



Candying Fresh Flowers and Citrus Zest

Various edible fresh flowers may be candied for decorating or garnishing cakes. The best choices are small blossoms with simple configurations of petals that can easily be brushed with egg white and coated with granules of sugar. These include violets, pansies, small roses and Peruvian lilies. It is especially important to look for flowers grown without pesticides. Farmers' markets are one source for untreated flowers. You can also grow your own or obtain them from a friend's home garden.

Ingredients:

For candied flowers:

- 1 egg white, at room temperature
- 20 to 30 pesticide-free fresh flowers
- Sugar for sprinkling

For candied zest:

- 2 oranges
- 1 lemon
- 1 1/2 cups plus 1/3 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup water
- 1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice



Directions:

To make candied flowers, line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a bowl, beat the egg white until it is covered with light foam. Using a clean, small paintbrush, lightly and evenly coat the flowers with egg white and sprinkle with sugar. If the sugar is absorbed after a few minutes, sprinkle again. Put the flowers on the prepared baking sheet and let dry at room temperature for 24 hours. Use your fingers to transfer them carefully to a cake. The candied flowers can be stored between layers of waxed paper in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.

To make candied zest, thoroughly wash the oranges and lemon. Cut a slice from the blossom end of each fruit so it stands upright on a work surface. Working from top to bottom, use a small, sharp knife to cut strips of zest, leaving the white pith behind. Stack the strips and cut them lengthwise into narrow strips 1/4 inch wide. Bring a saucepan of water to a boil over high heat. Add the zest strips and cook for 5 minutes. Drain the zest, refill the pan with water and repeat.

In another saucepan over medium heat, bring the 1 1/2 cups sugar, 3/4 cup water and lemon juice to a boil, stirring occasionally. Add the zest strips, reduce the heat to very low (barely a simmer), and cook until the strips are translucent and tender, about 30 minutes. Using a fork, lift the strips from the syrup and place on a wire rack set over waxed paper, making sure that the strips are not touching. Let dry overnight at room temperature.

Put the 1/3 cup sugar in a small, wide bowl. Toss the zest, about 10 strips at a time, in the sugar. If not using the zest immediately, store in an airtight container at room temperature. It will keep for up to 1 month. Makes 20 to 30 candied flowers or about 1/2 cup candied zest.

Note: Candying flowers calls for uncooked egg whites. Small children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with compromised immune systems should not eat undercooked or raw eggs. If you are concerned about egg safety, use pasteurized whites in place of raw.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma