

## Chocolate Covered Strawberries

60 large fresh strawberries, with stems left intact  
1 (12-ounce) package semisweet or bittersweet chocolate chips  
3/4 cup half and half cream  
1 to 2 tablespoons brandy, your favorite liqueur, or 2 teaspoons prepared coffee

Line a baking sheet or cookie pan with waxed paper.

Wash the strawberries and pat dry thoroughly with paper towels; set aside. NOTE: Make sure the strawberries are completely dry. Even a drop of water in the melted chocolate can cause it to "seize" and turn the entire mixture into a grainy mess.

If you use refrigerated strawberries, allow them to come to room temperature a few hours before dipping it in the melted chocolate. If you use cold fruit, condensation will form and that will prevent the chocolate from sticking.

Using one of the below methods, melt the chocolate chips:

### Methods of Melting Chocolate:

#### Double Boiler:

- In the top of a double boiler over hot water, not boiling water (don't let the bottom of the bowl touch the water, melt chocolate; add cream, stirring until smooth. NOTE: Be careful boiling water may cause steam droplets to get into chocolate which can result in "seizing," when the chocolate becomes stiff and grainy. NOTE: If you don't have a double boiler you can improvise one by placing a glass or stainless steel bowl over a pot of simmering water.
- Remove from heat and blend in brandy, liqueur, or coffee. Let the chocolate cool slightly, but it should not set.

#### Microwave Melting Chocolate:

- In a microwave-safe bowl, melt chocolate chips using either the defrost setting or 10-percent power in the microwave.
- Microwave for 1 minute, then check and stir. If you need more time, do it in 10-20 seconds intervals and check and stir after each addition of microwave time. Remove the container from the microwave and stir the chocolate until completely melted. Baking chips and baking chocolate may appear formed and un-melted after heating but will become fluid after stirring. Blend in cream, brandy, liqueur, or coffee.

**HOW TO DIP:** Grasp the stem or green leaves of the strawberry and dip into the chocolate and swirl in chocolate to partially cover. Give the strawberry a little shake as you withdraw it from the chocolate (this will fill in all the cracks and leave a nice even line of chocolate at the base.) When the strawberry is completely withdrawn from the chocolate, swirl it in a quick, clockwise motion to let the excess chocolate drip off. Place on the prepared cookie sheet. Repeat with the rest of the strawberries.

Either place strawberries into refrigerator or set aside to allow the chocolate to harden, about 30 minutes. Transfer fruit onto a serving platter to serve.

NOTE: The chocolate dipped strawberries are best if eaten within 24 hours - refrigerate for longer storage, but serve at room temperature for greatest flavor.