

Chocolate—so decadent, so versatile. The capabilities of this medium are almost unlimited, however a few basics are necessary for successful chocolate work.

First of all, chocolate is available in several forms. Knowing which type of chocolate is needed and how to use it is a must.

PURE CHOCOLATE - Contains only cocoa solids and cocoa butter (chocolate liquor-non-alcoholic).

If used in molds, it must be tempered. Not all types of pure chocolate taste good to eat by themselves, as some brands are meant mostly to bake with.

Types - Baker's Chocolate

Uses - for baking cakes, cheese cakes, cookies, brownies, chocolate fillings, chocolate buttercreams, etc.

COUVERTURE-PURE CHOCOLATE (Best Quality) - Has the highest percentage of cocoa

butter. European couverture must have at least 33% cocoa butter and may be as high as 42%.

Tempering is required when used for dipping and molding.

Types - Tobler, Callebaut, Lindt

Uses - for truffles, fillings, dipping, molding and baking. Also used in high quality desserts, cheese cakes and for making chocolate decorations or garnishes.

COMPOUND CHOCOLATE (Easiest to Use) – Contains no cocoa butter. Instead, vegetable shortening such as palm kernel, soya or coconut oil is used. This type of chocolate does not require tempering. It has a higher melting point making it more tolerable of warmer weather. To use this chocolate, simply melt in a double boiler to approximately 35 Degrees Celsius. Stir well and you are ready to go!

Types - Merckens, also known as Candy Coating or Candy Melts

Uses - molding, truffles, fillings, dipping and fondues.

To expand on the above, pure chocolate is available in unsweetened, bittersweet, semi-sweet, milk and white. The difference is the amount of added sugar. Milk chocolate has milk solids and vanilla added. White chocolate contains no chocolate liquor, but has extra sugar and milk solids added. Pure chocolate does not come in different colours. Compound chocolates are available in semi-sweet, milk or white. A variety of colours are available, or you can colour the chocolate yourself by using powder or oil-based colours. Chocolate can also be flavored easily by using oil-based flavours; only a few drops are required.

WHAT IS TEMPERING? (A Simplified Explanation)

Tempering is a procedure used to achieve a stable form of cocoa butter crystallization within the liquid mass of pure chocolate. Tempering chocolate requires patience and diligence. Pure chocolate

temperature must be raised to 46 Degrees Celsius then cooled to 46 Degrees Celsius and heated again back up to 30-32 Degrees Celsius. Pure chocolate must be operated within these temperatures for molding and dipping to set properly.

The storage of all types of chocolate is important since it is affected by temperature. It should be stored well wrapped in a cool, (18 Degrees Celsius) dry place free from odours. Properly stored chocolate will last 8-12 months. Chocolate which has a grey haze on it has "bloomed". This is the fat coming to the surface usually caused by storage conditions (too hot, or drastic temperature changes). This chocolate is not bad and can still be used.

MCCALL'S CHOCOLATE NO-NO'S:

- DO NOT STORE CHOCOLATE IN THE REFRIGERATOR OR FREEZER
- DO NOT ADD WATER OR ALCOHOL TO CHOCOLATE TO FLAVOUR OR THIN IT DOWN
- DO NOT OVER-HEAT YOUR CHOCOLATE WHEN MELTING

When first working with chocolate, it is a good idea to start with a compound chocolate, perhaps in the form of novelty suckers. This will give you an idea of how to properly use the mold as well as get a "feel" for the chocolate. Once you get the hang of it you'll be able to move onto filled chocolates and truffles. Compound chocolate is handy to have around for quick decorations and is available in many colours making it suitable for all occasions. Pure chocolate on the other hand takes a little more practice since tempering can be tricky. To minimize the work, tempering machines are available, however one must consider how serious they are about chocolate-making, as this machine is an expensive yet valuable investment.

CHOCOLATE HOLLOW-MOLDING & FILLED CHOCOLATES

Equipment Needed: Molds, soft clean cloth, spoon or ladle, rack, parchment paper, palette knife

Method for Hollow Molding: Polish molds with a soft clean cloth and melt chocolate in the usual manner

With a spoon or ladle (depending on the size of the mold) fill the mold with the melted chocolate. Leave to set in a cool place until the chocolate begins to harden around the edges. Pour out the unset chocolate and turn upside-down onto a rack with parchment paper underneath to catch the chocolate. In about 5-10 minutes, scrape off any drippings from the edge of the mold with a palette knife. Return to the rack and let set. Repeat the procedure when using medium to large sized molds. Cool completely in the refrigerator and then remove the piece from the mold.

To seal two halves together, place the pieces onto a heated cookie sheet. Heat the cookie sheet by holding it over a pot of hot water or a hot plate for a brief moment to melt the edges, and then quickly press the two halves together.

Method for Filled Chocolates: Follow the above procedure. One coating of chocolate is sufficient. Fill cavities with the desired centres, leaving space for the seal. Fill the remainder of the mold with melted chocolate, scraping off any excess with a palette knife and let set completely.