

## 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.

**Saltwater Taffy**

**Type:** Pulled candy.

**Description:** Okay, just a friendly warning here: I take no responsibility for any damaged dental work! That is what I actually told my recipe testers. Taffy, any taffy, is by its very nature an extremely chewy candy. Here I have made a simple vanilla flavor. At first the nugget feels rather firm, even hard, in your mouth. If it is very humid, it might be soft right away, but don't bet on it. Then your body temperature starts to soften the taffy as you chew and it becomes chewy, very chewy! Enjoy, but please be careful. Avoid this recipe if you wear braces or have any loose fillings!

**Field Notes:** Saltwater taffy doesn't require real salt water from the ocean. The origin of the name is blurry. Taffy was offered at country fairs in the Midwest by the 1880s, and sometime during that decade it appeared in Atlantic City as "saltwater" taffy. Today, particularly at seaside resorts, you will find candy stores offering dozens of flavors, from vanilla to root beer, cherry, and mint.

**Lifespan:** Store 1 month at room temperature in an airtight container.

**Yield:** about 50 candies

**Tools:** Scissors, 50 small square candy wrappers or cellophane

**Ingredients:**

1-1/2 cups granulated sugar  
2 tablespoons cornstarch  
1/2 cup water  
1/2 cup light corn syrup  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract or flavoring of choice  
Liquid food coloring (optional)

**Directions:**

1. Lightly oil the entire surface of a jelly-roll pan with canola oil. Lightly oil a pair of scissors.
2. Whisk sugar and cornstarch together in a medium-size saucepan. Gradually stir water into mixture, then stir in corn syrup, salt, and butter.

### **Saltwater Taffy, (continued)**

3. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar dissolves, then cease stirring and boil over high heat until it reaches 260°F (hard-ball stage). Remove from heat and stir in vanilla and food coloring, if using.

4. Scrape mixture onto prepared pan and set on rack to cool, about 20 minutes. During that time, occasionally scrape the edges up with a bench scraper, folding them over the middle. You just want to move it around a little and release any heat from underneath.

5. When the taffy is just warm and you are able to handle it, lightly oil your hands, pick up the taffy, and start to pull. Gather it together and pull, gather and pull. It will become more opaque and develop a satiny finish. Keep pulling until it starts to get firm, about 5 minutes of continuous pulling (but it depends on the room temperature and temperature of the candy).

6. Quickly pull taffy into ropes about 1/2-inch wide and cut 1-inch lengths with oiled scissors. Place pieces back on pan and allow to cool. Wrap individually when completely cooled.

**Candy Tidbits:** Here the flavor variations are endless. Try some cherry flavoring and a few drops of red food coloring; lime or sour apple flavoring with green coloring; lemon with yellow . . . you get the gist. The amount of flavor and color can be adjusted as desired. Also, flavorings will vary by brand, so start out with a smaller amount, taste, and adjust.