

Andrea's Chocolate-Dipped Buttercrunch

Gift Idea:

Present the buttercrunch in a new serving bowl or special tin.

Kathy's Note:

My sister-in-law, Andrea Gunst, shared this buttercrunch recipe with me several years ago and it has changed my holiday traditions forever. This is the stuff everyone begs for year after year — be sure to make multiple batches. Buttercrunch, a caramel coated in chocolate and ground nuts, keeps for over a week in a cool dark spot in a tightly sealed tin.

You can double the recipe if you like, but if you want to make more you shouldn't try to multiply the recipe by three or four — make multiple double batches.

Ingredients:

1 cup unsalted butter

1 cup sugar

1 tablespoon light Karo syrup

2 tablespoons water

2 large (about 7 or 8 ounce) chocolate bars*

About 1 cup very finely chopped walnuts**

**Buttercrunch can be made successfully with regular grocery store milk chocolate or chocolate chips, but you can also splurge and use fabulous bittersweet or semi-sweet 60% cocoa chocolate. The choice is yours.*

***You can use walnuts, almonds, pecans, pistachio, or any type of nut but it must be finely chopped to adhere properly to the chocolate.*

Line a cookie sheet with a piece of well-greased aluminum foil.

In a medium saucepan, heat the butter, sugar, Karo syrup and water over a low heat, stirring frequently. The mixture will caramelize and is ready when it hits 290 degrees on a candy thermometer. Watch it carefully, particularly toward the end of the cooking process. It will take at least 15 to 20 minutes to reach 290 on low heat. The mixture can burn easily; reduce the heat to very low and stir constantly if it seems to be cooking too quickly or turning darker than pale golden brown.

When the candy hits 290 remove from the heat and carefully spread it out in an even layer on the sheet of greased foil. Spread with a spatula to make a fairly thin layer. Let cool and

harden. (If you are really impatient you can place the cookie sheet outside in the cold in a protected place so it will harden more quickly.)

While the buttercrunch is hardening melt the chocolate in a saucepan over very low heat, stirring until smooth. If you choose to let the buttercrunch harden outside or in a very cold spot you must bring it back to room temperature before spreading with the chocolate. If the buttercrunch is too cold the chocolate won't adhere properly.

When the buttercrunch is hard to the touch (you shouldn't feel any soft spots), use a soft spatula and spread a thin layer of chocolate over the entire thing. Sprinkle with half the nuts, pressing down lightly so they adhere. Again, if you are the impatient type, you can let the chocolate harden in a cold spot. The chocolate should be fully dry—no wet spots to the touch.

Carefully remove the foil with the candy from the cookie sheet; place the cookie sheet on top of the foil and candy. Gently flip the candy over onto the cookie sheet and peel away the foil. Spread the remaining chocolate on top of the other side of the buttercrunch. Sprinkle with the remaining nuts, pressing down lightly. Let the chocolate harden and set in a cool spot.

When the buttercrunch is dry and hard break it into small pieces. You can keep it in a cool, dry tin or tightly sealed plastic bag for up to two or three weeks.

Serves: 6 to 8. Once you taste it, it's hard to stop!