

Chocolate: The Gift From The Gods

by: [Rosie Shaw](#)

Chocolate – whether dark or light, bitter or sweet – is a treat considered to have come to Earth from the heaven as a gift from the gods. And indeed it is one of the most popular gift items the world over, at every occasion.

I have yet to meet a person who doesn't drool over chocolate and most people are ready to cheat on their diet for a chance to bite into this delicious delight. Some days ago, I found that a chocolate decoration workshop was taking place. So the moment I found out that there's a demonstration of chocolate decorations for cakes and desserts, I picked up the phone and made my reservations. I can make some decent tasting and looking cakes but the picture-perfect stuff that culinary experts come up with are beyond my capabilities. A pastry chef's trade secrets had to be learnt.

Armed with a notebook and pen, I arrived at the hotel where the Executive Chef, Guido Scarpellino, and his team were ready to show us how culinary masterpieces are created. Initially, the Chef traced the history of chocolate, and discussed some of its characteristics and properties. Then came the part when the first chocolate leaf was made and we were asked if any of us would like to try doing it for ourselves.

The demonstration included the making of chocolate leaves, cups, various cut out shapes, chocolate curls, flakes and different icing designs using both chocolate and butter icing. The chef also showed us how floral and other shapes can be created from chocolate. Guido is not only an expert at his craft, but he is also a great teacher who gave us many helpful hints about how to handle chocolate and repeated the demonstrations as many times as we asked him to.

Like its true of a lot of other things, practice is what one needs to be able to work well with chocolate and get the desired result. The quality of cooking chocolate also plays an important part in it so one has to make sure one buys a well-reputed brand, otherwise a lesser quality cooking chocolate will just mess things up. The choice of a dark, light or white chocolate for use totally depends on individual preferences. To be able to have your cake decked up lavishly with pretty chocolate decorations, there is just one thing that you need to take care of – your urge just to devour the chocolate yourself!!

Here are some tips for working with chocolate:

- Do not substitute cocoa for chocolate if a recipe demands you to use chocolate.
- Do not melt chocolate directly over heat as it burns very quickly. Break the chocolate up and place the pieces in a small bowl, or on a plate, set over a pan filled with gently simmering water so that the chocolate does not get too hot. Leave it to melt without stirring. Use as directed in the recipes.
- To cool any chocolate decorations that you are making, avoid putting it in the freezer as the chocolate is likely to 'sweat'. It is better to cool it in the fridge or outside.

Here are techniques for making Simple Chocolate Curls and Chocolate Leaves

Chocolate Curls

To make simple curls, the chocolate should be at room temperature. Shave off long silvers using a vegetable peeler or a knife.

For a more professional look, melt the chocolate in a bowl set over simmering water.

Let it cool for one minute. Then pour it on to a slightly oiled work top and spread it out thinly with a spatula to 3mm.

Leave to cool and when it is on the point of setting, hold a long sharp knife upright, with a hand at either end, and pull it towards you with a gentle sawing action.

Let the curls on a baking sheet to harden.

Store between sheets of grease-proof paper in an air-tight tin.

Chocolate Leaves

You can use small leaves of any shape that you desire to make chocolate leaves.

Wash the leaves and dry them.

In a bowl of steaming, NOT boiling water, melt the chocolate.

Coat one side of the leaf either by using a brush or by dragging each leaf over the chocolate.

Place on a plate to cool, in the refrigerator if you like, with the coated side up.

After an interval of 10-15 minutes, coat the leaves once or twice more with chocolate, allowing it to cool each time.

Multiple layers of chocolate make the leaves harder and easier to work with.

After the chocolate is hard again, gently peel off the leaf, starting from the stem end of it.

There you will have lovely chocolate leaves, complete with veins.

Use it to decorate the cake in any way you please.

About The Author

Rosie Shaw runs her Cooking and Free Recipes website Cook-It-All.com. She also writes Free Cooking, Health and Food Articles.

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