

## Peanut Butter Balls

This is based on a recipe that my mother found in a magazine once. Based on the hairstyle of the woman whose photo ran with the recipe, I estimate that this was the early 1970s, or possibly late 60s. My mom and I made peanut butter balls every Christmas when I was growing up, and my friends still ask me for the recipe today. I've tinkered with the amounts and added some commentary.

For the balls:

- 1 stick of butter (Salted or unsalted, it won't matter.)
- 1 stick of oleo-margarine (Use the unhealthy kind, with trans fat. I've tried to make them without this, but it's hard to get the right texture. If I use all butter, they're too hard to bite into unless they're warm enough that the chocolate gets all over your fingers. If I use lowfat spread, they're too soft to form into balls and they fall apart in the melted chocolate.)
- 16 oz. jar of peanut butter (I use creamy.)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla (This is probably the least important ingredient in this recipe.)
- 4.5 cups of powdered sugar (Plus extra in case you need to adjust the stiffness of the batter.)

For the coating:

- 12 oz. semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable shortening (This makes the chocolate shiny after it cools, but doesn't affect the flavor or texture, so you could skip it and go for the matte finish.)

Whip the margarine and butter together until fluffy. Add the peanut butter and vanilla and beat until smooth and creamy (the color should lighten slightly). Start adding powdered sugar a cup at a time, mixing after each cup. Roll the batter into balls and place them on three or four parchment-lined cookie sheets. (If it's too soft to roll, add more powdered sugar.) Freeze the balls for an hour or overnight.

Melt the chocolate and shortening using a double boiler or however you like to melt chocolate. (I have one of these and it's awesome: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00024WP66/>) You want to have enough depth of melted chocolate that the balls are easy to submerge, so don't use too large a pot for the chocolate. I usually melt about half of the chips and shortening in a small saucepan, then add more as I use it up. The dipping is the trickiest part of this recipe. The original recipe said to use a toothpick, but the balls often fall off the toothpick. So I just drop them in the chocolate, then fish them out with a fork. Don't stab them with the fork; just use the tines of the fork as a strainer to let the excess chocolate run off. Set the dipped balls on parchment-lined pans and put them back in the freezer to set the chocolate. Once solid (30 minutes or so), you can remove them from the parchment and store them in sealed containers or ziplocs. They will keep in the freezer for a long time, or until somebody in your house discovers them. I think they taste best at refrigerator temperature, so I transfer them to the fridge before serving. (At room temperature, they can get messy.)

One tip: Don't take all of the undipped peanut butter balls out of the freezer at once, or they will start to thaw and be more difficult to dip in the chocolate. It's easier to clean extra pans than to try to dip half-thawed peanut butter. Particularly when your husband does the dishes.

Another tip: The peanut butter balls taste pretty good without the chocolate. So if you run out of chocolate (or patience), just put the last few balls in the freezer naked. Someone will love them.