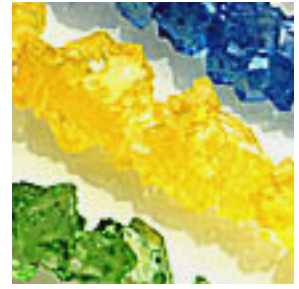


Eco-Fun Page



Rock Candy Crystals

Rock candy is a simple sugar candy that can double as a science experiment. The process can take up to a week, but it's fun to watch the sugar crystals growing over time. Note that the exact quantity of sugar syrup you will use depends on the size of the jar you have. If you want to make several pieces of rock candy, use multiple jars and skewers, and double or triple the sugar syrup solution as necessary.



Ingredients:

- 2 cups water
- 4 cups granulated sugar
- 1/2-1 tsp flavoring extract or oil (optional)
- food coloring (optional)
- glass jar
- sturdy cotton thread or skewer (kebab stick, small clean dowel)



Preparation:

1. Prepare your materials: wash a glass jar thoroughly with hot water to clean it. Using the wooden skewer as the base of your rock candy, use clothespins balanced across the top of the jar to clip it into place. (alternately, a cotton thread can be weighted with a paperclip and suspended from a pencil into the jar.)
2. Wet your wooden skewer or thread and roll it in granulated sugar. This base layer will give the sugar crystals something to "grab" when they start forming. Set the thread or skewer aside to dry while you prepare your sugar syrup.
3. Bring the water to a boil in a medium-sized pan. Begin adding the sugar, one cup at a time, stirring after each addition. You will notice that it takes longer for the sugar to dissolve after each addition. Continue to stir and boil the syrup until all of the sugar has been added and it is all dissolved. Remove the pan from the heat.
4. If you are using colors or flavorings, add them at this point. If you are using an extract, add 1 tsp of extract, but if you are using flavoring oils, only add 1/2 tsp, and make sure you don't stand right in front of the pan—the scent can be very strong as it rises in the steam. Add 2-3 drops of food coloring and stir to ensure even, smooth color.
5. Allow the sugar syrup to cool for approximately 10 minutes, then pour it into the prepared jar. Lower the sugared string or skewer until it hangs about 1 inch from the bottom.
6. Carefully place your jar in a cool place, away from harsh lights, where it can sit undisturbed. Cover the top loosely with plastic wrap or paper towel.
7. You should start to see sugar crystals forming within 2-4 hours. If you have seen no change to your skewer or thread after 24 hours, try boiling the sugar syrup again and dissolve another cup of sugar into it, then pour it back into the jar and insert the string or skewer again.
8. Allow the rock candy to grow until it is the size you want. Don't let it grow too large, otherwise it might start growing into the sides of your jar! Once it has reached the size you want, remove it and allow it to dry for a few minutes, then enjoy or wrap in plastic wrap to save it for later. Great to flavor hot teas in the cold winter months!