

How to Make Chocolate Bird Nests

Inspired by songbirds building their nests, we have created this delightful sweet and salty treat. The recipe uses homemade shoestring potatoes for sticks with which we create nests that are naturally gluten-free. If you have not tasted chocolate with homemade salted potatoes sticks before, you are in for a crispy treat. This is a great project to make for or with children. Even young children can help fill the nests with eggs. Whether it is for a dessert table, party favors, school treats, or baby showers, these little gems are sure to bring big smiles.

Yield: Makes nine nests, each about 2" / 5 cm in diameter.

Timing: Varies according to the amount of chocolate selected.

Chocolate Bird Nests

Ingredients	Volume	Grams	Ounces
Russet potato	1 large	about 300	about 10.6
Safflower oil, for frying	2 C	436	15.4
Safflower oil	¼ tsp	1.1	0.04
Salt	½ tsp	3	0.1 oz
Dark or milk chocolate,	one 3.5-oz bar (½ C)	100	3.5 oz

Decorative Eggs and Chicks

Ingredients	Volume	Grams	Ounces
Jordan almonds, yogurt covered raisins, or yogurt covered peanuts	12	35	1.25
Additional tempered chocolate for eyes	1 tsp	4	0.14
Dried mango for beaks	1 spear	5	0.18

Equipment: Brød and Taylor Folding Proofer & Slow Cooker (without water tray), small fry pan, small 12-muffin tin, bowl, and spoons or utensils.

All surfaces in contact with the chocolate should be thoroughly clean and dry. Consider the temperature and humidity of any surfaces or tools your chocolate will come in contact with. For example, a very cold spoon could develop condensation when moved to a warm area. The resulting moisture will likely cause your chocolate to seize, becoming lumpy and unworkable.

Melting the Chocolate. Set up the Proofer with the wire rack in place but without the tray. Set the temperature to 115 °F / 46 °C. Break the chocolate into pieces and place it in a small bowl in the center of the Proofer. Add ¼ tsp safflower oil to the chocolate and warm until melted, about 30 minutes. The chocolate will not scorch even after 1 hour at 115 °F / 46 °C. Any good-quality milk or dark chocolate bar with cocoa butter will work; we chose 70% cacao dark chocolate for our nests.

Making the Shoestring Potatoes. While the chocolate is melting, put about 1" / 2.5 cm of safflower oil in a pan or deep fryer and heat to 375 °F / 190 °C. Wash and peel the potato, then cut into fine julienne strips about 1 inch / 2.5 cm long. When the oil is ready, fry the potato sticks until they are crisp and dark golden brown. Remove from fryer and drain on paper towels. Sprinkle lightly with salt and cool completely.

Note: If they are not cooked long enough, they will be too soft to retain their shape when the warm chocolate is applied.

Coating the Potatoes with Chocolate. Whisk or stir the melted chocolate / oil mixture until smooth and well combined. When the shoestring potatoes are completely cooled, add them to the warm chocolate and toss gently to coat.

Shaping the Nests in a Muffin Pan. Lightly coat a muffin tin with safflower oil and place enough chocolate sticks in each muffin cup to form nests. With a small spoon or clean fingers, gently coax the sticks to form a round shape with a depression in the center. To ensure that the nest will hold together, use a spatula to scrape the remaining chocolate from the bottom of the bowl and drizzle it over the nests. Allow the formed nests to rest in a cool place until the chocolate loses its shine and sets firmly. If necessary, they can be chilled in the refrigerator to promote a good set.

Filling the Nests. Loosen the nests from their pan by placing the pan in warm water for a few minutes. Gently remove the nests from the muffin tin and fill with your choice of edible "chicks" and / or "eggs". Eggs can be made with jelly beans, yogurt-covered raisins, yogurt-covered peanuts, or Marcona and Jordan almonds. We made our little edible chicks out of yogurt raisins with dark chocolate eyes and dried mango beaks.

