

## Plant-Based Candy by Jimmy MacMillan

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It's encouraging to see more plant-based options for confections that offer a delicious candy experience without sacrificing the texture or flavor of classical confections. When making candies, we know that adding fat slows crystallization. That is why so many of our filling ratios include dairy such as butter and cream. Adjusting to contemporary diets and lifestyle has us looking for plant-based solutions.

There are many plant-based solutions for fat replacement available in the marketplace. These options include nut milks and nondairy butters. Unlike the butter and milk that are traditionally used, these products vary depending on their source material. Milk products made from almond, cashew and coconut should be considered and evaluated by flavor and texture. Nondairy butters are based on oils such as coconut oil and sunflower oil, and also vary from product to product.



One product that has yielded positive results is Earth Balance's vegan butter. Their formulation consists of palm fruit, palm oil, soybean, flax and olive oils. Another retail product to consider is Miyoko's European Style Cultured Butter, which contains coconut oil and sunflower oil. Examining the differences among these products can be helpful in understanding how using them affects texture of the finished candy. Effective fat replacement can be achieved with 100 percent coconut oil or by combining sunflower oil (30 percent) and coconut oil (70 percent), which produces a product most similar to butter in mouthfeel. It's important to understand that each oil varies in softness at room temperature, so unlike butter, you may need to temper each oil differently, sometimes working with products at a refrigerated temperature. We have had success setting enrobed praline fillings by adding cocoa butter to praline paste. For example, by combining 300 grams cocoa butter and 700 grams praline paste at 113°F (45°C) results in a center that can be cut and enrobed. These oils can also be used to set hand-rolled truffles, combining with chocolate and nut milks to achieve a desired set that can remain soft at room temperature. The addition of oil help counteracts the hard set of cocoa butter at room temperature. In our caramels, we use coconut fat combined with other oils to adjust the softness of the candy. Start with 40 percent coconut cream or milk to 10 percent plant-based butter, with the remaining 40 percent consisting of various sugars.

Chef Marta Martin has put together a plant-based bulletin support by her research that I would recommend to further understand how professionals can embrace plant-based sweets. Copies of the bulletin can be found at <https://www.cacao-barry.com/en-US/plantbased>.

Although we've only scratched the surface with this topic, it's important to understand that our customers will continue to want candies that are dairy free and made from plant-based materials. And it's important as pastry professionals that we keep an open mind and follow trends that support contemporary lifestyles.

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