

HOW TO MAKE SWEETENED CONDENSED MILK

Compliments of KitchenStewardship.com

This recipe for from scratch sweetened condensed milk has been saving people for years – both the ones who don't want to rely on cans and processed food or white sugars and those who simply don't have sweetened condensed milk on hand and are about to start a recipe.

You can ditch the cans, use the sweetener you prefer, and avoid a trip to the store for the ill-fated “just one thing” by making sweetened condensed milk from scratch. It's still sweet, so it might not deserve the title “healthy” exactly, but it's much healthier than canned sweet milk – and my version doesn't use any dried milk powder, which is iffy when it comes to health and safety.

Homemade Sweetened Condensed Milk:

Ingredients:

1½ c. whole milk

½ or ⅔ c. unrefined sugar (organic cane sugar or sucanat)

3 Tbs. butter

1 tsp. homemade vanilla or vanilla extract

Instructions:

1. Mix sugar and milk together in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Stirring often, bring to a low simmer over medium-low heat. As soon as steam starts lifting off the milk, lower the heat even further, and when the sugar is entirely dissolved, put the heat as low as it can go. A simmer burner is great for this.
2. The goal is to reduce the quantity in the pot (which is now about 1¾ cups) by approximately half. It takes about 2 hours at very low heat to reduce to one cup of liquid. You could speed it up a bit if you watch carefully and stir often. I preferred the freedom to wander the house doing other tasks, and thus allowed my process to take quite some time.
3. Once reduced to your satisfaction, whisk in the butter and vanilla. The recipe is equivalent to just less than one whole can of brand name sweetened condensed milk. (One can = 1¼ cups liquid. Substitute as needed.) Depending on what final product your sweetened condensed milk will be used in, you will probably need to allow the mixture to cool considerably before using.

Notes from the KS community:

Over the years a TON of people have used my recipe and commented on adaptations they have made. I read through all the comments (so you don't have to) and collected the best ones that might help you tweak the process to your liking. Just remember that I haven't actually tried all these ideas, so I can't personally vouch for them. See below for the best suggestions and adaptations from my readers.

- **What other sweeteners can I use?**

"I went ahead and substituted honey for the sugar in order to use all local ingredients. It worked just fine."

Katie's note: *Honey is sweeter than sugar, so reducing the amount by 25% should equal the same sweetness as the original recipe. That would be 3/8-1/2 cup honey.*

"I've tried it with date molasses and it works great."

- **Do I have to use whole milk?**

"I used 2% milk, and it came out brilliantly. I even messed up the point at which to add the butter and added it too soon, so I had to simmer the mixture for a while, but it still came out well."

"For the milk, I've used 2%, whole, soy, almond, half and half, and every single time the recipe turned out great."

"I made this with my goat's milk and it was wonderful."

- **Can you use the slow cooker?**

"Use the crock pot with the lid slightly off to the side so that it will thicken slowly, check and stir with a wire whip. I put it on in the morning and let it slow cook over the rest of the day."

"I made the recipe in my 6-qt slow cooker, uncovered, thinking the extra surface area would help it reduce more quickly. It took almost 3 hours on high for it to reduce from 1/2 inch deep to 1/4 inch."

Katie's note: *The slow cooker is going to take quite a while to heat up, plus leaving the cover off makes it very inefficient. It's a great way to avoid stirring, but it won't speed up the process. It's a SLOW cooker after all! ;)*

- **How long can I store it?**

"I put it in an air-tight container and keep it in the refrigerator until I need it, then just measure it out and use it. I have had it keep for up to 4 months that way. I make one gallon when it is finished reducing. Just whip in the vanilla and butter at the very last. I let it get up to room temp before using and shake or stir well before using."

- **Can I freeze it?**

"I have also measured out single servings in vacuum bags and frozen it."

- **What can I make with the homemade sweetened condensed milk?**

Any recipe calling for canned sweetened condensed milk.

- * **Homemade Irish Cream**

- * **Pumpkin Pie Recipes:** Or skip the condensed milk all together and use my [no-cans healthy pumpkin pie recipe](#)

- * **DIY coffee creamer:** "I've been using it to make my own creamer for the past two weeks, love it!! It's so much cheaper! One half gallon of milk makes two batches of creamer and one extra batch of condensed milk."

- **Why no dry milk powder?**

It's possible that stuff has all sort of health issues – [read here](#).

- **Is there a dairy-free version?**

My colleague Tiffany has you covered with her [dairy-free sweetened condensed milk](#).

See all the comments and interact [HERE](#).