

Satisfy your sweet tooth with our guide to cooking with chocolate

The ultimate guide to cooking with chocolate...

Whether it's dark and bitter or creamy and sweet, chocolate is a much-loved Australian dessert. We make cakes with it, drizzle it on everything we can and share it as a gift to celebrate life milestones. But cooking with this ingredient isn't as easy as it looks. So we've put together a guide with the best recipes and techniques to help you master cooking with chocolate.

Here's everything you need to know...

How is chocolate made?

Chocolate goes through a long journey before it hits the supermarket shelves. In fact, this ingredient begins its life as a seed on a cacao tree. Once these seeds are harvested, the cacao is fermented for 2-9 days and dried before being sent to a factory, where they're roasted to develop its unique flavour. The roasted beans are put under an extremely high amount of pressure to form cocoa powder which is then processed, tempered and moulded into a stable form with a shiny surface. Feeling hungry? Click here to see seven great places to buy chocolate in Australia.

What are the different types of chocolate?

The supermarket shelves are stocked with an endless amount of chocolate varieties, but when it comes to baking, there are three major types that you should be aware of. These include:

Dark chocolate

Dark chocolate is the healthiest form of chocolate, made by combining chocolate liquor with sugar. It has little or no added milk, with a minimum of 35% cocoa solids, retaining its strong, bittersweet flavour that is great for baking when other sweeteners are already in the mix.

Milk chocolate

Milk chocolate is the most consumed from of chocolate, world-wide. It is made with added milk and only 20-30% cocoa, so it's milder and sweeter than dark chocolate. While it's fantastic for eating on its own, milk chocolate is not as commonly used in the kitchen as many find its sweetness to be overpowering in some desserts.

White chocolate

Some purists say that white chocolate isn't chocolate at all because it does

not contain any cacao solids. But it does include cocoa butter mixed with sugar, milk and different flavourings, perfect for fruity desserts.

Click here to learn about more forms of chocolate (including pink chocolate).

What can I make with chocolate?

Around the world, chocolatiers, bakers, pastry connoisseurs and home-chefs use this highly versatile, delicious food in countless recipes and desserts, ranging from simple to elaborate. Here are some of our favourite recipes from around The NEFF Kitchen...

- Chocolate marble cheesecake with roasted cherries
- Chocolate mousse
- Chocolate cake
- Chocolate self-saucing pudding
- Chocolate crème brulee
- Chocolate peppermint tart
- White chocolate macadamia brownies
- Mango and white chocolate lamingtons
- Chocolate chip biscuits

Three ways to melt chocolate

Whether you're making chocolate mousse, a ganache filled cake or simply chocolate dipped strawberries, melting chocolate is a skill every home cook has to master. But did you know that there are multiple ways you can achieve smooth and creamy melted chocolate with different NEFF appliances? Here are three you can try today:

On your cooktop

Do you have a NEFF gas FlameSelect cooktop or NEFF induction cooktop? The great news is you can melt chocolate in a saucepan on level 1, no double boiling required! If you don't have a NEFF cooktop you can use the well known double boiler method. Simply bring some water to a boil (you only need your pan filled about an inch of the way) and reduce to a simmer. Pour half your chocolate into a heatproof bowl and place on top of the simmering water, stirring as the chocolate melts to remove any lumps. You can then add the rest of the chocolate into the melted mixture and stir until completely melted. Click here to view our range of gas and induction cooktops.

In your microwave

This is a quick and easy way to melt chocolate without using multiple pans. Simply place your chocolate in a bowl and heat in your microwave in 30 second bursts, stirring between to remove lumps and ensure your chocolate doesn't burn. If you start by melting half of your chocolate this way and slowly add the rest of your chocolate once the first batch is fully melted, you should be able to melt it faster and remove the chance of overheating your chocolate. Click here to view the NEFF microwave range.

Using your steam oven

Looking for a gentle and hands-free way to melt chocolate? Use your NEFF steam oven! Place the chocolate in a flat bowl and wrap completely in baking paper so that no water can drip in. Use the steam setting at 50°C and it should be melted after 15-20 minutes. Simply stir until smooth and leave to cool slightly. Click here to view the NEFF range of FullSteam and

VarioSteam ovens.

Cooking techniques

There are many different ways we use chocolate in our cooking. Two of the most common techniques include tempering chocolate and making chocolate ganache. Tempered chocolate is essential when making chocolate coated desserts, providing an attractive sheen that snaps perfectly. The process cycles between heating and cooling to create a mixture of melted chocolate that is smooth and glossy at room temperature. Click here to learn how to temper chocolate.

Chocolate ganache is a technique all bakers and dessert lovers should master. It is made using melted chocolate combined with cream, perfect for glazing or filling desserts to make them a delicious showstopper.

Tips for cooking with chocolate

- Finely chop chocolate for melting, and heat it slowly to ensure it doesn't burn or become lumpy.
- Don't buy choc-chips if you plan on melting them as they often contain stabilisers that help them hold their shape in bakes.
- Don't be afraid to use chocolate that looks like it's covered in white dust as it's probably just cocoa butter that has collected on the surface when the chocolate gets too warm.
- Pay attention to cacao percentages as they tell you how much of the chocolate is made from cocoa beans.

Want to learn more about cooking with chocolate? Attend one of NEFF's free product demonstration to learn about the benefits of cooking with our European engineered appliances while getting culinary tips from our experiences home economists.

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