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home-made chocolate truffles

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In the busy run up to Christmas, it is always useful to have a stash of little hand made gift ideas that can be rustled up pronto for that surprise visit by Great Aunt Mabel or last minute Christmas gift and so on.

These rather delicious and suitably decadent morsels are just the ticket and have yet to be met with anything less than squeals of delight by old and young alike!



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Essentially, they are simple chocolate ganache truffles, but dispensing with the rather more complicated hard chocolate coating they are simply dusted with cocoa, icing sugar or more colourful decorations.

They can be flavoured with liqueurs, coffee, spices or clematine zest and really do melt in the mouth. They also take minutes to make from beginning to end, bar the 2 hour chilling in the fridge. I would recommend they be stored in the fridge generally to keep them firm and prolong their freshness should they last more than a day without being scooped!



The recipe is based on one by Jamie Oliver: (makes about 50 teaspoon sized truffles) Ingredients 300g good quality plain chocolate in small pieces 300ml double cream finely grated clementine zest pinch of sea salt splash of brandy or other liqueur knob of butter Put the cream in a pan over a lowish heat until it is hot but not boiling.

Stir in the butter and zest and once the butter has melted pour the hot mixture over the broken up chocolate, whisking gently until it is all glossy and smoothly incorporated – just add a tiny splash of water if the mixture looks like it might split. {Incidentally, it can be used at this stage as the most glorious chocolate sauce for ice cream or, once chilled, as a ganache icing for cakes.}



Mix in the salt and the brandy or liqueur of your choice – I like cointreau. Of course, they can be made without the alcohol, in fact the lovely thing about this recipe is you can tweak away, adding your favourite flavours. Put into the fridge to firm up for a couple of hours. Once fully chilled, the truffle mixture can be scooped out in round teaspoonfuls and rolled in coatings of your choice. When they are finished, pop back into the fridge until they are very cold and then put in airtight bowls/jars etc and store refrigerated until needed. They look very smart simply coated in cocoa powder or icing sugar.

Crushed hazelnuts or amaretti biscuits give a lovely crunch and edible gold leaf, (baking department of Waitrose stocks this), can be added for ultimate swankiness! Of course, my nine year old wanted all the brightest sprinkles we could muster! They are perfect to make with children really – simple, speedy, with

gratifyingly delicious and idiosyncratic results, ("I made you the multi-coloured sprinkle ones, Granny!").



They look sweet in little bowls for a party or instead of a pudding, and adorable as gifts in little mason jars or ribboned cellophane bags.



Wishing you a wonderful Christmas and very happy 2013!

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