

CHOCOLATE PECAN TURTLE CLUSTERS

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 cups pecans
- 1/2 cup salted butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 7 ounces sweetened condensed milk (about 1/2 of a 14 ounce can)
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 12 ounces milk chocolate chips
- 1/2 teaspoon butter-flavored shortening (or regular shortening)

Directions:

1. In a large skillet, toast the pecans over medium-high heat until they are lightly fragrant and have slightly darkened, stirring occasionally. This should take just a few minutes.
2. Line two large cookie sheets with parchment paper and lightly coat them with cooking spray. Arrange the toasted pecans into clusters on the parchment paper, leaving about an inch of space between each cluster.
3. In a medium-sized saucepan over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Stir in the brown sugar, light corn syrup, and sweetened condensed milk. Increase the heat slightly and stir continuously until the mixture reaches a temperature of 235-240 degrees Fahrenheit, using a candy thermometer. Remove from heat and stir in the vanilla extract.
4. Carefully drizzle about 1 1/2 teaspoons of caramel over

each nut cluster, ensuring that each nut is coated with caramel. Work quickly, as the caramel will begin to set.

5. In a microwave-safe bowl, heat the milk chocolate chips in the microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring after each interval, until melted and smooth. Stir in the shortening and allow it to melt for a minute or two to make the chocolate more spreadable.
6. Spoon about 1 1/2 teaspoons of melted chocolate over the top of each caramel-nut cluster, swirling it around to create a decorative pattern.
7. Allow the chocolate to set completely. Once hardened, the turtle clusters are ready to be served or stored in an airtight container.