

Chocolate Caramel Pretzels

<http://userealbutter.com/2014/01/05/chocolate-caramel-pretzels-recipe/>

1 batch vanilla bean caramel, see below (or 16 oz. caramel bits/cubes plus 4 tbsps heavy whipping cream)
24-30 pretzel rods
24 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chips or chopped
1-2 cups any garnish like chopped nuts, crushed toffee, sprinkles, or white chocolate

vanilla bean caramel

based on [this recipe](#) from *The Kitchn*

1/2 vanilla bean
1 cup heavy cream
4 tbsps unsalted butter
1/4 tsp salt
1 1/2 cups sugar
1/4 cup corn syrup
1/4 cup water

Line two baking sheets with silpat mats or parchment paper.

Make the caramel: If making the homemade vanilla bean caramel, split the vanilla bean in half lengthwise and scrape the seeds out. Place both the pod and the seeds in a small saucepan with the cream, butter, and salt. Heat the pan over medium heat until the butter is melted and the cream starts to steam (but doesn't boil). Remove from heat, cover the pot, and let steep for 30 minutes. Remove the pod from the pan and keep the cream warm over very low heat, stirring occasionally. In a larger pan, combine the sugar, corn syrup, and water over medium heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid and bring to an active boil. Remove the lid and clip a candy thermometer on the side of the pan. Boil the sugar without stirring it until it reaches a temperature within the range of 250°F to 320°F, but not over 325°F (otherwise the caramel will become hard when it cools, which isn't what we're aiming for in this recipe). The lower the temperature, the softer the caramel. [If you are making candy at elevation, remember to reduce the target temperature by 1°F for every 500 feet above sea level.] Turn off the heat on both the sugar and the cream saucepans. Gently whisk the hot cream mixture into the sugar – it will bubble up and triple in volume – don't panic and keep stirring. When the cream is incorporated into the sugar syrup, turn the heat back on to medium and let it boil without stirring. When the temperature reaches 245°F to 250°F, remove the pan from the heat.

If you are using store-bought caramels, place the unwrapped caramels and the cream in a medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Stir until the caramel has melted completely. This took about ten minutes.

Make the chocolate caramel pretzels: Spoon hot caramel over a pretzel rod until all but the tip that you are holding is covered. Let the excess caramel drip back into the pan (give it a shake if necessary) to avoid puddling on the baking sheet. Set the pretzel on the baking sheet to cool. Repeat for all of the pretzels until you run out of caramel or pretzels. When the caramel has cooled, it might have “puddled” at the base of the pretzel. The caramel should be soft enough that you can mold it around the pretzel so it is more rounded than flanged at the base. For the chocolate, you can simply melt it or you can temper it per [the seed method in this post](#). Melting results in a soft chocolate coating with a matte finish. Tempering is harder to do and maintain temperature for, but it results in a shiny coating with a nice snap that doesn’t melt as readily as untempered chocolate.

To melt: place the chocolate in the top half of a double boiler or in a large bowl set over a medium or small saucepan of simmering water. Make sure not to get any water in the chocolate. Stir until the chocolate has melted and turn off the heat. Alternatively you can melt the chocolate on half power in the microwave for 30 seconds at a time, stirring between each 30 second increment until melted. Spoon the chocolate over each caramel-coated pretzel to coat it completely (except for the end you are holding), shaking off excess chocolate. Set on the same lined baking sheet(s) to cool. If you are topping the pretzels with crushed nuts, candy, or sprinkles, do so while the chocolate is still wet, but not dripping. If you want to drizzle white chocolate over the pretzels, wait until the dark chocolate has cooled completely. Melt the white chocolate on low power in the microwave or in the top half of a double boiler. Fill a pastry bag fitted with a tiny plain tip (approximately 1/16-inch) or a ziploc bag with a 1/16-inch hole cut in the corner, and pipe white chocolate over the pretzels. Makes approximately 24.