



Rudolph in Headlights (Chocolate Caramel Apples)

Level: Easy
Makes: 6

Prep & Decorating Time: 1 hour
Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Cool Time: 4 hours

6 medium granny smith apples
6 wooden apple sticks or sturdy treat sticks

Caramel:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
1 cup light brown sugar, packed
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup light corn syrup
 $\frac{1}{2}$ (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
2 tsp. pure vanilla extract



$\frac{3}{4}$ (1 lb. 14 oz.) bag dark chocolate melting wafers (see Notes below)

Decorating Ingredients:

Eyes (edible) - 12 Wilton® candy eyes (medium size)
Nose (edible) - 6 red M&M'S® milk chocolate candies
Antlers (inedible) - Approx. 10 12" iridescent chenille stems (craft pipe cleaners)

Step 1, Prepare the apples: Wash and dry the apples. Push the sticks into the stem or bottom of the apple (whichever side balances better when standing up). Place some boiling water in a deep, wide cup, and dip the apples completely into the boiling water for 20 to 30 seconds to remove any wax. Dry apple well with a paper towel and set aside.

Step 2, Dip apples in caramel: Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Coat paper with butter. Set aside. In a small deep saucepan, melt the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter over medium high heat. Add the sugar, corn syrup, and condensed milk and stir until combined. Attach a candy thermometer to the inside of the saucepan and reduce the heat to medium. Stir the mixture continuously until the temperature reaches 235°F ("Soft Ball" stage). Turn off heat source, remove candy thermometer, and continue to stir for another minute. Add vanilla extract and stir to combine. Working quickly, dip the apples one by one, letting the excess caramel drip off. Place on the buttered parchment paper. (If the caramel hardens before you finish all the apples, reheat the caramel until it turns to dipping consistency.) Let the apples cool for 1 to 2 hours. When cooled, if desired, cut off excess caramel at the bottom of the apple with kitchen shears.

Step 3, Dip apples in chocolate: Melt chocolate wafers according to instructions on package (I use a Wilton® Chocolate Melting Pot). Completely dip the caramel covered apples in the melted chocolate until the chocolate reaches the stick, let the excess drip off and place apples back on parchment paper. Let the chocolate apple harden for 1 to 2 hours. (Do not throw away the excess chocolate. Save it to re-melt later to use as a "glue" to adhere the candy eyes and noses to the apples.)

Step 4, Decorate: Re-heat the excess chocolate from Step 3 until melted. With the tip of a toothpick, dip into the melted chocolate and then add a small amount to the back of the candy eyes and red M&M'S®. Position eyes and nose accordingly on each chocolate covered apple. Set aside to let chocolate cool and harden.

Meanwhile, shape antlers. To make 1 antler you need: 1 - 12" chenille stem (for the main piece of the antler), cut 2 - 1" length chenille stem pieces (for the lower antler), and cut 2 - 2" length chenille stem pieces (for the top part of the antler).

Bend the main 12" stem in half. Attach lower antlers and then top antlers. If needed, cut with scissors to shape. Repeat to make a total of 6 complete antlers. When the chocolate on the apples have cooled and hardened, attach antlers where the chocolate meets the stick by twisting the middle of the chenille stems twice around the wooden stick. Reshape antlers as needed.

When ready to eat, remove chenille antlers and cut apples into fourths away from the center apple core.

Notes:

- I used Ghirardelli® Chocolate Dark Melting Wafers, and bought the large 1 lb. 14 oz. bag at Sam's Club®.
- So you don't feel overwhelmed to spend a lot of time making these apples all in one day, follow Step 1 and Step 2 on one day, leave the caramel apples on the buttered parchment paper and place in an airtight container to harden overnight (do not refrigerate), then finish completing Step 3 and Step 4 the following day.