

Dad, I don't have a...

When my oldest moved out on her own, one of her first needs was a double boiler. Instead of asking how to cook a main or side course, she wanted to start with dessert. She wanted to melt chocolate.

Dad, I don't have a double boiler, can I just heat it on the stove? Hmmm. By being very, very careful I've had some luck melting chocolate over a low heat on the stove top, but it can be tricky and the chocolate can burn or scorch easily. I haven't had much luck with microwave melting, but that could be because my microwave is very old. So I did suggest to my daughter to use a double boiler. But didn't she just say that she didn't have one?

The good thing is most kitchens have at least one substitute for an official double boiler. A double boiler is a very simple device. One pan is supported over another. The lower pan hold water to boil. The upper pan holds what you want to melt or cook at low/controlled temperatures.

Easy solution a small pan held over another with boiling water. Problem is holding the pan until the cooking is done, it can be tiring. Better is to rest a slightly larger pan on top of the smaller pan that boils the water. But it is a balancing act and you still have to hold the pan. A real double boiler has the upper pan resting in a recess in the lower pan. Can this be done without the special equipment? It can if you have a round stainless steel or oven safe glass bowl. Just rest the bowl in a pan above the boiling water. If you really want to know, the stainless steel bowl works best for me.

More on what you can do with a double boiler later...