



Sweets for your Sweetie!!!
Culinary Class with Chef Lisa Fidler
February 13, 2014

Caramel Pecan Turtle Clusters

Yields approximately 36 clusters

For the pecans

16 ounces pecan halves

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste

For the caramel

3/4 cup heavy whipping cream

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1/3 cup packed light brown sugar

3 tablespoons light corn syrup

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the chocolate coating

12 ounces good-quality semisweet or milk chocolate, roughly chopped

Directions:

For the pecans, preheat oven to 350°F. Toss pecan halves with melted butter and kosher salt and spread onto a large sheet pan. Toast the pecans, stirring halfway through cooking, until fragrant and golden, about 10 minutes; set aside until cool enough to handle.

Line two sheet pans with parchment paper and arrange cooled pecans into X-shaped clusters. (Feel free to reserve a handful of intact pieces to use as a garnish for the turtles.) Any remaining broken pecan pieces can be arranged into small mounds to yield a more rustic-shaped cluster.

For the caramel, combine the cream, sugars, and corn syrup in a medium-sized, heavy saucepan and whisk until incorporated. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. DO NOT STIR the mixture after it comes to a boil; if necessary, dip a pastry brush in water and brush down the sides of the pot to remove any sugar stuck to the sides. Continue boiling the mixture until it reaches 250°F on an instant read thermometer, about 10 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat and whisk in butter and vanilla.

Transfer the caramel to a smaller bowl. Working quickly, spoon a generous teaspoon or so over each cluster of pecans. Allow clusters to set, uncovered and undisturbed, for at least two hours but preferably overnight.

To melt and temper the chocolate coating, prepare a double boiler or set a heatproof bowl over barely simmering water. Add approximately 3/4 of the chocolate (the remainder will get added in after the initial heating) to the top of the boiler. Melt the chocolate, stirring often, until it reaches the following temperature(s) on an instant read thermometer — 116 to 120°F for semisweet; 110 to 112°F for milk chocolate — and immediately remove from the heat. Add the reserved chocolate and continue stirring until the temperature drops to the following: 82 to 86°F for semisweet; 80 to 84°F for milk chocolate. Return the chocolate to the boiler and heat on low until the temperature rises back up to 90°F, watching carefully to make sure the chocolate does not exceed the temperature. (Alternatively, follow this guide for [How to Temper Chocolate Without a Thermometer](#))

Drizzle the tempered chocolate (or transfer to a disposable pastry bag and pipe) over the pecan clusters. Set aside in a cool place to set. Turtles will keep for up to two weeks, stored between sheets of wax paper in an airtight container at room temperature.