

The SWEET QUEEN

Chef and food writer Maunika
Gowardhan shows us how to make barfi,
an irresistible Indian fudge

words and recipe maunika gowardhan
photographs james byrne

With Diwali and Halloween taking place this month, and the run-up to Christmas starting any minute now, October kicks off a good few months of celebrating and eating fabulous food. As far as I'm concerned, it's the best time of year.

Sweets and puddings play a big part in Indian culture and I think it's fair to say that a celebratory meal wouldn't feel complete without them. Diwali is no exception; it's a special time for gathering and feasting with family and friends.

Barfi comes in a variety of flavours, and shops across India sell truckloads of it during the festive season. Our sweets often have a savoury hint of cardamom about them, which helps balance out their sugary nature. Following on from that idea, my recipe includes ground green cardamom (my favourite spice), vibrant pistachios and stem ginger. Be warned – leave these fudgy little squares unattended in your kitchen and they won't last long. »

For more of Maunika's delicious recipes,
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Tip: You can make this fudge in a variety of flavours. I find dark chocolate works well with stem ginger and ground cardamom, but I also love the vibrancy of the saffron version



Chocolate, cardamom and stem ginger barfi

Makes about 40 squares

Prepare 10 minutes plus cooling and setting

Cook 15 minutes

- 200g milk powder
- 1 tsp green cardamom powder
- 80g stem ginger, plus 2 tsp syrup from the jar
- 50g shelled pistachios, plus extra to decorate
- 20g unsalted butter
- 200g dark chocolate (70% cocoa solids), broken into pieces
- 200ml double cream
- 400g condensed milk

- 1 Line the base of a 28cm x 20cm dish with baking paper. Sift the milk powder and cardamom powder into a bowl.
- 2 Roughly chop the stem ginger and the pistachios and set aside.
- 3 Melt the butter in a large non-stick saucepan over a low heat. Add the chocolate and stir constantly until

melted. Pour in the double cream and stir for another 20 seconds.

4 Stir in the condensed milk and simmer for 2 minutes.

5 Add half the chopped pistachios to the pan, along with the stem ginger and syrup. Mix well.

6 Whisk in the milk powder mix, a couple of tablespoons at a time. Continue to whisk for at least 2 minutes, until the mixture is smooth and lump free.

7 Once smooth and well combined, swap your whisk for a rubber spatula and continue to stir for a further 2-3 minutes, until the barfi mix begins to leave the sides of the pan and come together.

8 Tip into the prepared dish and smooth the surface. Top with the remaining pistachios and leave to cool for an hour before transferring to the fridge to set overnight.

9 Cut the barfi into 40 or so small squares and serve with little cups of hot chai, if you like.



OR TRY THIS VARIATION

Saffron and almond barfi

Following the same recipe, replace the pistachios with an equal quantity of chopped almonds and omit the chocolate. Soak ½ tsp saffron in 1 tbsp warm water and add to the saucepan at the same time as you stir in the double cream. Sprinkle with chopped pistachios and almonds, slice and serve.

