

How to make candy floss without a machine

From the sweeties.net wiki

A candy floss machine has a spinning head that melts sugar and flings it through tiny holes, where it cools in the air into threads: see [how is candy floss made?](#) Without a machine, you cannot make threads that fine, but you can make spun sugar, which pastry cooks use to decorate desserts.

A word on safety

This involves sugar syrup at about 155°C, which can cause serious burns, and flicking it through the air. An adult should do it, away from children and pets, and should not touch the threads until they have cooled.

What you need

This follows the spun sugar recipe from Chelsea Sugar, the New Zealand sugar refiner:

- 250 g white sugar
- 225 g water
- a little food colouring, if you like

You will also need a heavy based pan, a sugar thermometer, a pastry brush, two forks, or a whisk with its loops snipped off to leave spikes, and a rolling pin or broom handle.

Method

1. **Make the syrup.** Heat the sugar and water in the pan until the sugar dissolves, and brush the sides of the pan with cold water to stop crystals forming.
2. **Boil without stirring.** Bring it to the boil and do not stir. Cook it to 155°C, the hard crack stage.
3. **Stop the cooking.** Take the pan off the heat and dip its base in cold water, so the syrup does not keep cooking.
4. **Set up.** Hold the forks back to back, or use the cut whisk. Rest the rolling pin so that it sticks out over the edge of the worktop.
5. **Spin.** Dip the forks in the syrup and flick them back and forth over the rolling pin, so fine strands fall across it.
6. **Shape.** Gather the strands gently and shape them with your hands, without handling them too much.

Why it goes glassy

Like candy floss, spun sugar is cooked to such a high temperature that almost no water is left, and it cools so quickly that the sugar sets as a glass rather than as crystals. That is what makes the threads shine.

Use it straight away

Spun sugar does not keep. Chelsea Sugar says to use it the same day, because it absorbs moisture and starts to bead. Candy floss behaves the same way: in a study of candy floss at 25°C, it collapsed and crystallised within 3 days at 33% humidity, and in under a day in damper air: see [why does candy floss go hard?](#)

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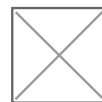
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