

Basic Chocolate Truffles *Makes about 30 1-inch pieces*

Swoon-worthy truffles are created with four ingredients and just a few minutes of hands-on time. Use your best chocolate, manage the temperatures along the way, and apply a little patience as the truffles chill and cure. You'll find them easy to make, and wonderful to share.

Ingredients:

8 oz. dark chocolate (60% cacao or greater)
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 cup dark cocoa for dusting

Directions:

1. Prepare the chocolate by chopping into small pieces about the size of chocolate chips or smaller. Place in a shallow bowl.
2. Warm the cream in a small (2 qt) saucier to just below the simmering point. Remove from heat. Add the vanilla extract (or other flavorings).
3. Carefully pour the cream over the chocolate. Let set undisturbed for about 5 minutes, then stir gently until the cream and chocolate combine into a silky smooth mixture. (Do not add the chocolate to the cream; the pan will hold too much heat and potentially affect the chocolate.) If additional warmth is needed to completely melt the chocolate, place the bowl over simmering water, or heat for 10 second intervals in a microwave oven stirring after each interval. Let cool to room temperature, about 30-45 minutes. If the ganache separates during mixing, simply add a few drops of cold cream and stir.
4. Once at room temperature the ganache is ready to be refrigerated for an hour or longer until ready to assemble the truffles. When chilling, cover well to avoid odors infiltrating the chocolate.
5. When ready to form the truffles, use a small scoop or two spoons to portion the chocolate into rough 1-inch balls. Leave the pieces in rustic form, or briefly roll the chocolate into balls with the palms of your hands – work quickly to minimize any melting from the heat of your hands. Roll the truffles in cocoa powder or another covering of your choice.

Alternate Coverings: Try different coverings for scooped truffle balls for another look and taste: white powdered sugar, Chopped nuts (almonds, pecans, walnuts, pistachios, salted peanuts), cacao nibs, finely shredded coconut

Variations: Enjoy any number of distinctly flavored truffles by adding flavorings to the warm cream:

- Amaretto Truffles – add 1 tablespoon of Amaretto liqueur
- Mint Truffles – add 1 teaspoon peppermint extract
- Grand Marnier Truffles – add 1 tablespoon of the orange-flavored, Grand Marnier liqueur
- Cinnamon Truffles – add 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Spicy Truffles – add 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper