1930

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Recommended Citation

Carlson, Thelma (1930) "The Little Elves in Fondant," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 10 : No. 5 , Article 14.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol10/iss5/14

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The Little Elves in Fondant

By Thelma Carlson

"LITTLE strokes fell great oaks," but little strokes do not always make good fondant. It takes patience and much thought to overcome the bad influences working against the good during the process of fondant making. Much cunning is needed to keep these naughty little elves, Big-Crystals, Crumbliness and Stickiness, from jumping into the pan and spoiling the product.

Proportion, a good elf, is two cups of sugar to one cup of water. The water should be heated so it will dissolve the sugar easily. Put the lid on immediately and heat for five minutes. During this time a heated argument between the different clans of elves takes place inside the kettle. The steam caused from this washes the sugar crystals down from the sides of the pan in five minutes.

After this, it is best to uncover the kettle and let the fighting elves hurl each other from the pan. The elf, Stickiness, will have been thrown out by the time the sugar mixture reaches 113 or 115 degrees C. The presence of the good elf, Temperature, can be determined by the thermometer, or by a sample of candy forming a hard ball when it is dropped into cold water. If it is cooked above this temperature the fondant will have too little water and Crumbliness will be the victor.

Now the main elves left with which to match one's wits are the Big-Crystal elves. The first method of attack is to let the fondant cool down to room temperature and beat vigorously, so that the elf, Agitation, may do its best work. One must not stop beating for the least little time, for when the crystals start to form, they form quickly. If not stirred continually the crystals become large, and not small and fine as one would like them. During this beating, air is whipped in and makes the fondant white, and it becomes less and less transparent. Beat until it is a white, fine, crystalline mass.

Often the salts of hard water have a bad influence and the fondant is a dirty grey color. A good fairy that will help is Cream of Tartar. This not only gives it a snowy white appearance, but is one of the enemies of Big-Crystals. If you want this good fairy to do some more work, let the candy stand for 12 to 24 hours and it will bring about "ripening." The candy becomes more moist, more plastic and kneads much more easily than when it was first made.

Nibbling a delicious piece will readily prove that the good fairies Proportion, Temperature, Agitation and Cream of Tartar have completely overcome the bad elves, Big-Crystals, Crumbliness and Stickiness.

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