



Sweets For Your Sweetheart!
Valentine's Day is only a few weeks away, believe it or not! If you'd like to make some sweets for your sweetheart, it's not too early to start!

Many candy recipes cook well in microwave, and some are much easier in the microwave than on a stove burner. The Chocolate Walnut Toffee takes almost an hour to reach the hard crack stage on the stove, but less than 15 minutes in a microwave and never scorches! Here are some hints for using your microwave for candy making:

-Use medium (50,5) power for melting chocolate. Stir frequently, since chocolate holds its shape when soft until it is stirred.

-For boiled candy, like the peanut brittle or toffee below, you may have to cut a conventional recipe in half. Use high power and a large heat proof container. Plastic microwave containers may melt from the candy temperatures! Do not fill container more than half full, since foods bubble up more in a microwave.

-Stir boiling candy once or twice to distribute heat to the middle since microwaves cook from the outside in.

-Do not put a regular candy thermometer in a microwave. Cook the candy and remove it from the oven to test the temperature, using either a cold water test, or a thermometer. Several kinds of microwave candy thermometers are available. Look for one if you make a lot of candy.

-To test candy with a regular thermometer, use the following temperature ranges. A thermometer reading anywhere in the desired range will give candy the proper consistency:

WATER TEST:
Soft Ball Stage
Hard Ball Stage
Hard Crack Stage

THERMOMETER:
235-240 degrees
260-270 degrees
295-310 degrees

This fudge recipe is super easy, and never fails.

Rocky Raisin Fudge

- 1 6-ounce package chocolate chips (1 cup)
- 1 6-ounce package peanutbutter or butterscotch chips (1 cup)
- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows

1. Line two trays or cookie sheets with foil or waxed paper.

2. Put chips in 2-quart batter bowl or microsafe mixing bowl. Microwave on medium (50,5) for 5 minutes, until glossy and soft.

3. Stir until smooth. (If chips are not melted, microwave on medium for another minute or so, and stir again.)

4. Stir in milk, then remaining ingredients. Turn out onto prepared trays and spread to desired thickness.

5. Refrigerate one or two hours until firm before cutting. Makes about 2 pounds.

TIPS: Shape fudge into a heart for Valentine's Day, or into your sweetheart's initial!

Candy may also be dropped in foil or paper candy cups. If candy cools too much when making drops, reheat for 30-60 seconds on medium (50,5). Reheating too long will melt the marshmallows.

-To make Rocky Road Fudge, use 1 1/2 cups each marshmallows and nuts and omit raisins.

When making peanut brittle or toffee use the microwave for long times given. Cooking too long will burn the candy. Not cooking it long enough will result in chewy instead of crunchy candy!

Peanut Brittle

- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup raw peanuts
- 1 tablespoon margarine or butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon soda

1. Cover a cookie sheet with foil and set aside.

2. In a 2-quart heatproof glass bowl or measure, put the corn syrup. Add sugar, salt and peanuts on top in that order. Microwave on high for four minutes.

3. Stir, then microwave on high for four minutes longer. Add margarine and vanilla; stir again.

4. Microwave on high for 1 1/2 to 2 minutes, until light brown. For best results, microwave the full 2 minutes in this step, unless the peanuts are getting too brown. (With a microwave candy thermometer, cook to hard crack stage, 295 to 310 degrees.)

5. Quickly stir in soda and immediately spread on foil. Don't worry if it looks bubbly and funny as you spread it, it smooths out.

6. Leave at room temperature to cool, then break into pieces when cold. Makes about 1 pound.

TIP: If you can't find raw peanuts, use roasted peanuts and omit the salt. Add roasted peanuts at the end of the cooking time, with the margarine and vanilla, and not at the beginning.

CHOCOLATE WALNUT TOFFEE

- 1 cup butter (1/2 pound)
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon white corn syrup
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts

1. Grease a 9-inch square pan thoroughly and set aside.

2. Combine butter, sugar, corn syrup and water in a 2-quart heatproof glass bowl or measuring cup.

3. Cook on high for 5 minutes. Stir, then cook on high for 5 minutes longer.

4. Stir and cook on high for 1 1/2 to 2 minutes longer, until candy turns light golden brown. (With a microwave candy thermometer, cook to the hard crack stage, 295 to 310 degrees).

5. Stir in the 1/2 cup chopped walnuts and pour the mixture into the prepared pan. Let stand several hours until firm.

6. Put chips in a small bowl and microwave on medium (50,5) for 1 to 2 minutes until glossy and soft.

Stir until melted and smooth, then spread over the toffee mixture.

7. Sprinkle 1/4 cup finely chopped nuts over the chocolate, pressing them in lightly. Chill to set chocolate.

8. Turn out of pan (warm pan bottom in hot water for a minute or so if necessary) and break into irregularly shaped pieces. Store in an airtight container or freeze. Keeps well at room temperature for several weeks. Makes about 1 pound.

NOTE: The cooking times above are for microwaves with 600 to 700 watts of power; for 500 to 600 W, add 10 seconds to each minutes; for 400 to 500 W, add 20 seconds to each minute.

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Richards named Snyder County Extension agent

UNIVERSITY PARK - Karen T. Richards knows about retailing, and she'll share some of her expertise as the newly appointed home economics and 4-H Extension agent in Snyder County.

"My background is in retailing, so I hope to incorporate what I know into programs on consumer spending," she says. "If people know how retailing decisions are made, they'll be better consumers."

Richards replaces Ethel Ann Jones, who is serving as interim extension clothing specialist at the Pennsylvania State University. Richards' appointment was announced by W. Wayne Hinish, acting dean of the university's College of Agriculture and director of the university's Cooperative Extension Service.

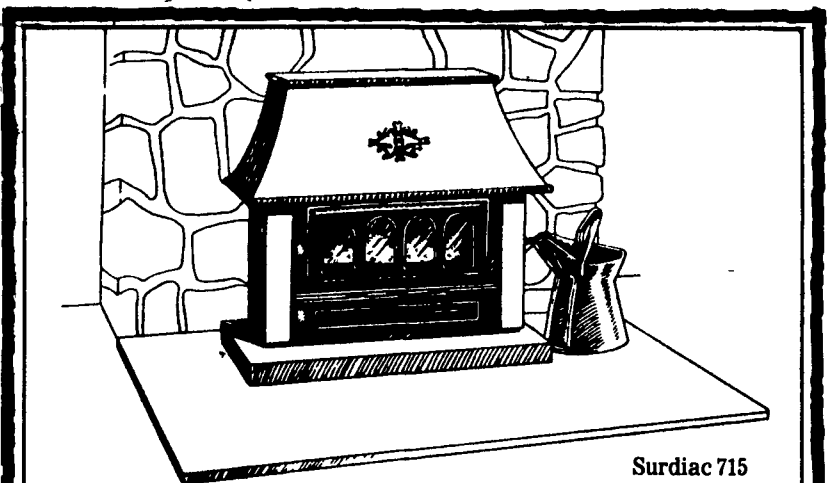
Richards will be responsible for educational needs and programs centered on youth and volunteer

development in Snyder County. Her first duty, she says, involves the Master Knitting program scheduled for this March.

"Volunteers are trained in knitting for 50 hours, and in return must give 50 hours of volunteer time by teaching others, giving radio presentations or writing articles," she explains. "The program will use volunteers as a resource and save time for the Extension staff."

Richards earned her bachelor's degree in home economics education from Penn State in 1979. She was a member of Phi Upsilon Omicron and Omicron Nu honor societies from Delta Gamma sorority.

After graduation, she purchased and retailed clothing for Burdines of Miami, FL between 1979 and 1983, and was an executive staff assistant for Clark's Department Store in Lufkin, TX between 1983 and 1985.



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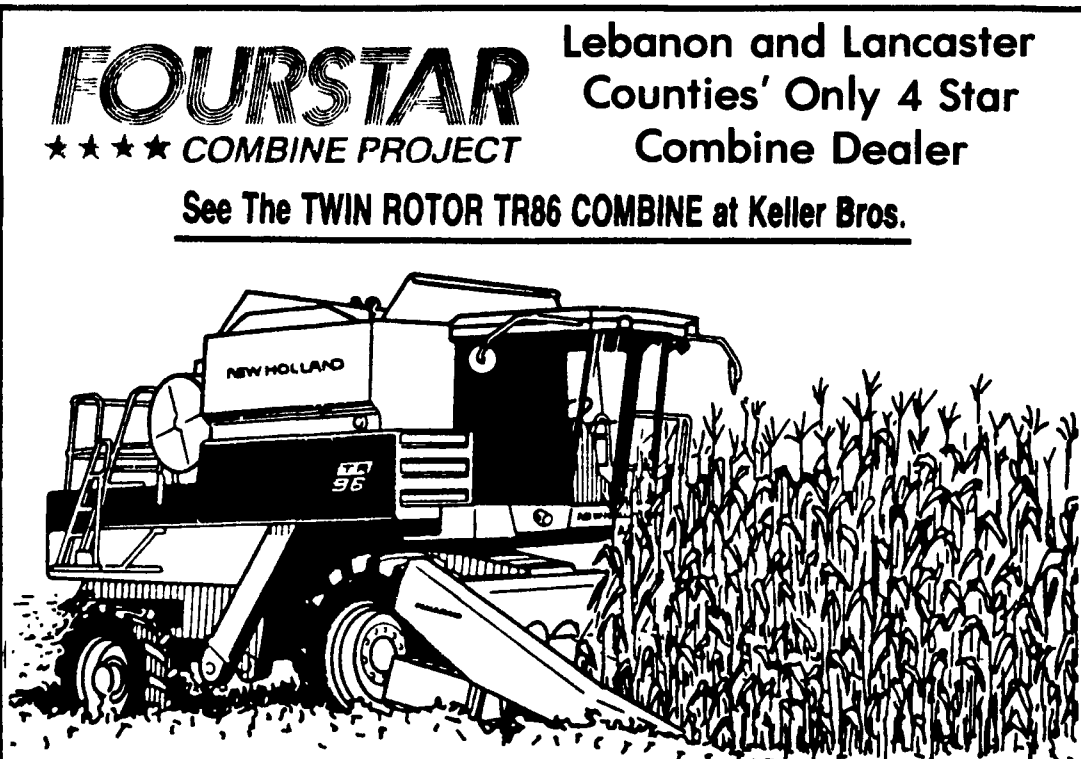
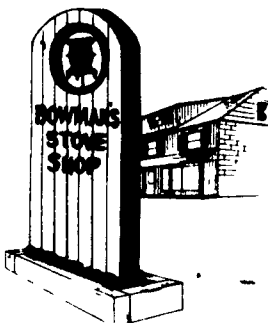
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