

SWEET AND SPICY CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

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Your truffles will only taste as good as the chocolate you begin with, so make sure you use a good chocolate like Ghirardelli or Lindt.

Using a sharp knife, chop the chocolates as finely as possible to help melt the chocolate quickly and evenly. Place the chopped chocolate into a medium glass bowl. Glass retains heat, so the chocolate will stay melted longer.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound bittersweet chocolate
- 1/2 pound semisweet chocolate
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon Grand Marnier (*optional*)
- 1 tablespoon hot prepared coffee
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon Cayenne Pepper
- Unsweetened cocoa powder



Directions

To make the ganache, heat the cream in a small saucepan over medium heat until bubbles form around the edge. Pour the hot cream into the bowl with chocolate through a fine-meshed sieve to trap any skin that may have formed and let sit for 20- 30 seconds. With a wire whisk, slowly stir the cream and chocolates together until the chocolate is completely melted.

Whisk in the Grand Marnier, coffee, vanilla and 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper. Taste the mixture. I typically add a little more cayenne pepper. With other peppers, you immediately feel the heat on your tongue. With cayenne, you won't feel the heat until you swallow where it leaves warmth in the back of your throat. If you like, add another bit of cayenne until you get the heat you like. This mixture will not get spicier as it sits, so this is the perfect time to test for your desired heat.

Cover the ganache with plastic wrap making sure the plastic rests directly onto the surface of the ganache to prevent a skin for forming. Place the warm ganache into the refrigerator for 1-3 hours, until mixture is firm. I poured the warm ganache into a casserole dish to cool quicker.

With 2 teaspoons or a small ice cream scoop, drop small mounds of the ganache onto a baking sheet lined with a silpat or parchment paper. Place in the refrigerator for about 20 minutes until firm enough to roll into round balls.

Pour the cocoa powder onto a deep plate or shallow bowl. Drop the truffles onto the plate and roll between 2 forks to completely coat with cocoa powder. Then use the forks to carefully transfer them to a baking sheet lined with parchment or wax paper. Return to refrigerator until ready to eat. These truffles will keep in the refrigerator for two weeks and in the freezer for several months. When ready to serve, remove from the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes as truffles taste best when eaten at room temperature.

For Valentine's Day, I have decided to coat my truffles with chocolate. I'll be serving them to company and coated chocolates are a bit fancier.

Using a sharp knife, chop chocolate as finely as possible to help melt the chocolate quickly and evenly. Place the chocolate into a medium glass bowl. Melt in the microwave at 50 percent power until soft, about 1 minute. Remove from microwave and stir. If not completely melted, return to microwave for another 20 - 30 seconds being careful not to overheat the chocolate.

Dip each ball in the melted chocolate. Two forks make it easier to fish out the dipped chocolate balls. Place truffles on a wire rack over parchment lined tray to dry. I had some leftover chocolate which I drizzled over the truffles in the photo. Allow the truffles to set for at least 15 minutes.

These will keep refrigerated for two weeks and in the freezer for several months, but serve at room temperature. Enjoy!