

CONFECTIONERY AT HOME.

BY CATHERINE OWEN.



IT would surprise careful English mothers to see the quantity of candy consumed by the average American child, and yet by far the largest consumers are young ladies

—although older ones plead guilty to a “sweet tooth,” nor are the stronger sex far behind in the weakness—in fact, the Americans are a candy-eating people, and by “candy” they understand everything in the way of confectionery, from Everton toffee to chocolate creams. Confectioners’ shops are everywhere, and from the splendour of their fitting-up one may judge how remunerative and well patronised their business is. Young lovers take a box of French candy to their lady-loves, as an Englishman would a bouquet (although the bouquet will not be forgotten by the American lover), and many husbands make a point of taking a regular supply home. Candy is thus a considerable item of expenditure among all classes above the rank of working people. A pound of fine candy costs from seventy-five cents (three shillings) to a dollar (four shillings) according to the store at which it is bought.

As American women excel in making preserves, and attain a proficiency in the art of making delicate cakes, only equalled out of America by professed pastrycooks, it is somewhat surprising that they have never turned their artistic hands to the elaboration of anything more *recherché* than molasses candy in the way of confectionery. Yet to make fine French candies requires no more patience, and is as satisfactory in its results as many of the so-called artistic *distractions* of the present day, it is more cleanly than modelling in clay, and not less so than pottery work. Although many English women are less of sweetmeat-eaters than their American cousins, pure and beautiful candies are indispensable at children’s entertainments, and by many ladies of Continental tastes a *bonbonnière* is by no means despised. I will therefore give some instructions in the art, beginning with the simplest form of French candy, called *fondant*.

It is generally supposed that special utensils are necessary to make fancy candies, and the ordinary directions in a work on confectionery bewilder you with the names of articles to be used, but perfect results can be obtained with a small enamelled or brass saucepan, and a silver spoon and fork.

Fondant.—Take two pounds of the *best* loaf-sugar,

put it in the enamelled saucepan with just enough water to wet it through, and set it on a clear fire; let it boil ten minutes, removing any scum that may rise; then take two smooth sticks, dip one in, and if on touching it with the other a thread forms, take your candy from the fire quickly, have a basin of very cold water ready, and drop a little candy in it from the end of the stick; if, after you have given it time to cool, it does not form a soft ball between thumb and finger, it is not yet boiled enough; return it to the fire, and boil a minute or two longer, trying it frequently. If, however, the candy on being dropped into the water has at all a brittle feeling, it is boiled too much; then add a table-spoonful of water and put it on to boil again till you reach the right point of firmness without brittleness. This may require a little experimenting with, but once the experience is gained the chief difficulty in making creamy candies is overcome. When your sugar is boiled to the right point, set it aside to cool; if it is quite right, when cooling a thin jelly-like skin will form over it, but it may happen that a sugary coating like thin ice may cover it, which I will term *granulating*. If, however, the candy is only granulated on the top, and the bottom of the saucepan is quite smooth, you can skim off the thin sugar cake, and then take a spoon and stir, and beat the candy till it looks creamy and begins to get firm. If boiled enough it will look like lard by the time it is cold. When it is in this state, lay it aside; it is ready to use for many purposes. If, however, it is not firm you must repeat the process, that is to say, boil the sugar up once again, leave it on the fire (without more stirring than necessary to melt all parts alike) till it is quite clear, then again put to cool, and beat when half cold as before.

Your fondant made, provide yourself with blanched almonds, oil of lemon, extract of vanilla, pistachionuts, some *prepared* cochineal, strong infusion of Spanish saffron, a few walnuts taken in halves from the shell, some chocolate, a little fine rum, and Curaçao, Maraschino, noyau—anything, in fact, for flavouring that may be convenient, or preferred. To try the effect of your work, now take a piece of the fondant, divide it into as many parts as you have flavours, drop (with *great care*, as too strong a flavour is disagreeable) a little lemon on one piece, a little raspberry syrup (very strong this must be, or your candy will be too wet) on another, a drop or two of vanilla on another, rum for another; with the lemon you can also put enough strong decoction of saffron to tint it a pale primrose, enough cochineal on the raspberry for a pink. Then take each piece and work it like a piece of bread-dough till thoroughly mixed; if colour or flavour is not satisfactory, add more; here your own taste must decide, many mixtures of flavours being excellent, such as lemon, lemon and ginger, bitter almonds and lemon; and lemon is always improved by a tiny

speck of tartaric acid. Your pieces all worked up, break off little bits, and make into little eggs or balls, or grooved cones; examine the forms of fine French candies, which are nearly all formed by hand, and imitate them. This, with the mixing and arranging of colours, is the artistic part of confectionery. If you make some of your pink balls as large as a damson, take a blanched almond, press it sideways in it, till it looks like a bursting fruit, just showing a kernel; these are handsome and may be made in all colours and flavours. You have now made raspberry creams, lemon creams, vanilla creams, and so on.

Panaché Fondant.—Take three pieces of your fondant, melt a little chocolate with as little water as possible by standing it in or over boiling water, when a smooth paste put it with one piece of fondant, work them together, adding a drop or two of vanilla; when the flavour and colour suit you, lay it aside. With a second piece pound up some almonds or walnuts very fine; if almonds, add one drop of bitter almond flavour; walnuts require nothing; colour the fondant pink, and work nuts and candy together; when well mixed and coloured a bright pink, lay this aside. The third piece is to remain white and needs only flavouring.

Divide the chocolate-coloured fondant in two equal parts, also the white, make each part into a ball, then with a small round phial bottle roll each piece on the back of a dish, just as you would a piece of paste, using the finest powdered sugar instead of flour, to prevent sticking; roll the candy in the form of a strip an inch and a half wide, a quarter of an inch thick, and as long as your fondant allows; when you have the two white and two chocolate strips, take the pink, roll it as nearly the same width and length as the others as you can, but let it be at least twice as thick, then take one strip of chocolate, lay it on a piece of buttered paper, lay next a white strip upon it, fitting as neatly as possible, then the pink on that, then another white, and last of all the second chocolate; now press them gently together, but not so as to put your panaché out of shape, and lay aside for an hour in a cool place.

When firm, take a sharp knife, give a sharp clean cut to the four sides to remove uneven surfaces, and you will then have a neat brick-shaped piece of candy before you; now with the knife cut it neatly crosswise into little tricoloured slabs half an inch thick; leave these a day to dry and harden, and pack away in rows in paper boxes for use.

Chocolate Creams.—Take a piece of fondant, flavour with vanilla, roll it into little balls the size of marbles, then take some grated chocolate—it must be finest French—let it get hot, then take the white of an egg well beaten, and mix both together; when the egg and chocolate form a smooth thick batter, dip each little ball in it from the end of a fork; if the white shows through, add more chocolate; drop each on a piece of oiled paper, and set aside for twenty-four hours.

There is a new kind of candy lately introduced by fashionable candy makers in New York, and in most of the handsome stores. A confectioner stands at work in the window, showing the process of dipping the creams; the skillet of hot creamed candy stands

beside him, with an under-pan of boiling water to keep it just right. Walnut, almond, and every variety of candy are thus dipped now-a-days, and are much more delicious than the old-fashioned candies of solid sugar.

Orange and Lemon Creams.—Take an orange, carefully grate off the yellow part of the peel on to a plate, then you will have about a table-spoonful of the grated rind, squeeze on this the juice of half the orange, and the juice of half a lemon, or a tiny bit of tartaric acid; then take enough finely powdered sugar to make the orange into a stiff paste, make it into little balls, and put for some hours to dry. Then take a piece of fondant, put it in a cup, and stand it in boiling water; it will soon soften; move it about till it is like thick cream, then dip each orange ball in it and drop it off on to oiled paper. If the cream is too thin to cover the inside colour, let it cool for a minute, warming it again if it gets too thick. Lemon creams are made in exactly the same way; walnuts in halves should have this cream candy flavoured with vanilla, then be dipped and dropped from the end of the fork in the same way.

Roman Punch Drops.—Make some little balls of fondant, flavoured with lemon and a grain of tartaric acid, then melt some more fondant as for orange creams; colour it pink and flavour it with rum, then dip each of your lemon-flavoured balls in it, and drop them from the end of the fork on to oiled paper. This dropped form of candy is very pretty and delicious, and may be made in infinite variety; for instance, mix a little grated cocoanut, or chopped almonds, with fondant, make it into balls, flavour the outside cream as you choose, and dip them in it; but in making a quantity of candy it is well to have some sorts that require less time, using the drop to ornament the whole.

To this end make fondant as before, take a piece the size of an egg, chop some almonds, work them into it as you would fruit into a cake, flavour it with vanilla, rose, lemon, or bitter almond, and have a case made of stiff paper about an inch wide and deep, and as long as your candy will fill, press it well in, to form it into a neat bar, and when you wish to use it take off the paper and cut it into small cubes with a sharp knife; if the latter is wetted with spirits of wine it will cut more neatly.

To make these bars, the fondant must be very firm; the best consistency is as hard when cold as winter butter; should it by chance be so hard that it crumbles or you cannot work it, wet your hand once or twice with any spirit.

In your first efforts at making fondant you may find, instead of it being as smooth as butter, that it will have a slightly sugary texture. If you have the patience, before flavouring or colouring it, add two or three table-spoonfuls of water and boil it up, taking care you have put in enough liquid to thoroughly dissolve the sugar. To ascertain this take a little in a spoon when boiling; if it is a smooth syrup it is right; if gritty, or particles of candy still remain, add a little more water; boil now till it will form a soft ball between the fingers

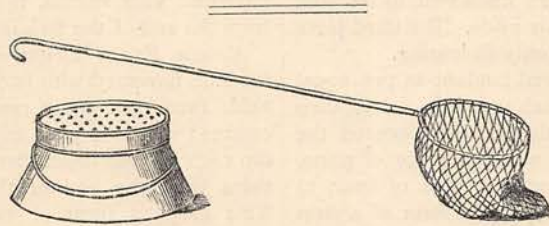
as before directed. To save time you may pour off a little in a saucer, set it in a cold place, and when ready beat it with a spoon; if the result is smooth and gets firm as it cools, you may conclude the rest in the saucepan is right; if it is white and creamy, but not firm, boil it two or three minutes longer.

Many people do not object to the sugary texture, but I would advise getting the fondant once perfect. The failure to do so once or twice will only teach you the art of sugar-boiling better than a chapter of words, and you will see for yourself how it passes from one degree to another. A pinch of cream of tartar put with the sugar when boiling will tend to prevent granulation; but if the least bit too much is added, it will also make it very hard to cream.

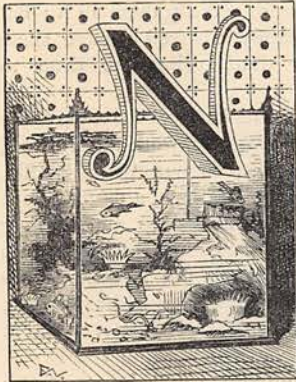
In giving these directions I have endeavoured to be very clear, remembering my own difficulties in teaching myself from books. For this reason I will emphasise one or two things—always use the *best* white sugar; be very careful that flavouring, colouring, &c., are highly

concentrated, as even a drop too much liquid will make your fondant run. When using chocolate get the best French *unsweetened*—your own candy supplies the sugar; and in making dipped candies take care your cream is thick enough to cover well, and not to run. If very hot it may be too thin; then stir a minute or two till it thickens, keeping it in boiling water all the time it is being used, or it will get hard at once; and when you put the fondant into the bowl to bring it to cream, stir it as it warms the whole time, or it will go back to syrup. In using a fork to dip, do not stick it into the article; drop your ball or nut into the candy, taking it out on the fork as if the latter were a spoon, rest it on the edge of the bowl a second to drain it, then neatly drop it on to the oiled paper. The cream candy should not run off on to the paper, leaving the inside bare; if it does, beat longer.

Lastly, when I say powdered sugar I mean such as you would use for cake-icing, as fine as flour.



OUR AQUARIUM.



NOW I suppose most people, whose minds have ever been awakened to take an intelligent interest in the world of nature, can point to some particular circumstance which first called it forth and set their faculties going in that direction. It happened with me in this wise. When I went with mother on that never-to-be-forgotten first visit to London, I was of course taken to the Zoological Gardens, and was as much pleased with the lions and tigers, elephants and hippopotami, as any other child; but when I entered the zoophyte house, then newly erected, and looked into the tanks at the extraordinary creatures that might have been flowers or seaweeds, had not the movement of their small tentacles shown them to be alive, it was quite a different thing. All the rest of my time was spent in watching them. Seeing how much more I was interested there than in anything I had previously seen, my friends very kindly suggested that if I did not care about visiting the birds and reptiles, they would go on and see them,

and come back for me on their way out of the Gardens. This was delightful, and for the first time in my life I experienced the pleasure of observing the wondrous beauty of creatures which were not endeared by being familiar pets and playthings, but the very sight of which opened a new world of life and study.

When I reached home I talked to my father on the subject, and to Tom and Jennie as well. Tom laughed at me, and said I wanted to emulate the example of one of his schoolfellows, who kept two slow-worms in some moss in a glass jar, and struck on the side of it with a knitting-needle when he wished them to show themselves for either food or play. Father asked if a bowl of gold-fish would not content me; but after awhile, during which he was no doubt turning over in his mind what could be done, proposed that we should try a little fresh-water aquarium to begin with, as he did not see his way to procure either zoophytes or the requisite supply of the briny element, whereas spring-water was always obtainable, and he believed we should have a great deal of pleasure in watching the ways of some of the denizens of ponds and streams that were well within our reach. He did not promise that we should make a great success, and thought it possible that our fish might die and emit all sorts of unsavoury odours, and observed that it was quite a new experiment to him. In a few days a kind of good-sized glass box without a lid was made by a