

# Making Ripples

## DIY Chocolate Truffles

by Amanda Bancroft

Is chocolate an aphrodisiac? Science has yet to demonstrate that chocolate has any real aphrodisiac effect, but the placebo effect is certainly helping chocolate achieve results. According to WebMD, “In the early 1980s, researchers...detected the chemical phenyl ethylamine (PEA) in chocolate. PEA is a central nervous system stimulant, usually present in the human brain, that is thought to help arouse emotions. But the human body actually absorbs very little PEA from chocolate -- not enough to affect our emotions, anyway.” The New York Times notes that, based on the latest research, “if chocolate has any aphrodisiac qualities, they are probably psychological, not physiological.” It may not be a love potion, but chocolate is delicious, and you can easily make your own chocolates at home – giving you full control over the flavor, quality, texture, and fillings. Your chocolates can be vegan or meet your dietary restrictions.

The most common molds for making chocolates are either metal or silicon. Metal molds typically have intricate designs on them, but are not always easy to work with because of burning your fingers and the difficulty in removing chocolates once cooled. Silicon molds are much more convenient, but less elaborate, and certain kinds are prone to molding.

To begin, first you'll need chocolate! Use base ingredients like baking squares of chocolate, bars you enjoy, or chocolate chips, which can all be melted in a double boiler. By placing a few inches of water in a small pot and bringing it to a boil while covered with a flat or wide bowl (don't use plastic), you can easily melt the chocolate inside the bowl. Stir frequently, and keep the stove on a low temperature setting.

For other ingredients, try adding very small amounts (depending on volume) of extracts like mint, almond, or vanilla. You can even create your own peanut butter cups! Fill the molds with a third chocolate, followed by a dollop of peanut butter mixture of your choice. Fill the rest with chocolate, making sure no peanut butter is showing on the outsides. Drizzle leftover chocolate over potato chips for an addicting combination. Or dip fruit like cherries into the bowl. Make nut clusters by mixing in nuts and scooping them in teaspoons onto wax paper. Allow all chocolates and truffles to cool, either letting them firm up on the counter or placing a tray in the refrigerator until the chocolates are solid.

Some chocolate brands create conditions for child slavery in Africa, and cause the destruction of important habitat around the world. Others support wildlife and small family farms. Certain chocolate bars focus on the conservation of endangered species, while others focus on creating fair wages for farmers producing the products in cooperatives. Try to choose your truffle ingredients based on love not just for your sweetheart, but also for the world.

You can make your own truffle box for these chocolates out of a decorated toilet paper roll! It's easy, cheap, and looks attractive when finished. For detailed instructions, search for "Upcycling for Valentine's Day Gifts" under Do-It-Yourself Ideas in our archives at [www.RipplesBlog.org/MakingRipples](http://www.RipplesBlog.org/MakingRipples)

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