

Chocolate - Frequently Asked Questions

What is that white stuff on my chocolate?

Chocolate contains cocoa butter, a vegetable fat that is sensitive to heat and humidity. Temperatures above 75° will cause chocolate to melt. The cocoa butter can rise to the surface and form a grayish discoloration called "cocoa butter bloom." Condensation on milk or semi-sweet chocolate may cause the sugar to dissolve and rise to the surface as "sugar bloom." Neither type of "bloom" affects the quality or flavor of the chocolate and, once melted; the chocolate will regain its original color.

While refrigerated chocolate is certainly safe to use, we don't recommend it. Chocolate kept in the refrigerator may "sweat" when brought to room temperature and may not melt properly.

How long should I keep chocolate?

The shelf life of confectionery products is generally a year. Ingredients such as nuts will shorten the shelf life. Products kept beyond recommended shelf life may have flavor loss or texture changes.

How should I store chocolate?

Solid chocolate products will maintain their freshness if well wrapped and stored in a cool, dry place (55–60°F).

Cocoa is considered a non-perishable item which should maintain freshness if stored at room temperature in a tightly sealed container.

I love the flavor of chocolate—what are some other reasons I should enjoy chocolate?

- Chocolate contains a protein that inhibits bacterial growth on teeth, and since it melts at body temperature and melts off of teeth, the sugar in chocolate does not cling to teeth.
- Chocolate makes us happy when we eat it. It contains the highest concentration in any food of phenylethylamine, which is the chemical produced in the brain when a person is in love.
- Chocolate is preferred by 80% of the world's population.

Ballooning Basics

How Balloons Fly

Have you ever wondered what keeps a hot air balloon flying? The same principle that keeps food frozen in the open chest freezers at the grocery store allows hot air balloons to fly.

It's a very basic principle: Hot air rises and cold air sinks. So while the super-cooled air in your grocer's freezer settles down around the food, the hot air in a hot air balloon pushes up, keeping the balloon floating.

A hot air balloon has three major parts: the envelope, the burner, and the basket.

- The basket is where passengers ride. Usually made of wicker, baskets protect the occupants and are lightweight and flexible.
- The burner is positioned above the passenger's heads and produces a huge flame to heat the air inside the envelope.
- The envelope is the colorful fabric bag that holds the hot air. When the air inside the envelope is heated, the balloon rises.

To descend, the pilot allows the air to cool and the balloon becomes heavier than air. The pilot has complete control of the up-and-down movements by controlling the heat in the envelope.

Once airborne, balloons just float with the wind. It is true that the pilot doesn't know where the balloon will land ahead of time, but that doesn't mean he can't control the landing!

Before the balloon is launched, the pilot knows which way the wind is blowing so he knows which way the balloon will go. The air is in layers, and the different layers may be moving in different directions. So even though the pilot can't steer the balloon, he can move up and down to find a layer of air that will allow the balloon to change direction.

Some days the amount of change is very small; other days the balloon may be able to actually turn around and fly in the opposite direction!

Watch That Landing!

During the flight the balloon is followed by the chase crew. The chase crew is usually in radio contact with the pilot, and the crew's job is to be at the landing site when the balloon touches down. This can be quite an adventure in itself!

After the balloon lands, the crew packs the balloon back into the chase vehicle and everyone returns to the launch site.