

Brown Sugar Fudge Candy A.K.A. Penuche

If you've never heard of penuche (pronounced puh-**noo**-chee) or maybe haven't had the opportunity to try it, you are in for a treat! Penuche resembles fudge and is often called "brown sugar fudge," but it is actually candy.

Penuche is formed when the brown sugar caramelizes, which creates a flavor similar to caramel. Made with only brown sugar, powdered sugar, butter, milk, vanilla, and nuts, the recipe is simple, but the taste is decadent. Brown sugar is an ingredient that can make a difference in your cooking and baking. Its dark color and flavor are due to its molasses content, depending on whether it is light or dark brown sugar. The touch of molasses yields a spicier, richer flavor than regular white sugar used in most fudge recipes.

Penuche is popular in the United States and Mexico. In the United States, it is most prevalent in New England states and the South. Variations on the recipe for penuche can change by region. Some people add molasses or maple syrup to enhance the flavor. The type of nuts used is also a simple variation that can alter taste and texture; almonds, cashews, pecans, pistachios, and walnuts are all options. If preferred, try it with pepita or sunflower seeds or a combo of nuts and seeds.

There are also variations all over the world. Penuche resembles Mexican Cajeta, made with sweetened, thickened goat's milk with the same dull brown color of penuche. In India, their versions use thickened milk and are called peda or milk fudge burfi. The main difference between the regional variations is the consistency and thickness of the finished product. For example, Mexican Cajeta is a liquid and can be spread like a glaze, but the consistency of penuche resembles fudge. Indian pedas or milk burfis have a texture that is stiff like a cookie. The many variations are all popular in their parts of the world, despite the different names, they all have great taste.

Since penuche technically is a candy, traditional recipes will call for using a candy thermometer and being precise with your measurements, procedure, and temperature. When making candy, there are specific temperature stages that refer to the hardness of the candy once it has cooled. They are:

- Soft-ball stage: 235°F – 240°F
- Firm-ball stage: 245°F – 250°F
- Hard-ball stage: 250°F – 265°F
- Soft-crack stage: 270°F – 290°F
- Hard-crack stage: 300°F – 310°F

If you cook your penuche or other sugar candy to soft-ball at 235°F, your product will be very soft. However, if you cook the same recipe to 250°F, it will be much more firm. The key for a smooth, creamy, non-grainy fudge is to use a quality candy thermometer or an instant-read thermometer that can reach up to 300°F.

Fudge does not need to be refrigerated and will last up to 2-3 weeks stored in an airtight container on the counter. I find this is never a problem – fudge tends to quickly disappear.

There are also many “easy penuche” recipes available that do not require the use of a candy thermometer, and some can even be made using your microwave. Select your recipe based on the amount of time, effort, and skill you would like to put into making your penuche. Maybe try an easy recipe first, and then advance your skills to try making penuche with a candy thermometer.

Another way to enjoy penuche is as an icing or frosting for bars, cakes, cupcakes, and cookies. Penuche frosting is amazing!

Penuche can easily become a household favorite. Enjoy this delicious confection that is creamy, sweet, and melts in your mouth!

Here is a simple, yet highly recommended recipe for penuche. Recipe from:

<https://www.momontimeout.com/easy-penuche-recipe/>

Easy Penuche

Ingredients:

- 1 cup unsalted butter plus additional for buttering parchment
- 2 cups brown sugar, packed
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 1/2 to 4 cups powdered sugar, sifted
- 1 1/2 cups coarsely chopped pecans plus additional for topping if desired

Instructions:

1. Spray a 9 x 5 inch loaf pan cooking spray and line with parchment paper. Set aside.
2. Melt butter in a heavy bottomed 2 quart saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring as needed.
3. Stir in the brown sugar and cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly.
4. Gently pour in the milk and stirring constantly, bring mixture to a boil.
5. Remove from heat and let cool for 30 to 40 minutes, or until the mixture is lukewarm or at room temperature.
6. Stir in the vanilla extract.
7. Stir in powdered sugar, one to one-half cup at a time, stirring until completely combined. Add powdered sugar just until the mixture is thick and has the consistency of fudge. It will harden as it chills.
8. Stir in coarsely chopped pecans.
9. Spoon into the prepared loaf pan and top with additional pecans if desired.
10. Cover and cool until firm.
11. Cut into squares and store in the refrigerator in an airtight container.

<http://awakenings2012.blogspot.com/2014/07/penuche.html>