

# Cleo Coyle's Orange Chocolate Halloween Bark

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*This is not as much a recipe as it is a collection of “how to” techniques that will help you create a fun, holiday chocolate bark, using your microwave. In the first step, I’ll show you how to add natural orange flavor to chocolate. In the second, I’ll give you options on coloring white chocolate. The third step will show you how to make marbled chocolate bark using cinnamon-flavored dark chocolate as an accent. Have fun and...Happy Halloween! ~ Cleo*



## **Ingredients for the bark:**

- 12 ounces (about 2 cups) white chocolate chips  
(\*or see my note below about Candy Melts)
- 5 large oranges (to flavor naturally)
- 6 ounces semi-sweet chocolate chips (for marbling)
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon (to spice up the darker chocolate, but you can omit this if you don't care for cinnamon)

## **Optional finisher:**

- 1/2 cup slivered almonds, toasted (or your favorite chopped nut, toasted)

## **Coloring option** (if not using Candy Melts):

- Food coloring (either [gel](#) or water-based; you will need the color orange OR you can mix the colors yellow and red to make orange)
- 1 tablespoon butter (you'll need this if you are using water-based food coloring such as McCormick's)



*\* Note: Candy Melts are pre-colored chocolate wafers that can be substituted for the white chocolate chips. To purchase Candy Melts online, [click here](#). You can also find Wilton Candy Melts in the baking section of Michael's craft store.*

# HOW TO ADD NATURAL ORANGE FLAVOR TO WHITE OR DARK CHOCOLATE

## Directions:

**Step 1 - Zest your oranges:** For every 12 ounces (2 cups) of white chocolate chips or Candy Melts, you will need about 4 tablespoons of orange zest. You should be able to get that from 5 large oranges.

(Cleo note: After I zest my oranges, I often juice them or use the flesh in fruit smoothies. Waste not!)

**Step 2 - Zap the zest:** Spread the zest flat on a microwaves safe plate and heat it for about 2 minutes. With clean fingers, touch the zest to test whether it has dried out. It should be completely dry and crumbly to the touch, crunching like breakfast cereal when you crush it. If not, keep microwaving in 30 second increments until it is. The drying process will reduce the zest amount by about half its volume. So you will end up with about 2 tablespoons of dried zest.

**Step 3 - Grind the Dried Zest into Powder:** Using the back of a tablespoon, crush the dried zest into a powder. You can certainly do this with a mortar and pestle if you have one or give it a very light buzz in a spice grinder. (Don't buzz too long or you'll burn the zest via blade friction; this I know from writing the Coffeehouse Mysteries!)

*Note: The crushing process will reduce the zest again by about half. So you should end up with about 1 tablespoon of dried and ground orange zest.*

**Step 4 - Melt the chocolate:** Because of its milk solids, white chocolate melts faster than dark chocolate so be careful when heating. For best results, microwave in 30 seconds increments. Stop, stir, and heat again. (Once chocolate is burned, you can't save it, so melt slowly!)

**Step 5 - Add the Flavor:** Now stir in the dried and ground orange zest. The orange zest powder will add a lovely, light orange flavor to the bark. The color will be a very pale orange, and I suggest brightening the color by the method on the next pages.



# HOW TO COLOR WHITE CHOCOLATE

If you're not using pre-colored Candy Melts, discussed on page 1 of this recipe, then the smartest way to color chocolate is with [food coloring gel](#). These gels are designed to color candy and baked goods without adding liquid to the recipe and possibly ruining it.

If the only food coloring you can find is water-based, such as McCormick's, DO NOT simply dump the food coloring into the melted chocolate. Follow my directions; otherwise, instead of remaining smooth and silky, your chocolate will seize up and be ruined. What does ruined chocolate look like? See the regrettable evidence to the right...



**AAAAAH!** What NOT to do with chocolate. (Scary, isn't it?!)

When water is introduced to chocolate during the melting process, (whether droplets in a wet container or on a spoon), the smooth texture will be ruined. To the right is an example of chocolate that has seized up. There is no saving it. This is also what will happen if you simply dump in water-based food coloring. But if that's all you can find, I have a solution...



## COLORING WHITE CHOCOLATE

**Melt butter:** For this recipe, I suggest 1 tablespoon of butter, gently melted in a microwave. To that, add your water-based food coloring. Orange or mix yellow and red to make orange. You will need about 6 times as much yellow as red, so add the yellow first and keep playing with it until you have a nice dark shade of orange.



**Slowly stir in:** A little at a time, stir the colored, melted butter into the chocolate. The **MOMENT** you see the chocolate begin to lose its smooth texture and seize up into tiny chunks, **STOP**. That's as far as you can go in adding color of this kind (water-based in melted butter) to the



chocolate without ruining it. This colored-butter method made a very pretty pale orange chocolate for me. It was smooth and silky enough to use as frosting on cupcakes or cookies (and I will be doing this in the near future). For today, lets make bark!

# MAKING ORANGE CHOCOLATE BARK (2 WAYS)

## Marbled Bark

(1) Place 6 ounces (1 cup) of semi-sweet chocolate chips into a microwave safe bowl, sprinkle in  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of ground cinnamon (if using), and melt 30 second microwave blasts, stirring between each heating session to prevent scorching. Set aside.



(2) Cover a baking sheet or small cutting board with parchment paper. (**WARNING:** If you do not use paper, your heart will break because the chocolate will adhere to the surface as it dries.)

(3) Pour out your (12 ounces) of melted orange chocolate (*made from instructions on pages 2 and 3 of this recipe*). Using a spoon or spatula, spread the orange chocolate into a rectangle canvas of about 8 x 10 inches in size. Dot the melted semi-sweet chocolate onto the orange chocolate canvas by generous tablespoons as shown in the photos below.



(4) To marble the chocolate, use a wooden skewer, chopstick, or butter knife to make long, bold, curved strokes through the dots of chocolate and into the orange canvas as shown. In my photos, you see a wooden chopstick.





**Optional finisher:** Sprinkle 1/2 cup of toasted nuts over the top of the marbled bark. To make certain these nuts stick to the chocolate canvas, use clean fingertips or back of a spoon to very lightly press them into the chocolate.

**CHILL, BABY!** - Slip the pan into the refrigerator for 20 to 30 minutes or the freezer for 15. This will harden the bark up quite nicely. Break apart and enjoy!

**COLD STORAGE:** I place my extra bark pieces in a plastic container or zip lock bag and keep them in the fridge or freezer to prevent melting.

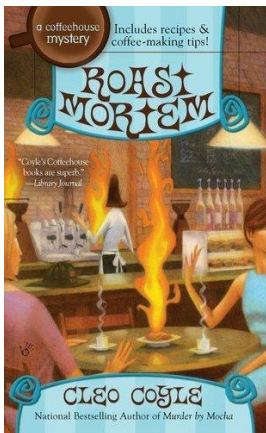


## Jack-o'-Lantern Orange Bark

**VERY TASTY!** If not making marbled bark (see above), then stir 1 cup of toasted, chopped nuts into the melted white chocolate (for flavoring and coloring see pages 2 and 3 of this recipe) and pour the melted chocolate out onto a baking sheet that's been covered by parchment or wax paper. Spread the chocolate into a flat rectangle (8 x 10 inches) and slip the whole thing into the refrigerator for 30 minutes or the freezer for 15. Once hard, break into pieces. Store in a plastic container or zip lock bag; keep in fridge to prevent melting and...

*Eat with Joy! ~ Cleo Coyle,  
author of The Coffeehouse Mysteries*

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