

## **PRALINES: A CONFECTIONARY TREAT**

How do you pronounce praline? Depending on the region you live in, the pronunciation will vary. Generally, Americans say PRAW-leen or PRAY-leen.

Pralines are a classic candy from the American South. In comparison to their culinary ancestors, American pralines are very different from the French praline paste and Belgian chocolate pralines. American pralines are decadent, delicious candies made with cream, brown sugar, and pecans. When eating pralines, they first crunch, and then the caramel base of the praline melts in your mouth like fudge.

Americans first experienced pralines when French settlers brought them and other culinary traditions to Louisiana in the 18th and 19th centuries. Since the American South has pecan trees, original recipes were modified. Instead of using hazelnuts and almonds, the readily available pecans were used. Local chefs then decided to add cream to the mixture of boiling sugar to create the soft, fudgelike texture of pralines that we know today.

Like pronunciation, the recipes for the pralines can also vary by geographic region. However, they all depend on the same main techniques. By combining sugar, butter, and cream over medium heat, then boiling the mixture until it reaches a specific temperature (usually 240°F). Next, the nuts and flavorings are added, and the mixture is beat until it thickens. The patties are formed by scooping the hot mixture onto a prepared surface, then let the pralines cool at room temperature.

By learning general tips and tricks, making pralines can be easier for the beginner. To prepare for making pralines, be sure to have your counter space clean and prepared with parchment paper or aluminum foil. Do NOT use wax paper as the liquid praline mixture is too hot and will melt the wax.

Another important guideline for making pralines is to be sure to follow the recipe exactly as written. Making candy does not allow for ingredient substitutions or doubling the recipe. If you want to double the pralines, you will need to make two separate batches.

A candy thermometer is essential when making pralines. The thermometer is attached to the pan and watched as the mixture reaches each stage of the process.

It is crucial to make pralines on a cool, dry day. If there is extra humidity in the air, the candy might end up with a more sugary, grainy texture. If you absolutely must make candy on a hot or humid day, cook the praline mixture until the thermometer registers 1 to 2 degrees higher than indicated in the recipe you are using. If the pralines don't turn out the way you hoped, you can still crumble them and use them to top ice cream for a sundae.

You will have better results from your praline recipe if you use a saucepan with thick sides and a thick bottom to conduct heat evenly. Be sure to use a pan that is big enough to allow the candy mixtures to double or triple in volume while they cook, so they do not boil over.

Once the sugar in the praline mixture has melted into a smooth syrup, spoon the pralines onto the surface you prepared before you started. If the mixture is sticking, spray the spoon with non-stick spray before getting the next scoop.

Pralines are delicious, and you can master this recipe by following close attention to details.

Creamy Pecan Pralines Recipe from Food Network

(<https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/emeric-lagasse/creamy-pecan-pralines-3644076>)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups chopped pecans

Instructions:

- Mix light brown sugar, granulated, sugar, heavy cream, butter, water and salt in a heavy-bottomed saucepan.
- Cook over low heat, constantly stirring with a wooden spoon, until sugar dissolves. Stir in pecans and cook over medium heat until mixture reaches the soft ball stage, 238°F to 240°F on a candy thermometer. If you spoon a drop of boiling syrup into a cup of ice water, it will form a soft ball that flattens easily between your fingers.
- Remove pan from heat and stir rapidly until mixture thickens.
- Drop pralines by the spoonfuls, 1-inch apart onto parchment paper-lined baking sheets.
- Let cool completely until firm. Store in an airtight container.

<https://www.thespruceeats.com/what-are-pralines-520373>

<https://www.southernliving.com/desserts/candy/how-to-make-best-pralines>