

DIY Chocolate Favors

You—yes, even you—can make delicious treats your guests will love

by **Andrea Rotondo Hospidor**

So your nuptial budget's stretched to the max, but you're not ready to cross guest favors off your list? Then consider rolling up your sleeves and making chocolate treats to pass out to friends and family. Yes, even those of us for whom boiling water represents a major culinary adventure can create lovely little delicacies that'll leave guests with chocolate-smearing grins on their faces.

Minda Toyoshiba, the owner of Briar Rose Chocolates, in La Verne, CA, declares that when it comes to edible favors, almost anything goes. "Weddings and wedding favors should reflect the personality of the bride and groom," says Toyoshiba, who's created confection masterpieces for clients nationwide. "Anything from marbled sea shells to carousel horses, to fire trucks and totally edible gold picture frames for use as place cards can be created. I've even done milk chocolate gorillas holding bright yellow bananas for a wedding at the Los Angeles Zoo."

If you'd like to make your own chocolate wedding favors, you'll need:

- a microwave or double-boiler
- several bowls and spoons
- candy molds (plastic or metal)
- molding chocolate such as Merckens Chocolate or Wilton Candy Melts
- small cellophane bags
- small squeeze bottle
- plastic gloves (rated for food handling)
- candy thermometer

Depending on what sorts of favors you're making, you might also want to have:

- lollipop sticks
- luster dust (a.k.a. pearl dust, a totally edible shimmery powder that adds a pretty opalescence to the favor)
- small paint brush (for applying the luster dust)
- oil-based flavorings (Lorann is a popular brand)
- decorative ribbons

Instructions

THE MOLD

Select a mold for your favors. "Molds come in both plastic and metal. Plastic molds are the most popular, are easily found in craft shops and online, are less expensive than metal molds, and come in hundreds of styles. They can cost \$1.50 to \$3.00 each," Toyoshiba says. "Metal molds can cost upwards of \$5.00 a piece."

MELTING THE CHOCOLATE

Next, melt the chocolate. You can do this with a double boiler or a microwave. When Toyoshiba makes simple chocolate lollipop-type favors, she opts for the double boiler method and melts two pounds of chocolate at a time. This is because she knows the molds are easy to fill so she'll work the batch quickly. Remember to place water in the lower pan and bring it up to temperature (between 90 and 92 degrees Fahrenheit; use the candy thermometer to check it). It should be almost to a boiling point, but not scalding hot. The chocolate goes in the smaller pot on the top, which sits in the hot-water bath. Make sure no water mixes with the chocolate or this batch will be ruined. Stir the chocolate until it's melted.

If you are working with more than one color of chocolate or are marbling with two tones, consider using the microwave method. Place a small amount of chocolate (about half a pound) in a microwave-safe bowl. Depending

on the wattage of your microwave, cook on high (600 watts) for about one minute. Return to microwave for 15-second intervals if needed. Stir until completely melted.

ADDING A FLAVOR

For a special zing, add your preferred flavoring now. You can do this with an oil-based flavoring designed for chocolate making. Just don't overdo it, Toyoshiba says. Twenty to 25 drops of flavoring per pound of chocolate works nicely.

FILLING THE MOLDS

Fill a squeeze bottle with chocolate and pour a small amount into each mold crevice. Tap the mold gently on the counter to eliminate any air bubbles. (If there are any stubborn bubbles, pop them with a toothpick.) Then, fill the crevices to the top. If your favor needs a lollipop stick, insert it now. Then, place the entire mold in the freezer for about five minutes. The favors are ready when they start to pull away from the mold. Remove the favors from the freezer and immediately place each chocolate on a sheet of wax paper to rest.

DUSTING WITH SHIMMER

A final coating of luster dust will give your favors a nice sparkle. After the chocolates are out of the mold, dip a brush (Toyoshiba prefers to use a regular paintbrush) first in a clear liquid—like water—then in the luster dust. Brush the powder onto your favors for a solid looking, rather than dusted on, color.

PACKAGING THE FAVORS

Put each chocolate into a cellophane bag and close with staples or by tying it with a pretty ribbon (if you've got enough money in your budget, you might consider getting ribbons personalized with your names and the wedding date).

How much will it cost?

The cost for DIY chocolate favors will depend on the molds you select, how much chocolate you need, and your packaging. It's possible to make 100 favors for about \$30. If you choose a larger mold or finish the favor with an expensive ribbon, expect your costs to rise to about \$1 per favor.

Online Chocolate-Making Sources

- Sugarcraft (sugarcraft.com): the place to go for candy molds and supplies
- Creative Treetops (creativetreetops.com): offers a great starter kit and how-to video
- The Chocolate Box (tcbsupply.com): offers candy molds, chocolate, flavorings, and more

If you decide not to make your own favors, many chocolatiers can come to your rescue. Toyoshiba and Briar Rose Chocolates may be reached by phone at 714/390-8732, on the Web at BriarRoseCelebrations.com, or through email at briarrosechocolate@yahoo.com.