

## **Homemade Peanut Brittle**

If you want to build your candy confidence, peanut brittle is the perfect candy for you. While it is true that peanut brittle can be temperamental, it is also true that by following the procedure and helpful tips, it is a cinch to create some phenomenal candy.

### **Altitude**

Successful candy-making requires achieving the desired degree of sugar concentration for a quality product. Did you know that you need to adjust candy recipes to compensate for high altitudes? Recipes written and made at sea level need temperature adjustments when being prepared at a higher elevation. The altitude changes the boiling point of the candy, so if you do not change the recipe, you will likely have overcooked candy.

For every 500 feet above sea level, the boiling point is decreased by 1°F. When the boiling point is lower, evaporation will happen more quickly. When the water is lost faster, the sugar mixture may become too grainy or hard if the recipe is not adjusted.

Here is a handy rule of thumb: For every 1,000 feet above sea level, reduce the temperature in the recipe by 2°F.

### **Sugar Cooking Stages**

There are seven different stages of candy-making. Each stage corresponds to a texture or consistency—the hotter the syrup, the harder the candy. The final temperature must be accurately measured for the recipe to be successful. An instant read or candy thermometer is the best way to check the candy stage temperature.

### **What Makes It Brittle?**

Brittles are hard and must reach the hard-crack stage, so the sugar will be cooked to 300 - 310°F. However, brittle is delicate, and you can easily bite into it. How, might you ask? The secret is baking soda.

The sugar acids react with the alkaline baking soda releasing bubbles of CO<sub>2</sub> which make the sugar porous and brittle. The clear sugar turns opaque immediately

and increases in volume due to aeration. Use a large saucepan so the candy does not foam over.

## **Brittle Process**

Peanut brittle is much easier to make than you may think!

1) To start, measure out all ingredients before you begin cooking. When making peanut brittle, you must work fast, so there is no time to measure as you go.

2) After measuring ingredients, line a large baking sheet with a silicone mat or grease with nonstick spray.

3) Cook the water, sugar, butter, corn syrup, and salt in a large, heavy bottom pot over medium heat until it begins to boil. (In some recipes, the butter will be added later.)

4) Add a candy thermometer to the pot and boil the mixture, without stirring, until the mixture reaches the soft ball stage (238°F). Do not be tempted to cook over higher heat to speed up the process.

5) Next, stir in the nuts and boil until the mixture is at 300°F (hard crack stage). Do not forget to adjust for altitude. Keep stirring to make sure the nuts do not burn. The syrup will begin to turn a golden brown color.

6) Once the mixture reaches the desired temperature, remove the pot from the heat. Stir in the vanilla and the baking soda. The mixture will rapidly expand and bubble.

7) Quickly pour the brittle onto the prepared baking sheet and spread it into a thin layer using the back of a buttered spoon as evenly as possible before it starts to harden.

Tip: The best trick for making ultra-thin brittle is to use a warm baking sheet to keep the candy fluid enough to spread it as thinly as possible.

8) Once it has cooled, use a spatula to gently loosen the brittle from the pan and break it into pieces.

## **Storage**

Store peanut brittle on the countertop in an air-tight container for up to 6 weeks. Peanut brittle can be frozen.

Do not be discouraged if the brittle does not work the first time. It is not unusual to need multiple attempts to get it right. However, once you do, your time and effort will be worth the sweet rewards!

(Sources: [foodcrumbles.com](http://foodcrumbles.com); [www.exploratorium.edu](http://www.exploratorium.edu); [www.southernkissed.com](http://www.southernkissed.com); [uwyoextension.org](http://uwyoextension.org))