

Fresh From the Kitchen

Recipes excerpted from ***A Baker's Field Guide to Holiday Candy & Confections*** by Dede Wilson. Published by Harvard Common Press, Boston, MA. Copyright 2005. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

Star-Shaped Marshmallows

Type: Poured candy.

Description: These are adorable star- (or snowflake-) shaped marshmallows. They are perfect for kids to have in a cup of hot cocoa on New Year's Eve while the adults are drinking more grown-up beverages.

Field Notes: Maybe you have never thought of making marshmallows at home, but they are actually very easy! The only trick is the timing—you must have the sugar syrup ready at the same time as the egg whites. This is best accomplished by beginning to beat the egg whites about halfway through the sugar syrup's cooking time. A stand mixer is of great help, as you must manage a few steps at one time. Note that you must begin these a day ahead.

Lifespan: Store 1 month at room temperature in an airtight container in single layers separated by waxed or parchment paper.

Yield: about 30 stars

Ingredients:

1/2 cup confectioner's sugar, sifted
1/4 cup cornstarch, sifted
1/2 cup water
1 tablespoon unflavored gelatin
3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 cup light corn syrup
2 large egg whites
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

Directions:

1. Line a jelly-roll pan with aluminum foil, smoothing out any wrinkles. Whisk together confectioners' sugar and cornstarch and sift about half the mixture evenly over the lined pan. Reserve the rest.
2. Stir together 1/4 cup of the water and gelatin in a small bowl. Let sit 5 minutes to soften.
3. Meanwhile, stir remaining 1/4 cup water, 3/4 cup sugar, and corn syrup together in a medium-size saucepan.

Star-Shaped Marshmallows, (continued)

4. Bring sugar mixture to a simmer over medium heat. At the same time, in a clean, grease-free bowl using an electric mixer at medium speed, beat egg whites until frothy. Add cream of tartar and continue to beat until soft peaks form. As these are beating, check sugar syrup: It should be approaching 240°F (soft-ball stage). Beat 2 tablespoons sugar into egg whites and continue beating until stiff peaks form.

5. When syrup reaches 240°F, remove from heat and whisk in gelatin mixture until it dissolves.

6. When egg whites are ready, slowly add sugar syrup in a thin stream, preventing syrup from hitting the beaters or the sides of the bowl. Beat on high speed until thick, glossy, and cool, about 4 minutes. Beat in vanilla.

7. Scrape mixture onto prepared pan, quickly spreading to a 1/2-inch thickness with an offset spatula. Sift remaining sugar-cornstarch mixture over the surface. Allow to dry at room temperature overnight. Dip a small, 1-1/2-inch star-shaped cookie cutter in confectioners' sugar or cornstarch and cut out stars as closely together as possible. Any scraps make great s'mores!

Candy Tidbits: You could flavor these with something other than vanilla if you like. A nice idea is to add a few drops of peppermint extract to the mixture instead. These are great in hot cocoa!