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## Stickelers Answer

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Stickeler's Puzzle on Page 4

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## Kitchen Diva

### Hooray! Chocolate for Valentine's Day

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, have you wondered how the connection between chocolates and love was created, or how the tradition of giving chocolates on Valentine's Day began? As with many popular holidays, connecting chocolates to Valentine's Day was a business decision.

Some of the commercial connection is due to the marketing strategy of Richard Cadbury in the 19th century. His British family manufactured chocolate and was looking for a way to utilize the cocoa butter that was extracted during the making of chocolate liquor. Cadbury figured out a way to make chocolate bars that were tasty and economical. Previously, resources were limited and chocolate was an expensive purchase that only the elite class was able to afford.

Cadbury's next step was to be the first to create beautiful heart-shaped boxes for chocolates decorated with Cupids and roses, which were quite popular in Victorian days and were considered as symbols of romance.

In the U.S., it was chocolatier Clara Stover, the wife and business partner of Russell Stover, who took the chocolate-romance marketing strategy to the next level. Stover, along with her husband, first started selling chocolates wrapped in heart-shaped boxes in 1923. Their business quickly took off when they started selling to department stores.

If you want to add your own personal touch to your Valentine's Day gift, use these instructions and the recipe below to make your own Valentine's Day Truffles. For an added touch and to create a holiday tradition, place your truffles in a heart-shaped gift box along with a love letter. Happy Valentine's Day!



Photo by DepositPhotos.com

#### VALENTINE'S DAY TRUFFLES

**NOTES:** Truffles are bite-sized chocolate confections made from ganache -- a mixture of melted chocolate and warmed cream -- cooled until firm, rolled, and coated with chocolate, cocoa powder or chopped nuts.

This recipe makes a ganache using a 2:1 ratio of chocolate to cream. Weigh the ingredients for best results.

Look for high-quality chocolate in the 60 to 70 percent range. Avoid chips or bars, as they typically contain added hardening agents.

Finely chop the chocolate. A serrated/bread knife will make this easy, and finely chopping the chocolate will help it melt more quickly and evenly.

Cool the chocolate ganache before scooping and rolling. Once the chocolate is melted, whisk the ganache mixture until smooth and shiny. Then pour the ganache into a shallow pan to cool in the fridge. You can scoop the ganache into tablespoon-sized rounds after about 30 minutes to make the truffles. Work with gloves on to make cleanup easy.

8 ounces of 60 to 70 percent chocolate for making truffles (like Lindt-dark, milk and white chocolate)

1/2 cup heavy cream

Truffle coatings: Dutch cocoa powder, chocolate sprinkles, finely chopped hazelnuts or almonds, or 8 ounces of 60 to 70 percent chocolate for melting and dipping

1. Finely chop the chocolate using a serrated or bread knife. Transfer the chopped chocolate to a medium bowl.

2. Microwave the cream on high until hot but not boiling, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Alternatively, heat the cream over low heat in a small saucepan until steaming.

3. Pour the hot cream over the chopped chocolate and set aside for 5 minutes to melt. Then, whisk the cream and chocolate together until smooth and shiny.

4. Pour the ganache into a shallow pan or baking dish, such as an 8 by 8-inch baking dish. Refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes.

5. Scoop and roll the truffles. Use a tablespoon or small cookie scoop to portion the ganache into 1-ounce portions (about 2 tablespoons each). Roll the balls between gloved hands to avoid fingerprints until smooth, and place on a plate. Refrigerate for a few minutes while preparing the coatings.

6. Coat the truffles. For best results, pour the coatings into small dishes or bowls. Roll the finished truffles in cocoa powder, nuts or sprinkles. You also can dip the finished truffles in tempered chocolate (procedure follows).

7. The finished truffles keep best in the refrigerator and can be stored there for up to two months. Bring truffles to room temperature 30 minutes before serving. Makes 12 (1-ounce) truffles.

#### CHOCOLATE-DIPPED TRUFFLES

If the temperature of your room is fairly cool (60 F to 70 F) your candies can be left out to set overnight, but if your room is warm, or you want to speed up the process, you can refrigerate them for approximately 10 minutes to set the chocolate for dipping. This setting period will form a "skin" around the outside to help the truffles keep their shape. Use a fork to dip the truffle into the dipping chocolate.

To make the dipping chocolate: Place 8 ounces of chopped chocolate in a large microwave-safe bowl, and microwave in 30-second intervals. Stir after every 30 seconds until most of the coating is melted. Stir constantly until the remaining chunks of chocolate have melted and the mixture is smooth.

Some of the Valentine's Day history courtesy of chocolatier Jason Vishnefske ([www.santabarbarachocolate.com/blog/](http://www.santabarbarachocolate.com/blog/)).

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