

GANACHE

YIELD | 575 GRAMS/ABOUT 2 CUPS PLUS 2 TABLESPOONS

INGREDIENTS / WEIGHT / MEASURE (APPROXIMATE)

Dark chocolate couverture (64%) / 300 grams / 10 ½ ounces

Butter (French style, 82% fat) / 50 grams / 1 ¾ ounces or 3 ½ tablespoons

Clover honey / 20 grams / 1 scant tablespoon

Vanilla bean / ½ a bean / ½ a bean

Heavy cream (35% fat) / 275 grams / 1 ¼ cups

Ganache is a chocolate filling used in pastry and especially in chocolate candies (think truffles and filled chocolates), usually made of dark, milk, or white chocolate, heavy cream, butter with a fat content of 82 percent, and a flavor like vanilla or coffee. It is fairly simple to make, but without some basic understanding of the ingredients and the process, things can go wrong. Ask my students— they sometimes experience anger and frustration when they are learning to make ganache. But ganache is so delicious that it should never be the cause of stress. Follow these instructions and you should not have any problems.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Get out the following equipment and allow all of the ingredients to come to room temperature:

Digital scale, set to metric weights

1 large chef's knife

1 small microwave-safe bowl or ramekin

1 small rubber spatula

1 medium microwave-safe bowl

1 paring knife

1 medium saucepan

Plastic wrap

1 medium rubber spatula

1 digital thermometer

1 small stainless steel hand whisk

1 immersion blender

Read this recipe through twice from start to finish.

NOTE: For this small amount of ganache I like to use a rubber spatula. For anything larger a whisk is your tool of choice.

METHOD

1. If you purchased your chocolate in a block form, place it on a cutting board. Using the largest chef's knife you own, shave the chocolate off the side of the block from

the top down; the tip of the knife should never leave the cutting board while the middle of the knife goes up and down. Once you have shaved off 300 grams of chocolate, chop the shavings into ¼ -inch pieces. It's important to have uniform pieces so that they will melt evenly. If you are using coins there is no need to chop them.

2. In a small microwave-safe bowl, soften the butter by creaming it with the honey, using a small rubber spatula. Microwave it for 5 seconds if it is too firm, but do *not* melt it. If the fat crystals are melted they'll make the ganache feel greasy.
3. Place the chopped shaved chocolate or coins in a medium microwave- safe bowl. Microwave the chocolate for 30 seconds at 50 percent power. *Melting at 50 percent power is crucial:* since chocolate does not contain any water, high heat will make it go straight from melting to burning. The chocolate should just be semi-melted— stir for 5 seconds and you should see some of it beginning to melt. Repeat this process if you don't; the key is to have some melted chocolate and some that is still hard.
4. Split the vanilla bean in half lengthwise and scrape the seeds out with a paring knife. Place the cream in a medium saucepan with the vanilla bean and seeds. Bring it to a boil, remove from the heat, and remove the vanilla bean.
5. Immediately pour the hot cream mixture over the half- melted chocolate; *do not wait* or the cream will cool down and will not melt the chocolate properly. Waiting also allows steam to escape from the hot cream. Steam equals water, so if the steam escapes, water escapes, and your ganache will be dry. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and let the mixture stand for 60 seconds before mixing. Remove the plastic wrap and shake off the condensation clinging to it into the ganache. Using a rubber spatula, stir the mixture by making very small circles beginning in the very center, to homogenize. You will see the mixture begin to emulsify—the fat and water becoming one—in the center of the bowl. Once you see this beginning to happen (and not before), you can gradually stir from the center to the edges of the bowl by making wider and wider circles, until the cream and chocolate are completely homogenized into a thick, smooth mixture.
6. It is now time to add the butter. But you cannot just add it without measuring the temperature of the ganache. The optimal temperature for the ganache before adding the butter should be between 100.4°F/38°C and 104°F/40°C. A ganache that is too hot will instantly melt the butter, causing it to lose its creamy texture. If you try to mix the butter into a ganache that is too cold, at room temperature it will become so cold that it will trigger the crystallization of the cocoa butter and butter fat crystals— both of which begin to crystallize at around 90°F/32°C— making them separate from the water in the ganache. In cooking, when a fatty sauce gets too cold and the fat separates out we call this a broken sauce; it's a common occurrence. With ganache we call it a broken ganache. If your ganache does break, you can fix it (see my \$100 trick on page 77), but if you use a thermometer before you add the butter your ganache won't break. To bring the temperature down, just simply wait; do not stir too much or the ganache will be full of air bubbles and it won't be as appealing to the eye. Once the ganache has reached the right temperature, add the butter. Mix it first with a small whisk and immediately finish the mixing with an immersion blender for about 30 seconds, until the ganache is smooth and shiny. Use as needed.

IT'S DONE WHEN IT'S DONE

Your finished ganache should be silky and very shiny. This means that the emulsion has been perfectly achieved. It should also taste creamy because the fat has been broken down into the finest crystals possible. These are the characteristics of creams and sauces that involve an emulsion of water and fat.

STORAGE

Ganache can be used as soon as it's made or it can be tightly covered and refrigerated for up to 1 week, or frozen for up to 1 month. Lay a sheet of plastic wrap directly on top of the ganache, then cover the bowl with another sheet. The best way to use it after it has been refrigerated is to let it sit on the counter for 3 hours so that it has a chance to come to room temperature; frozen ganache should be allowed to come to room temperature overnight on the counter.

VARIATIONS

FLAVORED GANACHES: Ganache can be flavored with a variety of ingredients, such as spices, flowers, coffee, citrus, or herbs. The flavorings are infused in the cream. For best results, add your flavoring to the cream a day ahead and let it infuse overnight. Flavored ganaches fall into two categories: those flavored with spices, and those flavored with other ingredients such as coffee, citrus, or herbs. For a spice-flavored ganache, always use whole or crushed spices. Crushed spices release more flavor. Do not use ground spices because they leave a grainy feel on the tongue. As a general rule, the amount of spice you add should equal 0.2 percent of the total weight of the ganache. So for this recipe you would add about 1 gram of spice, the equivalent of a cinnamon stick, 15 peppercorns, or a vanilla bean. For strong spices such as cloves or nutmeg you would use less, or they will overpower the flavor of the chocolate. Let your palate be your guide. If adding an acidic spice like ginger, use the candied form, as fresh ginger will curdle the cream in a split second. Bear this in mind also when using other acidic ingredients such as lemon and orange. When flavoring ganache with other flavors such as coffee, tea, or herbs, use 2 percent of the total weight. For this recipe, that would be about 12 grams. If using coffee beans, crush the beans, as they will release more flavor than whole; do not use ground coffee. As with spices, infuse the ingredient in the cream overnight for the best results. One last bit of advice: beware of flavors like rose or lavender, which are extremely strong and must be used sparingly, as they can make your ganache taste like cheap soap.

Jacquy's takeaways

\$50 TRICK: Place the vanilla bean and seeds in the heavy cream the day before making the ganache. Let it infuse overnight in the refrigerator before heating the cream and making the ganache the next day. This will make a much more flavorful ganache.

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