

How to melt chocolate

From the sweeties.net wiki

Chocolate is designed to melt: the fat in it, cocoa butter, melts at about 34 to 38 °C, just below body temperature, which is why it melts in your mouth. That makes it easy to melt in the kitchen too. The skill is in not overdoing it.

Before you start

- **Chop it small.** Small, even pieces melt at the same speed.
- **Use a completely dry bowl and spoon.** Water is chocolate's enemy (more on that below).
- **Go gently.** Chocolate scorches easily, and burnt chocolate tastes bitter and turns gritty. You cannot undo it.

Method 1: the microwave

1. Put the chopped chocolate in a dry, microwave safe bowl.
2. Heat at half power for about 15 seconds.
3. Take it out and stir well, even if it still looks solid. Chocolate often holds its shape until it is stirred.
4. Repeat in short bursts, stirring each time.
5. Stop when about four fifths of it has melted, then keep stirring. The heat in the melted chocolate will finish off the rest.

Method 2: over a pan of water

This is the old way, and the gentlest. Cooks call it a bain marie, or water bath.

1. Put a little water in a saucepan and bring it to a bare simmer.
2. Sit a heatproof bowl on top, making sure the bottom does not touch the water.
3. Add the chopped chocolate and let it melt slowly, stirring now and then.
4. Take the bowl off as soon as it is smooth, and wipe the bottom dry so no drips fall into anything.

A water bath heats gently because the water around it never gets hotter than boiling point, and the steam warms the bowl evenly.

Why water ruins it

Even a small amount of water, from a wet spoon, a drip or a puff of steam, can make melted chocolate seize: it turns thick, dull and grainy almost instantly. It happens because the tiny sugar and cocoa particles in the chocolate clump together when a little water hits them. It is worth knowing that a lot of liquid is fine: chocolate melts beautifully into cream or milk, which is how ganache and [proper hot chocolate](#) are made. It is the small splash that causes trouble.

If it seizes

Stirring in a little more fat, such as a knob of butter, a splash of cream or a little flavourless oil, can often loosen seized chocolate back into a smooth sauce. It will not set with a glossy snap again, but it is fine for brownies, drizzling or dipping.

Milk and white chocolate

Milk and white chocolate contain milk solids and more sugar, and they burn more easily than dark chocolate. Use lower heat and shorter bursts, and stir more often.

Melting a Mars bar is a slightly different job, because of the caramel and nougat inside: see [how to melt Mars bars](#).

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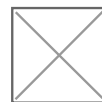
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