

Chocolate Tempering

Have you ever wondered how you get that light snap of chocolate, well its all down to the tempering. You don't need any special equipment when doing this at home. All you need is a hotplate, a saucepan, decent plastic or glass bowl, a thermometer, a tray and some good quality couverture chocolate. I use Callebaut chocolate which I buy in 2.5 kilogram bags from the Chocolate Trading Company, however you can buy smaller quantities.

Why do we temper chocolate?

If chocolate is tempered correctly you get hardness for a perfect snap, it should have a gloss and be resistant to fat bloom. Chocolate should ideally be kept in a cool temperature, it can bloom if it's too warm and also if it's too cold, that's when the fat comes to the top. One mistake I have made in the past and that is putting the chocolate in the fridge to set which can cause it to bloom, this is when either the sugar or fat rises up to the top and then you get a dull grey look. There is nothing wrong with the chocolate it just doesn't look good, in fact it looks old. If this happens you can always use this chocolate in a desert or cake.

Tempering chocolate consists of heating the chocolate to a certain temperature, cooling it to a certain temperature, and then heating it again to a certain temperature.

You place your bowl over a pan of boiled water with two thirds of your chocolate in the bowl and stir slowly until its properly melted when the chocolate reaches 45C, don't let it get hotter than 60C. When the chocolate has reached 45C add a handful of the un-melted chocolate that you have put to one side, stirring slowly until it has melted, add another handful and stir again till all the chocolate has melted. Slowly add the rest of the un-melted chocolate. THIS IS CALLED SEEDING. When tempering white chocolate stir slowly until the chocolate has cooled down to 29C, for milk chocolate stir until to 30C and for dark chocolate stir until 31C. If it is still too warm add a bit more un-melted chocolate.

Now if your chocolate has already cooled down to the correct temperature and there are still lumps of un-melted chocolate you can just get hold of a hair dryer and use the warm air to melt the chocolate.

Once your chocolate is tempered you need to use it right away as it will crystallise within 5 – 10 minutes.

You can now use your tempered chocolate for making shards or filling moulds. If you are wanting to make shards, simply put some baking paper on a tray and pour the chocolate on that evenly then add whatever you like – nuts, dried fruit, sprinkles etc. Once set place in a bag, tie with a ribbon and there you have a lovely gift for someone or just eat it there and then!