



Recipes:

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Candying Chiles

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Bold Banana Bread

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Belligerent Butter Scotch

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Blistering Blue Lagoon Cocktail

Many chile gardeners know harvest time as "too many chiles", and we already showed you various ways to use and preserve the plenty of pods, for example by **drying**, [pickling](#), **juicing**, or

making hot sauce

. Now here's a new way to keep the pods for enjoying all year long: Candied Chiles! The ways you can use the sweet peppers are almost limitless, and the same is true for a byproduct of the process, spicy syrup.



An Ancient Tradition

Candying is one of the most ancient forms of preserving the harvest - the ancient Egyptians preserved nuts and fruits with honey. Like spice, candied fruit like wild oranges, melons and apricots, were brought to Europe by traders from the Middle East and China in the Early Middle Ages. Until sugar was introduced during the Crusades, honey and palm syrup were used, later replaced mostly by sugar-based syrup. The technique is the same, though - by placing fruit in syrup with gradually increased sugar content, their cell liquid is getting replaced by sugar. This migration through semi-permeable cell walls is called osmosis, not to be confused with *Ozzmosis*, the great '95 album by Ozzy Osbourne. For an in-depth explanation of osmosis, see [Wikipedia](#)

[here](#). Typically, 70 to 75 percent of the extracted cell liquid, mostly water, will be replaced by sugar, while shape, color and a good portion of the flavor will be preserved. That way, candied fruit will keep almost indefinitely.

Since its introduction to Europe in the Middle Ages, the technique was getting refined to perfection especially in France and Italy. In fact, these countries have true artists even today. At a confectioner's store in Biarritz, France, we discovered these beautiful candied fruits - oranges, pears, melons, even whole pineapple.



Candied fruit at a confectioner's

store in Biarritz, France

At the *Peperoncino Festival 2006* in Southern Italy (see our [report](#)), we discovered a great

dark chocolate from Tuscany that was nicely spiced with bits of candied habanero peppers!

"Habanero Candito"

from Tuscany, Italy:

Dark chocolate with

pieces of candied



habanero chiles.



This was the ultimate motivation to try candying ourselves - chiles, of course. We heard from

other chileheads who already had successfully candied chiles, so we rolled up our sleeves (so

they wouldn't get sticky.)

As you can see below, our efforts were not in vain. In fact, the chiles look and taste just great,

and we've already found many uses for them.



Home-made Candied Chiles:

Serrano, Jalapeno (strip, green), Caribbean Red, Thai Hot, Fatalii (yellow), Orange Habanero, Cherry B

Be warned, though - **candying chiles is not for the impatient**. The process spreads over six

days, taking about 30 minutes every day, not counting cleanup of sticky utensils and pots. While

the sophisticated approach of French confectioners aims for soft fruit, we're aiming for crunchy

chiles with a transparent, almost glass-like appearance, so we can take a simpler approach.

Let's get started!



Required Equipment

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Medium sized saucepan

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Wooden spoon

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Mason Jar (1 quart/1 liter) or similar glass container with lid

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Small glass bowl that just fits into the opening of the jar, to hold down the

peppers in the liquid

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one or two clean marmalade jars, lids

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Heat resistant strainer

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1/2 quart (1/2 liter) jars (for example jam jars) to keep excess syrup

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Cookie cooling rack

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Baking oven or electric dehydrator

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Old newspapers to put under pots and jars



Ingredients

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About 1/2 to 3/4 lb. (250 to 340 grams) of fresh chile pods,

rinsed and cut in half or strips (see note below)

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2.6 lbs.(1,2 kilograms) regular white sugar

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1 Quart (1 liter) water

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Let's Get Started

Day #1

1. Preparing the Peppers

Like with all preserving techniques, only the freshest, spotless chiles should be used. These are

rinsed and patted dry.



Peppers ready for Candying

To ease syrup penetration, it is recommended to cut the pods in half. You should also deseed

them. Just cutting the pods in half works well for thin-walled varieties like *Habanero*, *Cayenne* or

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ai

Fleshier chiles like

Jalapeño

are better cut into strips. See also our

[Tips Section](#)

below.

2. Cooking the Syrup

In a large saucepan, combine 1 quart (1 liter) water and 2 lbs (1 kilogram) sugar. Using the

wooden spoon, mix well, then bring to a rolling boil. Keep boiling and stirring until the mixture

takes on a syrupy consistency, but still stays clear and colorless. This takes about 30 Minutes. If

you are using a ceramics stovetop, watch out not to spill any sugar or sirup on it, as this stuff

burns in fast.

Put the cut chiles into the Mason jar or other glass container, pour with boiling-hot syrup

(caution - don't burn yourself). Leave enough room to put a small bowl as a weight on top to

keep the peppers down, all covered with in the liquid. Close the container, keep remaining

syrup in marmalade jar(s).



Pouring the Syrup

Let chiles sit in the closed container for 24 hours.



Don't they look beautiful?

Chiles Candying in the Syrup

Notes:

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To minimize spill cleanup, put a newspaper underneath your jars. It is also recommended to

rinse and clean all cooking utensils right after work.

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Various candying instructions recommend to start the pouring with syrup that has cooled down

first. We found pouring the piping hot liquid helps avoiding spoilage of peppers by fermentation

while sitting in the liquid for days. Of course we could have boiled the pods quickly first, but that

might have made them soft and mushy, losing their shape. Feel free to experiment here.

Day #2

Drain chiles in a strainer, letting the syrup flow into your saucepan. Put chiles back into the

glass container.



Straining the Chiles

Bring the syrup to a boil and stir in an additional 50 g (1.75 oz.) of sugar. Add also the syrup you

saved in marmalade jars, keep boiling and stirring with your wooden spoon for about 10 minutes

at high heat. Pour the hot syrup over the chiles again, put on the weight to keep them all

covered in liquid. Also, save the remaining syrup again, let chiles sit in their closed container for

another 24 hours.

Day #3 to Day #5

Repeat the second day's procedure, including the addition of 50 g (1.75 oz.) more sugar every

day. Both the sugar addition and the reduction by cooking will cause the syrup to become

thicker and thicker. And it's getting hotter, too, as some of the capsaicin dissolves from the

peppers into the liquid. After Day #5, let sit for 48 hours and have a rest on Day #6.

Day #7

Pour syrup and chilis into saucepan and bring to a brief boil, for just one minute, then take off

the heat.

Drain chiles through strainer, catch the syrup in jars - you'll see we have great uses for the

sticky spicy liquid as well.



Draining the Syrup off the Chiles

Arrange the chiles on a cookie cooling grid or a grid from your baking oven. Be sure to put

parchment paper or a newspaper underneath, as we put the peppers there to let them drip off

excess syrup. Count for two hours.

As the pieces will still be sticky, we finish them off in the baking oven or dehydrator. Since I kept

my good old trusty El Cheapo "Mr. Coffee" dehydrator from our time living in Florida, I used that

one, and the chiles were nice and dry after just four hours. When using a baking oven, drying

should take about 15 minutes at 210F (100°C) to 300F (150°C) with a door lightly open. If

available, turn on the oven's air, too. Check after 10 minutes, drying should be finished no later

than another 10-15 minutes. (To keep the peppers as they are, we prefer the airflow and lower

temperature offered by a dehydrator, which is a great device for drying peppers in general).



Finishing in the Dehydrator

Either way you should let the chiles cool to room temperature, then store them in an airtight

container. Flat containers like *Tupperware* or *Gladware* allow to place the pieces side by side,

rather than stacking them, and potentially have them stick together.



Airtight Storage

That's because it *can* be possible that the chiles are still a little sticky. If that's the case, you can

coat them with powdered sugar (also called

confectioners' sugar). The

French confectioners glaze their fancy fruits with a thin sugar coating after candying to keep

them soft and moist by preventing drying out more than desired. But since we aimed at

producing crunchy chiles to begin with, we don't need to do that. Our candied chiles didn't stick

after weeks of storage, and they wonderfully kept shape, color, heat and aroma. I think the

pictures speak for themselves!

To retain the candied fruits' colors, commercial production sometimes involves the addition of

sulphur dioxide, a legal additive. Store your candied chiles at a dark place, they should keep their

colors nicely without any additives. Especially the colors of mature pods survive syrup treatment

and cooking really well. In fact, they seem to come out even more vibrant on the translucent

pods. Just the green color of immature pods tends to darken to a brownish tint during candying.

Note: We found it to be **very important** to get rid of all humidity and to store the candied

peppers tightly closed at a cool place, preferably in the refrigerator. Especially fleshy peppers

can get moldy after a couple of months if not dried well and/or stored too warm. Since the

thin-fleshed varieties are getting dry more easily, we found small hot red peppers as well as

c.chinense varieties like Habanero, Tropical Red, etc. best suited for candying.

Now let's see what we can do with our beautiful candied chiles - and with the hot syrup!

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How to Use the Candied Chiles



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Spice up fruitcake, muffins and other cakes, like our

Bold Banana Bread (see [recipe](#) below) or how about

a habanero cheese cake (above), with bits in the dough

and matching decoration on top!

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Decorate cakes, ice cream and other desserts

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Use as a spicy snack (optionally cover with chocolate - yum!)



What to Do with the Spicy Syrup

The hot & spicy syrup is a nice byproduct that can be used in many ways as well. Here are

some ideas.



Spicy Syrup: The byproduct can

be used in many ways as well

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To sweeten tea and hot chocolate, especially during the cold season

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For cocktails that call for syrup as an ingredient, like Blue Lagoon (see [recipe](#))

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Over waffles and pancakes -- makes U hop ;-)

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Spicy toffee, caramels, or our *Belligerent Butter Scotch* (see [recipe](#) below)

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For lingering lollipops

The syrup is stored best in marmalade or Mason jars. Strain to keep out seeds and chile

particles from candying



Tasty Tips

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These chiles can be candied--just cut into halves:

Aji Amarillo, Andy and other Cayenne varieties, Apple Sweet Pimiento, Caribbean Red,

Cascabel, Cherry Bomb, Datil, De Arbol, Dutch Red, Habanero, Malagueta, Peter Pepper,

Piquin (Pequin), Red Savina, Scotch Bonnet, Serrano, Super Chili, Tabasco, Thai, Birdeye.

(The pea-sized Chiltepins are probably candied best in whole, punctuated with a needle. That

one is in the works right now.)

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These meatier varieties are better cut into strips or rings:

Antohi Romanian, Biscayne and other Cubanelle type peppers, Feher, Hungarian Hot Wax,

Italia, Jalapeno, Manzano (Rocoto), New Mexicans like Ortega, Anaheim, Joe Parker, Paprika

Supreme, Poblano, Rio Grande, Rocoto, Round of Hungary, Santa Fe Grande.

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If you wish to have soft sweet chiles, just leave them in the syrup. Whenever needed, you can

fish them out of the jar. That's almost like *Peperoncini Giulebbati*, candied sweet hot chiles that

are great on cheese. We found those on an Open Doors chile event in Parma, Italy, presented

by Maurizio from

Ca' d'Alfieri

(see our

[report](#)

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Still have one of those 70's Bodum "French Press" low-tech coffee makers? These devices are

great for candying chiles, as they provide great means to keep the pods submerged in the

syrup.



Great for Candying: "Bodum" Coffee Maker

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Keep sections of pods uniform in size for each batch.

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Procedure and recipes are not carved in stone -- experiment!

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Most importantly, take your time and allow this to be a fun project.

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Do you have any further ideas how to use candied chiles (and the syrup) that

you would like to share? We'd love to hear from you!

Happy Chile Candying!!



Recipes

Bold Banana Bread



Credit for this tasty recipe goes to Mary Jane, who baked this banana bread on one of our visits

to Albuquerque. While MJ used a chopped fresh habanero, I replaced it with a colorful mix of

chopped candied peppers, making it almost look like a fruit cake.

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1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour

-

2 1/4 teaspoons baking powder

-

1/2 teaspoon salt

-

1/3 cup shortening (we prefer butter)

-

2/3 cup sugar

-

1/2 teaspoon lemon zest

-

2 eggs

-

2 soft, ripe bananas

-

1/2 cup chopped walnuts or pecans

-

1 cup coconut flakes

-

1 tablespoon mixed candied chiles, chopped

Note: All ingredients should be at room temperature.

1.

Preheat oven to 350F (180°C)

2.

Sift flour with baking powder and salt.

3.

Blend shortening, sugar and lemon zest to a creamy consistency.

4.

Beat the eggs, mash the bananas, blend both well with the shortening/sugar mixture.

5.

Add the sifted ingredients in three steps, beating the batter after each addition until smooth.

6.

Fold in the chopped nuts, candied chiles and coconut flakes.

7.

Pour banana nut bread batter into a well-greased loaf pan.

8.

Bake for about 1 hour, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

9.

Let cool before slicing.

Yield: One loaf

Heat Scale: Mild (punctuated by hot pepper bits)

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Belligerent Butter Scotch

This candy recipe makes good use of the syrup created as a byproduct when making candied

chiles. Depending on the chiles used, the syrup can get pretty hot. Typically it has a consistency

somewhere between corn syrup and molasses and looks clear, lightly tinted.

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1/2 cup chile syrup

-

1/2 cup butter (125 grams)

-

2 oz. (60 grams) pecans, walnuts or almonds, chopped

1.

Butter a baking sheet or a piece of parchment paper. Cover an area as large as a letter size

page with the chopped nuts and set aside.

Candied Capsicums



In a microwaveable cup, cautiously warm butter so it just melts to a liquid stage.



Stir in 1/2 cup of sugar and 1/2 cup of hot sauce. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring frequently.



Crack into 1/2" pieces, store in airtight container and enjoy!



[Recipe for Candied Capsicums](#)