

Pralines are able to maintain their quality and flavour over a considerable length of time.

- *Fondant creams*

- Crystallised sugar fondant can be combined with flavoured oils, fruit purees and jams to create fresh flavours with a long shelf life. Traditional fondants are made by boiling sugar, water and liquid glucose to 120 °C and then cooling it down on a marble slab or metal tray, crystallising and creaming the setting sugar in the process. Fondants can be left to set by hand-piping into corn starch moulding cavities; they are then left to form a hard crystallised shell, enabling the centre to be hand-dipped in chocolate. Alternatively flavoured fondant creams can be piped into moulded chocolate shells for a glossy finish.

- *Caramels*

- Caramelised, liquid sugar can be used with a range of complementary flavours. Caramel has a high sugar content and therefore can maintain quality and shelf life for a longer period of time than conventional ganache and praline filled chocolates.

- *Chocolate liqueurs*

- Alcohol flavoured sugar syrups can be the ultimate decadent chocolate, but do not forget that alcohol can evaporate!

18.3.2 Hand-dipped or enrobed chocolate confectionery

Hand-dipping at the point of sale is an excellent way of attracting customers. In addition a hand-decorated, hand-dipped chocolate (Figure 18.2) looks distinctively different from a mass produced one and can demand a premium price.

Confectionery is a sugar based delicacy, that was historically used to make medicines taste more palatable and also to work with like porcelain to form decorations for the dining tables of eighteenth century Europe. Confectionery centres that are hand-dipped often have a crystallised centre that sets harder than the softer ganache filled chocolates. The higher sugar content in these confections tends to lead to a lower available water content, therefore enabling the confections to have a longer shelf life. The high sugar content nature of these products means that they usually reach a high temperature in the making process and are then left to crystallise and cool. These products must therefore be set into shape or cast into a large container to set before forming into shape. The traditional processes and nature of ingredients of confectionery items make them a popular product for artisan confectioners to create and add value to. These items can be made on a sizeable scale, with a long shelf life without compromising quality. An increase in the retail price of these products can be obtained by hand-dipping in chocolate so that nostalgia and traditional methodology adds to their perceived value.

Niche product lines of single confectionery items in a range of flavours and finishes can create an outstanding addition to existing sweet shops and cafes. By



Figure 18.2 A selection of hand-made chocolates using a range of techniques including filled, moulded chocolates, clusters and hand-dipped centres. Reproduced with permission of The Chocolate Tree.

specialising in a single product type, equipment costs, processes and consistency can be achieved whilst still giving the consumer a wide choice.

- *Marshmallow*
 - Traditionally made with whipped egg white, gelatine and boiled sugar, variety can be created using fruit purees, essential oils, colours and flavourings. For commercial purposes recipes with unpasteurised egg white should be avoided. Alternatively dried egg white can be used or a fondant crème-based recipe that incorporates gelatine.
- *Fudge*
 - Traditional recipes involve boiling milk, butter and sugar together to achieve an 85% sugar concentration in the mixture before cooling and leaving to set and form into pieces. Flavours can be added to the process for variety, whilst multiple flavoured batches can be used to create different combinations.
- *Toffee*
 - Can be prepared to a variety of consistencies based on the types of ingredients used and the temperature to which the sugar is boiled. Toffee is often mixed with butter and nuts to create variety. The caramelised sugar can be formed into a hard, brittle structure when boiled to high temperatures or kept soft, chewy and sticky when boiled to lower temperatures or with added ingredients.
- *Nougat*
 - Made using honey, nuts, whipped egg white and sugar, nougat can often create a complementary texture and often a cheaper filling to chocolates. Similar in ingredients to marshmallow but more like toffee-making in the process. A range of finishes, consistencies and ingredients can be utilised to develop a variety of products.