



Fondant.com 2018 Advent Calendar

Day 2



The Best Fudge in the World

This is the first recipe I ever made.

Gramma Margaret, my Mother's Mom, came all the way from Door County Wisconsin for a visit one Christmas Eve. Margaret had never visited us before and never did after. She was quiet and mysterious, sold Avon products for a living and had taught my mother to make the best chocolate fudge I have ever tasted. I remember giving up my bed so she could sleep in my room – being one of 8 kids, I felt honored (sucker!). I was told to sleep on the couch but instead positioned my sleeping bag almost under the Christmas tree so I could look up at the lights and ornaments all night long – not easy since there were presents for 13 people surrounding it at the time.

Margaret asked that we open presents Christmas Eve . . . not Christmas morning as we normally did. How STRANGE! We did open gifts on Christmas Eve and it felt a bit weird. Before we could beg her to make her famous fudge, Gramma was out the door and on her way back home.

Fast forward to Halloween night years later. The neighbor lady one block down, catty-corner from our new house made a similar fudge – it was grainy and had less chocolate but it was pretty darn close to Margaret's. Neighbor Lady didn't speak much English as we all found out when she would interrogate us as to whether we lived "in the neighborhood" – her way of determining if we were fudge-worthy. None of us kids bothered to find out where SHE was from – we were afraid of her but needed that fudge!

She was a saver like most of the people of her generation. She even saved mailing envelopes she received. She served the big brown hunks of Halloween fudge in recycled overseas-posted envelopes - one hunk per foreign-stamped, tissue paper thin holder. We would sit our costumed behinds down on the massive wrap-around front porch of her American Four Square house, scrutinizing the front of our envelope, running our chocolatey fingers over the colorful stamps, trying to picture the countries and towns where the envelopes originated in an effort to make the moment last ... until she would appear at the front door yelling at us in her native tongue causing us to scatter.

It was really good fudge. But... not at all like Margaret's velvety, miraculous slabs.

When I was in high school, we had a tornado. Neighbor Lady's house was badly damaged. My best friend and I went to try to help her clean up. She brought out her fudge to thank us! I told her thank you for the Halloween fudge, too. I don't know if she understood me but she smiled.

As little kids will do, I thought we would be fudgeless forever. I certainly couldn't ask Neighbor Lady. My mother rarely made it. After Christmas we asked Mom to make it. We caught her at a weak moment. She agreed! My older sister was 13 or so and I was probably 8. We were right there like chocolate-crazed hawks watching every move. The next day, I

was at the stove on the folding step stool so I could reach the burner, ingredients in the pot and ready to go. I had the recipe memorized (so I thought). To my horror, my fudge was even grainier than Neighbor Lady's fudge! My sister showed me what I did wrong (NO STIRRING until it's cool!!) and now I too can make The Best Fudge in the World.

The Best Fudge in the World

This recipe is a true "fondant". Make this candy on a clear day. Sugar loves humidity and your fudge will test wrong if you make it on a rainy/damp/moist day. That's just the way it is - chemistry.

In a heavy gauge 4 quart saucepan with a candy thermometer clipped to the side of the pan, with the tip 1" above the bottom of the pan, on a low flame, whisk together:

- 2 squares (2 ounces total) Baker's unsweetened baking chocolate
- ¼ cup milk

Cook, stirring like crazy with the wire whisk all the while over low flame until it looks like pudding. Immediately add:

2 scant cups granulated white sugar

Whisk again to incorporate well. Try hard not to get too much mixture up the sides of the pan. If you do, use a silicone scraper to clean the sides of the pan to remove all sugar crystals that might have landed there. Stir gently now until small bubbles form around the edges. When it reaches this critical stage, STOP STIRRING and resist the urge to ever stir it again while it's cooking.

Start to check the temperature of the fudge after 5 minutes of boiling. When the fudge reaches 231 degrees, remove it from the heat. Disturb it as little as possible at this stage. Add:

- 1 teaspoon (Mexican) Vanilla extract (like McCormick brand)
- 2 Tablespoons salted butter (I use Land 'o Lakes)

Cool fudge on a baking rack or cool stove top until you can hold your hand on the bottom of the pan for the count of 10 seconds without having to pull your hand away in pain (start checking after ½ hour). When cool enough to handle, you must stir the fudge to incorporate air (called "beating the fudge").

To beat the fudge, you must use a wooden spoon or you will be stirring forever. Beat until it starts to "change". It will lose some of its gloss and will start to hold its shape. Hurry and get it out of the pan and onto some waxed paper. Cut immediately or you may not get another chance depending upon your level of success. Store airtight

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