for sweets. Wash them out with soapy water and dry well. Cushion the insides with tissue paper, shredded cellophane or straw (as long as the sweets are pre-wrapped).

- Raid your local markets or haberdashery for **laces, ribbons** and odd **scraps of fabric**.

- Draw pretty designs on **tissue paper** or stitch together some **patchwork** to use for wrapping. **Children's paintings** are delightful for wrapping too, and children love to contribute.

Put them to work with colourful paints on some butcher's paper for the task.

- Purchase labels from your local newsagency or make your own tags and tie on to the gift.

HOW TO PACK

So your hard work isn't wasted, it's important to ensure your candies and sweets are packed carefully, not squashed together in boxes and left to melt or deteriorate.

Toffees and lollipops should be stored in airtight jars. Any humidity will make them weep. They can also be wrapped in foil or waxed paper or cellophane.

Truffles should be stored in boxes and kept in a refrigerator.

Put tissue paper or shredded cellophane in the bottom of boxes to help prevent the contents sliding around. Layers can be separated by sheets of greaseproof paper or tissue paper, and it is a good idea to insert a piece of stiff cardboard or aluminium foil between layers to prevent squashing.

Lay the sweets out attractively so they are eye-catching when the box is opened. Chocolates are best put into dark paper cases as their colours rubs off on paler ones.

Put tags or labels on your gifts with the name of the candy or sweet, the date it was made and instructions on how to store it.

Above all, use your imagination and make sure you involve the children – very often they will add that special extra touch.

Don't be afraid to do something a little off-beat, like making the wrapping part of the gift – a scarf or tea towel, for instance. Your friends will love it if you have put some thought into reflecting their personalities, colour preferences and tastes.

Happy wrapping!



Conversion Chart

OVEN TEMPERATURES

Celsius (electric)	Celsius (fan-forced)	Fahrenheit	Gas	
120°	100°	250°	1	very slow
150°	130°	300°	2	slow
160°	140°	325°	3	moderately slow
180°	160°	350°	4	moderate
190°	170°	375°	5	moderately hot
200°	180°	400°	6	hot
230°	210°	450°	7	very hot
250°	230°	500°	9	very hot

If using a fan-forced oven, your cooking time may be a little quicker, so start checking your food a little earlier.

METRIC CUP & SPOON SIZES

Cup	Metric	
¼ cup	60ml	
⅓ cup	80ml	
½ cup	125ml	
1 cup	250ml	

Spoon	Metric
¼ teaspoon	1.25ml
½ teaspoon	2.5ml
1 teaspoon	5ml
2 teaspoons	10ml
1 tablespoon = 4 teaspoons	20ml



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