



## Fondant.com 2018 Advent Calendar (page 1)

### Day 16



### Food Gifts + Patty's Private Chocolate Clay Recipe

We want to be proud of the things we make for family and friends at the holidays. Some people do crafts. Others, like me, give the gift of homemade foods. I find this to be the more daunting of the two. We all want our baking to be tasty but have the added pressure of making it beautifully gift-worthy as well.

In most cases, we are really creating tradition here. People will look forward next year to your homemade gift when you give the best of yourself each time.

The first step in the process of creating a food-gift tradition is to try recipes and adjust until we are happy with the taste and texture. Don't settle until it is the best possible version of that recipe.

The second step is getting the aesthetics to live up to the promise of our edible gifts. This used to be a lot trickier in the past. Now, thanks to Martha Stewart Incorporated and other clever companies, the task of *"The Presentation"* is a lot less frustrating. We have an unlimited supply of "tools" now to help us create whatever our minds can imagine.

To create the cookies in the photo, I made my butter shortbread cookies in Dark Chocolate and Browned Butter Vanilla Bean flavors but did not have time to frost them with the glaze that I normally do for an iced cookie (no time for drying!). Not a problem for me only because I have a drawer full of cookie cutters and in my case, plunger-cutters specifically designed for cutting out the sugar doughs I always have on hand like homemade Marshmallow Rolled Fondant, Gumpaste and Chocolate "Clay". Each sugar dough has its own special purpose when decorating and for this project, I chose White Chocolate Clay.

The most forgiving to work with and the most delicious of all the fondant-based sugar doughs is Chocolate Clay. Back when I was in attending classes for my culinary training, we learned that the most important master recipe for confectioners is fondant - in fact, it was the first question on our final exam for our confectionery food course called "Candy 101". In that class, we received one recipe to make Chocolate Clay but I found that the recipe needed a lot of tweaking to be correct for each specific type of chocolate - white, milk, and dark. Mostly because of the variances in ingredients each type of chocolate contains. An all-purpose recipe does not work well in this case.

I've passed this recipe along to a lot of decorators and not surprisingly, Art Teachers! It really does work best with the least amount of handling - especially for people like me with *"hot fingers"*.

To make the designs on the cookies in this post, I rolled out White Chocolate Clay and used a snowflake-designed, PME brand plunger cutter (available online). The plunger cutters eject the clay from the cutter! This method allows for more detailed designs to be created easily.

There are so many choices for packaging now, too! Check online or in your local craft store for options. I kept it local with my choice of cellophane bags - *Highland Supply Company in Highland, IL.*

The gift tag is from a photo I took of my Flickr friend, Mary's gift. It is a decorated matchbox she made and sent to me last year. I photo'd it and printed it out on card stock, punched a hole at the top and strung baker's twine through (available on etsy.com or another local company, Papersource). ***Thanks, Mary!***

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### **Patty's Private Chocolate Clay Recipe**

I developed this recipe for a chocolate class for kids. Pastry chefs call this chocolate "plastique". When rolled thin it is referred to as chocolate leather. When used for modeling purposes, it's called chocolate clay or chocolate dough. Chocolate clay acts similarly to modeling clay or play dough. This clay is edible and delicious. It is best to make these recipes 24 hours ahead so that the chocolate can set up completely. Excessive handling of the clay can break down the clay and cause it to dry out making it impossible to handle so be quick and concise. Store completely air tight and do not refrigerate. You do not need to temper the chocolate before you proceed but it seems to have a better texture when you do. ***Just remember though, the better the chocolate you use, the better your clay will taste and behave!***

### **Choose only ONE of the THREE recipes below and then follow the directions to complete:**

#### Dark Chocolate Clay

2 parts Chocolate

1 part white corn syrup or glucose

#### Milk Chocolate Clay

2 ½ parts Chocolate

1 part white corn syrup or glucose

#### White Chocolate Clay (use only white chocolate that contains cocoa butter)

3 parts Chocolate

1 part white corn syrup or glucose

#### **Directions:**

Melt chocolate to 100 – 110 degrees. Do not overheat! Stir the chocolate to cool it off to 90 degrees (It should feel cool when you dab some on your upper lip, but the chocolate should still be very fluid). Working quickly, add the corn syrup. Stir very quickly with a rubber spatula to incorporate the syrup as quickly as possible. When it starts to appear as though it is getting grainy, stop stirring. Pour the mass into a Ziploc® bag and store at room temperature until it is firm throughout (about 24 hours).

When ready to use it, knead it as you would bread dough. When it is pliable enough to work with, STOP KNEADING. It is very easy to over-knead and ruin it. If you find that the oil has been released, throw it out and start over. You will find the dark clay will be the one that should be kneaded the longest. If your hands are not very strong, just use a wine bottle or rolling pin, or if you have a pasta machine, that works the best of all. Store any unused clay in the Ziploc® bag with the air pressed out. **Do not store in the refrigerator.**