



Food and drink

The taste of your heart

Chocolates are the signature gift for Valentine's Day and White Day, and making them yourself speaks volumes to your (potential) sweetheart in Japan. Here's all you need to know.

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If you have never tried making chocolates, take heart! Chocolate is a forgiving medium. Once you have the essential equipment – a candy thermometer, a bowl, a pan and some heat – there is really only one trick you need to know, called tempering. If not handled correctly, chocolate is greasy and crumbly. To make sweets with a dry, glossy surface, smooth texture, and a clean “snap,” follow these five easy steps:

1. Break the chocolate into squares of about 1cm. Heat a pan of water until it is barely simmering. Put a clean, dry, glass or metal bowl above (not touching) the water, with the chocolate and a candy thermometer in it. Note that if even a small amount of water gets into the chocolate at this stage it will solidify.
2. Heat the chocolate to 50°C. Let dark chocolate cool to 32°C, milk chocolate to 31°C.
3. Pour out a small portion onto a smooth, nonporous surface and fold it onto itself with a flat scraper until it thickens. Return the thickened chocolate to the bowl and stir it in. Test a small portion by letting it cool. If it is not right, reheat to 50°C and try again.
4. Once the chocolate is tempered, you have many options. You can simply pour it into molds, add a delicious center filling, or add nuts or dried fruit before molding. For large centers, maintain the temperature, and use a dipping tool to transfer the centers in and out of the molten chocolate.
5. Lay the finished candies out on a cool, dry surface.

Truffles are a classic treat and even simpler to make. Boil 1/4 cup of cream, and pour it over 100 grams of broken chocolate. Wait for one minute then stir until the chocolate melts. You can flavor the mixture with a tablespoon or two of liquor or champagne. Cool the mixture until it can be scooped into balls, then roll them in sugar or cocoa powder.

