Equipment and Ingredients

A confection may loosely be defined as a sweet, but in a stricter sense, a true confection is an item that is preserved by its sugar content—a candy. Confection is also a term for a piece of work that displays excellent skill and craftsmanship, and with good reason. In many regards, confectionery or candy making is the most exacting of any of the culinary arts. That is not to say, however, that it cannot or should not be successfully practiced and enjoyed at home. In fact, like most branches of the culinary arts, the roots of confectionery lie with the homemaker taking the time to make something special for her family. Even in today's world, with time compressed as never before, and most people finding it hard to find time to even cook meals on a regular basis, home confectionery can still be a fun and satisfying pursuit. Whether you are making candies for your family, to serve to guests, or for holiday occasions, a range of home confectionery is within the reach of anyone with a kitchen and a few basic tools and ingredients.

Sugar as a Preservative

When sugar is present in a food in small quantities, that food is very susceptible to spoilage by a number of villains, including fermentation from yeast, bacterial spoilage, and the growth of molds. All of these organisms can, and do, utilize small quantities of sugar as a food source. (In the controlled settings of bread baking and wine or beer making, we take advantage of these organisms to break down sugar into alcohol and carbon dioxide. Without this fermentation there could be no bread, beer, or wine.)

When a food contains sugar in larger quantities, however, it becomes inhospitable for microorganisms. The reason for this lies in the attraction between sugar and water.

Sugars are hygroscopic; that is, they are attracted to water. All living things require water for their life processes. When simple organisms such as fungi or bacteria are put into contact with a food with a very high sugar content, the sugar actually draws water out of the organism, rendering it unable to function and to reproduce. The result is that the food is preserved by the sugar content.

People have realized for thousands of years that sugars could preserve foods. Originally, honey was used as a concentrated source of sugars to preserve fruit. Today's confections are much more likely to utilize cane or beet sugar and corn syrup than honey alone, but the fundamental concept remains the same: A true confection is a food that is preserved by sugar content.

Equipment for Home Candy Making

MAKING CANDIES IN A HOME KITCHEN requires little in the way of special equipment or conditions beyond what is found in any reasonably well-equipped home kitchen. The first concern is the environment itself.

When working with sugar or chocolate, the air temperature and humidity must be within certain guidelines. Ideally, the air temperature should be close to 68°F, and the humidity should be low. If these conditions are not available in your kitchen during certain times of the year, it will affect what types of candy you can make.

- If your kitchen is warm but not humid, you can still make all types of sugar confectionery like brittles, caramels, and fudge, but you will not be able to work with tempered chocolate to make truffles or other dipped centers.
- If you have humidity and heat in your kitchen, you are still able to make crystalline confectionery like fudge and fondants.
- In order to work with chocolate, you will need both a cool temperature of 66° to 70°F and low humidity of less than 50 percent. If necessary, a dehumidifier may be used in the kitchen to reduce humidity. The single most important factor in chocolate use is temperature. Strive for 68°F in the work area for optimum results.

Basic Kitchen Equipment

STOVE Any home stovetop used for food preparation can also be used for candy making. Most cooks prefer a gas flame to electric heat for cooking, but without a doubt, you can be successful with either heat source or with induction burners.

COUNTERS In a professional candy shop, stone surfaces of marble or granite are used to aid in the production of a wide variety of candies from fudge to caramel to hard candy, and to temper chocolate. In this book, I have eliminated the necessity of working on a stone surface, so any countertop with sufficient work space will serve perfectly well.

MICROWAVE OVEN A microwave oven is not mandatory for home candy making, but as with many other areas of culinary arts, it can be a useful time-saver in making candy. A microwave is often used for melting chocolate, softening butter, or warming ingredients for mixing. Anything performed by a microwave oven may also be accomplished using a more traditional method of heating. If you do use a microwave oven, remember that each model is different, so you must adjust the time accordingly.

REFRIGERATOR There are no special requirements for a home candy making refrigerator. In fact, a refrigerator is used very little in home candy production. Most of the finished products do not require, nor should they be subjected to, refrigeration, and chocolate should never be refrigerated in order to force it to set. Refrigeration is reserved mainly for storing perishable ingredients, and occasionally to speed up a nonchocolate setting process.

FOOD PROCESSOR Although not essential, occasionally a food processor will be useful in candy making for pureeing fruit or grinding nuts. Any food processor will work fine for these basic purposes, and nothing special is required of this piece of equipment.

MIXER A powerful mixer can be a great tool to speed and facilitate making candies in your home kitchen. A mixer will be useful to make fudge, aerate marshmallows and nougat, and stir ganache so that it sets properly for truffles. I recommend a 5-quart stand mixer that has separate paddle and whip attachments. Other types of mixers can also be used successfully, but a powerful machine is required for making nougat.

Cookware

SAUCEPANS Saucepans for candy making need not be different from those normally used in your home kitchen. In commercial candy shops, copper kettles are often used, but all of the recipes in this book are based on commonly available cookware. The most frequently used saucepans are 2-quart and 4-quart pans. These will satisfy nearly all of the requirements in this book. All cookware should be nonreactive, such as stainless steel, and should have a heavy bottom so that the heat is distributed evenly.

DOUBLE BOILERS When a double boiler is used in these recipes, a 4-quart saucepan should be filled with 1 inch of water in the bottom, and heated. Once hot, the flame should be lowered to keep the water from boiling. A heatproof bowl should fit snugly onto the saucepan, and should not be significantly larger than the saucepan.

BAKING PANS Two sizes of baking pans are used throughout this book: 9-inch square and 9 × 13 inches. Each of these pans is 2 inches deep, although that much depth is not mandatory. Nonstick pans are helpful, but the techniques used in these recipes make that feature less crucial.

SHEET PANS Either aluminum 12 × 16–inch pans or the more standard 10 × 15–inch pans may be used when sheet pans are used. Sheet pans may be used either with parchment paper or without.

BOWLS Stainless-steel bowls are the preferred mixing containers; a 3-quart size is the most useful for the majority of the recipes in this book. Occasionally, 5- or even 8-quart bowls may be helpful. In lieu of stainless steel, mixing bowls of ceramic, plastic, or glass may be used.

Hand Tools

All of the typical tools normally used in a kitchen are also useful in candy making—wooden spoons, whisks, rolling pins, and other common tools are standard equipment. In addition, the following items are basic essentials.

KNIVES A basic assortment of kitchen knives is all you need for candy making: A chef's knife, paring knife, and serrated slicing knife will be enough for almost any recipe in this book.

PALETTE KNIVES Sometimes called *cake spatulas*, one 8- or 10-inch offset palette knife and one 8- or 10-inch straight palette knife will be useful in a candy making kitchen. A bench scraper will also be useful.

RUBBER OR SILICONE SPATULAS Be sure these are heat resistant; the high temperatures of some of the candy recipes will melt an ordinary rubber spatula.

PASTRY BAGS A pastry bag is used in a few of the recipes. It may be either cloth and reusable, or plastic and disposable.

PARCHMENT PAPER Rolls or sheets of parchment paper will help to keep pans clean, speeding cleanup.

THERMOMETERS A good-quality thermometer for cooking sugar is probably the single most important piece of equipment for home candy making success. There are many good thermometers available, and any of them may work well for you. If I were to recommend one thermometer to use, it would be a good-quality digital thermometer.

GLASS TUBE THERMOMETERS These have a long history of use for candy making and can still be used today. Be certain that these are immersed in the liquid deeply enough to provide an accurate reading. This minimum level will be marked with an arrow on most thermometers. Glass tube thermometers are available for high temperatures used in sugar cooking, and for lower temperatures for chocolate tempering.

DIGITAL PROBE THERMOMETERS These are useful for both sugar cooking and for chocolate use; they are reasonably priced and are usually accurate. Be careful when using probe thermometers for cooking sugar that the probe is not touching the bottom of the saucepan; you will get a reading that is much higher than the actual temperature of the sugar.

DIAL THERMOMETERS These can also be used for sugar cooking. Like the glass tubes, they require immersion up to a minimum level in order to provide an accurate reading.

INFRARED OR SURFACE THERMOMETERS These can be used for maintaining the temperature of a bowl of chocolate, but they should not be used for sugar-cooking applications.

Measuring Tools

SCALE In professional formulas, all measurements are made in weight. Because this book is intended for the home candy maker, the recipes are given in both weight and volumetric measure, so although highly recommended for all ingredients, a scale is not an essential tool for home candy making. In this book, due to the different forms in which chocolate is sold (pistoles, chips, blocks, etc.), all chocolate measurements are expressed in weight. If a scale is not available, use the table on page 24 that lists volume measures for chocolate. A scale will, however, always provide a more accurate and consistent measurement for all ingredients than volumetric measurement, and small household digital scales are readily available for a reasonable cost.

MEASURING CUPS AND SPOONS Because these recipes are intended for home use, they are designed so that the ingredients may be measured in cups, tablespoons, and so on. Dry and liquid measuring cups and standard measuring spoons are all that is required to successfully make the recipes in this book.

Special Equipment

DIPPING FORKS These tools are made explicitly for dipping centers in chocolate. One round fork and one two-prong fork will be enough for most home candy cooks. These are available from candy making supply stores, Web sites, or at larger craft stores. Dipping forks can be improvised by bending back two tines on an inexpensive dinner fork to make a tool with the necessary space between the tines.

TRANSFER SHEETS Transfer sheets are plastic sheets that have been silk-screened with colored cocoa butter to create a pattern, logo, or picture. They are available from candy making specialty Web sites and supply stores and can be found with a wide variety of patterns and themes.

TEMPERING MACHINE Not a necessity, but a very convenient luxury. There are several chocolate tempering machines available intended for home use. They temper small quantities of chocolate and hold it at the correct temperature for use.

TOP ROW FROM LEFT: Bench scraper, ice pick, digital thermometer, and parchment paper.

CENTER ROW FROM LEFT: Dipping forks, palette knives, offset palette knives, and candy thermometer.

BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT: Wooden spoon, silicone (heat-resistant) spatula, chocolate paddle, and pastry brush.

Ingredients

IF YOU DO ANY BAKING AT HOME, most of the ingredients used in home candy making are probably already in your pantry. Wholesome candy ingredients are familiar foods such as sugars, dairy products, eggs, and nuts. There are a few specialty items that will be helpful in some of the recipes, and these are readily available at candy making stores or from candy making Web sites. The only commonly used ingredient in this book that requires special attention to purchasing is chocolate. In fact, it is worthy of a chapter of its own, so for information on buying chocolate see Chapter 2.

Sweeteners

Sweeteners are the heart of candy making. Not only do they contribute flavor, but they make up the bulk of many candies, and they always help prevent spoilage. There are several sweeteners used in home candy making, each with its own flavor and characteristics.

SUGAR The word *sugar* may apply to any of a variety of sweeteners, but for the purpose of this book, sugar refers to sucrose, the sugar derived from either sugarcane or sugar beets. Sucrose is the gold standard sweetener when it comes to flavor, and is the sweetener to which all others are compared. When sugar is called for in a recipe in this book, use granulated white sugar, which may be measured either by weight or by volume.

Inclusions

The term *inclusions* in candy making refers to any type of added ingredient that is mixed into the mass of candy, and is spread throughout, but remains discrete from the rest of the candy. Inclusions are added to candies in order to provide textural contrast, visual appeal, and flavor complexity. The most important rule about inclusions to use in candy making is that they must be shelf stable. Perishable items such as fresh fruit do not make acceptable inclusions in candy because they would cause spoilage.

The most common inclusions found in candy are nuts, which provide a crisp textural contrast to many favorites such as fudge or soft caramels. Dried fruits are popular for their bright colors and vibrant flavors, and even pieces of other candy, such as peppermint hard candy, or marshmallow, can be used as inclusions in certain instances. Baked goods such as pretzels, crackers, or cookies may be used, but since they will absorb moisture and get soggy if improperly handled, they must only be used in very low moisture candies.

COARSE SUGAR Sugar is also available in a larger crystalline form, known as *coarse sugar* or *sanding sugar*. This type of sugar is used primarily for decoration on finished pieces, as its large crystal size makes it difficult to dissolve in recipes.

SUPERFINE SUGAR At the opposite end of the sugar spectrum from coarse sugar is superfine, or bar, sugar. This sugar is in crystalline form, but the crystals are very small and dissolve easily and quickly.

CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR Sometimes known as *powdered sugar*, confectioners' sugar is sugar that has been ground into a powder. Because pure powdered sugar would pick up moisture from the air and harden very quickly, manufacturers add a small amount of cornstarch to confectioners' sugar. This sugar is commonly available in 6X or 10X—the higher the number, the finer the sugar powder. The 10X confectioners' sugar is used in the recipes in this book.

BROWN SUGAR Brown sugar is fully refined sugar that has had molasses added back to it after refining. It is available in either light brown or dark brown, depending on the grade of the molasses that is added. In this book, only light brown sugar is used in the recipes.

TURBINADO SUGAR Sold under the trade name Sugar in the Raw, turbinado sugar is a less-refined sugar that actually leaves the molasses in the crystals rather than adding it back after the sugar has been refined.

CORN SYRUP Late in the nineteenth century, industry discovered how to convert cornstarch into a sweet syrup. The rest, as they say, is history. Corn syrup has become one of the most widespread food ingredients in America. When corn syrup is used in candy making, its purpose is to help prevent the sugar from crystallizing or graining. When corn syrup is called for in recipes in this book, light corn syrup should be used. Dark corn syrup has had refiner's syrup and caramel color added to it. Glucose syrup, a specialty type of corn syrup available to professionals, is not utilized in this book.

HONEY Honey is a natural sweetener made by honeybees. There are many different types of honey available, varying by the flower from which the bees gathered nectar. They range from very light in body and color, such as acacia honey, to very dark colored and strongly flavored, such as buckwheat honey. Anywhere honey is used in this book, commonly available wildflower or clover honey is the choice unless otherwise stated or desired.

MOLASSES Molasses is the syrup removed from sugar during refining. It is dark in color and rich in flavor. The color and flavor vary depending on the point at which it was removed from the sugar in the refining process. The darkest and strongest flavored molasses is called blackstrap. Golden molasses is slightly lighter in both color and flavor.

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS There are a wide variety of nonnutritive sweeteners available today. None of these sweeteners behaves like sugar, and they cannot be substituted for the sweeteners called for in candy making. Making candies with artificial sweeteners is a discipline unto itself and is not discussed in this book.

TOP ROW FROM LEFT: Turbinado sugar, superfine sugar, and sanding sugar.

SECOND ROW FROM LEFT: Dark brown sugar, light brown sugar, and confectioners' sugar.

THIRD ROW FROM LEFT: Light and dark corn syrup.

BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT: Honey and molasses.

Water

Yes, water is an important ingredient in candy making, and controlling it is a large part of what confectionery is about. It is not an ingredient that requires special attention, though. Any potable tap or bottled water will suffice for making any of the candies in this book.

Dairy Products

Dairy products are an important ingredient in home candy making; ganache, fudge, caramels, and other candies all depend on dairy products for their function and flavor. While it is often best to use fresh dairy products, for some candy making applications a processed or dried product does a better job. Fresh dairy products are always the form to use, however, when making ganache for truffles.

FRESH LIQUID DAIRY PRODUCTS These include everything from skim milk all the way through heavy cream. The only difference between any of the various fresh dairy products is the percentage of fat that they contain. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) defines these percentages, and a dairy product must fall within these guidelines in order to use a given legal name. For instance, heavy cream is defined as containing not less than 36 percent fat; if cream contains less fat, it cannot be legally called heavy cream. In the recipes contained in this book, all the cream is heavy cream and all the milk is whole milk unless otherwise stated. Because fresh dairy products are highly perishable, they must be stored properly and used within a short period of time.

PROCESSED DAIRY PRODUCTS These include evaporated milk and sweetened condensed milk, as well as lower fat and nonfat versions of these two products, which may be substituted in the recipes to save calories but will somewhat compromise the texture and flavor of the finished products. Evaporated milk is essentially whole milk that has had much of its water removed in the manufacturing process. Sweetened condensed milk is milk that has had much of its water removed and sugar added. The sugar in sweetened condensed milk makes it more shelf stable than evaporated milk. These products are ideal for making caramels and fudge because they do not require as extensive cooking as fresh dairy products do and are less likely to curdle in the process.

DRIED DAIRY PRODUCTS Dried milk and dried cream are simply the dairy product that has had all its water removed. These are of limited use in home candy making, but they are sometimes added to nougat to add flavor and richness without adding any additional moisture.

BUTTER Butter is an important ingredient in much home candy making; it provides flavor and a delicate, melt-in-the-mouth quality to any candy that contains it. Unsalted butter should always be used whenever possible for the recipes in this book. While salted butter may be substituted by reducing the salt elsewhere in the recipe, unsalted butter is generally a higher quality and is the first choice. Under no circumstances should margarine or shortening be substituted for butter in candy making recipes. To do so would severely diminish the quality of the finished product.

Eggs

Egg whites are often used in home candy making to aerate and lighten confections such as divinity, nougat, and sometimes marshmallows. The rules for using egg whites in candy making are the same as for making meringues: They must contain no fat or yolk, and the bowls and equipment must also be free of fat. Egg whites are available separated from yolks, fresh, frozen, or dried. The recipes in this book utilize only fresh egg whites. Frozen whites often do not respond well to the heat from cooked sugar syrups, and dried egg whites are not really necessary for the home candy maker. Large eggs should be used for the recipes in this book.

Binding Agents

Binding agents are used in making jellies, and occasionally in other products as well. When used in jellies, their primary function is to thicken a flavored syrup to the point that it will hold its shape and can be cut or portioned. There are four main types of binders used in confectionery, and they all are used in recipes in this book.

PECTIN Pectin is the binding agent that thickens jams, jellies, and preserves. It is extracted from fruit, usually apples or citrus rinds. In candy making, it makes a nearly perfect jelly because it has an appealing texture. Pectin requires a high sugar content and an acidic pH in order to bind. Because of these requirements, recipes made using pectin cannot be altered easily and should be followed closely to ensure success. The form of pectin used in the recipes in this book is liquid pectin, which is available in grocery stores under trade names such as Certo and Ball, as well as others.

GELATIN Gelatin is a binding agent made from animal collagen and is used in confectionery to make gummies. Because gelatin has a very chewy texture, it is not used as a binding agent unless that elasticity is desired. Gelatin must be hydrated in cold water before use, and it should not be exposed to high heat, which will damage the gelatin. In this book, gelatin is used as an aerator for marshmallows.

AGAR Derived from sea vegetables, agar is a binding agent more commonly used in Asian cuisines than in American kitchens. It is, nonetheless, a useful binding agent. The fruit that is used to make agar jellies does not need to be cooked, so agar jellies have a fresh flavor. The texture of agar jellies tends to be short; they crumble in the mouth rather than being chewy and elastic like gelatin. Agar is available in different forms. For candy making, however, powdered agar is best to use. Agar is available from online candy making suppliers (see Resources, page 289).

STARCH Cornstarch is a binder used when making the traditional candy Turkish Delight. While commercial candy makers use modified starch for jelly making, the Turkish Delight on page 185 honors tradition and uses ordinary cornstarch, as has been done for hundreds of years.

Nuts

Many varieties and forms of nuts are used in candy making. From whole toasted hazelnuts or pistachios to chopped pecans or sliced almonds to peanut butter or praline paste, nuts are indeed an important part of candy making. Nuts may be inclusions, like walnuts in maple fudge; they may make a filling, like Peanut Butter Bombs; or they may be made into dough, like marzipan.

The most important consideration in selecting nuts for use in candies is freshness. The oil in nuts is especially prone to rancidity, which will result in off-flavors. Nuts should be stored airtight in the refrigerator or freezer to protect from rancidity. Always taste nuts before using them to ensure that they are not rancid.

The most important factor in using nuts is toasting. Almost without exception, the flavor of nuts improves with proper toasting (see page 50 for instructions on toasting nuts). This is often done in the oven prior to use, and sometimes during cooking, as when making peanut brittle.

Nut Pastes

Nut pastes are a convenient way to use nuts in candy making when a smooth texture is the desired result. There are several forms of nut pastes, from peanut butter to more specialized forms such as praline paste. All nut pastes are high in oil and have the potential for rancidity, so they should always be used while fresh. Be sure to store all nut pastes properly, away from heat, light, and exposure to oxygen.

ALMOND PASTE Almond paste contains almonds, sugar, and bitter almond oil for fragrance. It is both sweet and aromatic and is used in making marzipan.

PRALINE PASTE Praline paste is a mixture of equal parts caramelized sugar and toasted hazelnuts that have been ground to a smooth paste.

NUT BUTTERS Nut butters are often made using cashews or almonds. These can be found in health food stores and generally contain no sugar. Some nut butters contain oil in addition to the oil in the nuts, but the best ones are made without any adjunct oil added.

PEANUT BUTTER The standard commercial smooth peanut butter is used in the recipes in this book.

Fruits

While fresh fruit is not suitable for use as an inclusion in candies due to its high water content and short shelf life, fruit that has been naturally preserved, either by drying or candying, is well suited to use in home confectionery.

DRIED FRUIT Excellent quality dried fruit is commonly available and makes a fine addition to many candies. The most frequently available dried fruits are cherries, cranberries, apricots, pears, and strawberries, in addition to the more traditional dates, currants, and raisins. All of these make interesting combinations with chocolate and nuts and have appropriate shelf lives, so they are well suited to candy making. Dried fruits are usually chopped and mixed into candy as an inclusion.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Toasted peanuts, sliced toasted almonds, toasted cashews, dried apricots, dried cherries, dried cranberries, and pistachios.

CENTER TOP: Cocoa nibs.

CENTER BOTTOM: Dried pears.

CANDIED FRUIT To a great extent, candied fruit has fallen out of favor with American tastes. This is probably due mainly to the poor-quality candied fruit that floods the market. If, however, high-quality candied fruit is sought out, it can be a superb addition to the ingredients in a home candy maker's pantry.

Other Inclusions

Any type of dry, shelf-stable food product can be used in candy making as an inclusion. This includes seeds such as sesame or pumpkin, breakfast cereals, crackers, and other snack foods that can be mixed into a candy to provide flavor and textural contrast. The only caution is to avoid mixing dry ingredients that may absorb moisture, such as cereals, into a candy containing moisture, such as ganache. To do so is to invite not only a poor texture, but spoilage as well.

Flavoring Agents

Without various flavoring agents, most candy would have little to offer other than sweetness. Flavoring agents come in many forms, and the recipes in this book utilize nearly all of them.

SALT While salt is a minor ingredient in confectionery, it is an important flavor-enhancing agent. While there is arguably no difference in flavor between forms of salt, because of different crystal size there is a difference in the amount contained in a teaspoonful. The recipes in this book are designed to use common supermarket granulated salt crystals, either iodized or not. Using volumetric measures, such as teaspoons, with a different form of salt, such as kosher salt, will alter the flavor of the finished recipe.

VANILLA BEANS Vanilla beans are really the queen of all flavors. Rich, heady, and aromatic, they impart true vanilla flavor as no extract can. When they are called for in a recipe, vanilla beans should be split lengthwise down the entire length of the bean and the seeds scraped out of the bean. Both the seeds and the pod are then boiled with the batch in order to extract maximum flavor. The pods are removed after steeping, and the seeds remain in the batch. The pods may be rinsed, dried, and stored in a container of sugar to imbue the sugar with vanilla fragrance.

If cost is not an object, vanilla beans can be used anywhere vanilla extract is used, but they are generally reserved for candies where the rich vanilla flavor is the star. If vanilla beans are unavailable, substitute 1 tablespoon of extract for half a bean, but do not expect precisely the same flavor results.

EXTRACTS Extracts are flavors made by steeping the flavoring agent in an alcohol-based liquid, creating a strongly flavored liquid that can then be added to foods. The most common example is, of course, vanilla extract. Some flavors labeled as extracts may also contain manufactured flavors (see below); if you wish to avoid these, you must read the labels carefully.

MANUFACTURED FLAVORS This category includes artificial and so-called natural flavors. These are different from extracts and are very convenient to use. Manufactured flavors should generally be reserved for situations in which other flavors will not work well, such as in hard candy. These flavors vary considerably in strength, so following the manufacturer's advice on how much to use is wise. It is always easier to add more than to take it out once it has been added.

SPICES The spice cabinet should not be overlooked when flavoring homemade candies. Ground spices may be added to candies at various stages of cooking to provide unique flavors. Spices tend to burn at high temperatures, so they are not well suited to hard candies

or brittles but are very much at home in ganache or fudge. Cream of tartar, sold as a spice, is actually an acidic ingredient added to aid in whipping egg whites and to help prevent the crystallization of sugar.

LIQUORS Because liquors are highly flavored liquids, they make ideal additions to candies and can provide unique flavors. They are often used to flavor ganache and can be added to many other types of candy as well. Because alcohol is highly flammable, always exercise care in handling, and never add it directly to a hot pan on the stovetop.

COFFEE AND TEA Coffee and tea are often used in candy making. Not only are they widely available and convenient to use, but they both go beautifully with chocolate. When tea is used in the recipes in this book, it is steeped into liquid and then strained. When coffee is used, it may be steeped or it may be made by reconstituting a small amount of instant coffee.

Coloring Agents

Home candy makers should generally avoid artificial colors; the color of most candies should come naturally from the foods contained in them. In some cases, however, use of food-approved colors is expected. Hard candies without color would still taste as good but would lose much of their visual appeal. Coloring agents should be added a little at a time until the desired shade is achieved.

Unless used for coloring chocolate, all of the coloring agents in this book are water based and may be in either paste or liquid form. For coloring chocolate, fat-based colors or colored cocoa butter must be used.

Specialty Ingredients

There are a few specialty ingredients used for some of the recipes in this book. All of these are available from the online retailers listed in the Resources (see page 289).

COCONUT FAT When used, coconut fat should be deodorized if possible. Nondeodorized coconut fat will impart a strong coconut smell to any recipe.

WAFER PAPER Wafer paper is used to seal and protect nougat such as Nougat Torrone (page 183). It is made from a starch, such as potato starch, and is white in color and neutral in flavor. When used on a nougat, it is intended to be consumed with the nougat as part of the candy.

INVERTASE Invertase is a naturally occurring enzyme extracted from yeast. It can be added to centers after cooking to cause them to soften after they are coated with chocolate. Cherry Cordials (page 147) are made using invertase in order to liquefy the center.

FRAPPE Frappe is a stable light foam that is mixed into certain types of candy to make them lighter in color and texture. Frappe in candy making is used the same way meringue is used in baking, and with good reason: Frappe is little more than a meringue that is very high in sugar. While it is not beyond the scope of home confectioners to make their own frappe, when frappe is required in a recipe in this book, commercially available marshmallow creme is used.