

Prep Time	15 minutes
Cook Time	20-25 minutes
Cool/Set Time	30-40 minutes
Total Time	Approximately 1 hour 15 minutes
Skill Level	Intermediate (candy-making)
Cuisine	American — Southern / Creole
Course	Dessert / Candy / Confection

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Ingredients

For the Pralines

- 1½ cups (300 g) granulated white sugar
- 1 cup (220 g) packed light brown sugar
- 1 cup (240 ml) heavy cream
- 4 tablespoons (56 g) unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 cups (200 g) pecan halves, lightly toasted
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda (optional — helps prevent crystallization)

Equipment

- Heavy-bottomed 4-quart saucepan
- Candy thermometer (calibrated)

- Wooden spoon
- Whisk
- Two baking sheets lined with parchment paper or silicone mats
- Two spoons (for dropping)
- Pastry brush and small bowl of water

Time & Intensity Breakdown

Phase	Time	Heat Intensity	Effort Level
1. Prep & Toast Pecans	8-10 min	Medium (350°F / 175°C oven)	Low
2. Combine & Dissolve Sugars	5-6 min	Medium-low	Low-Moderate (stir gently)
3. Boil to Softball Stage	8-10 min	Medium (rolling boil, 235-240°F / 113-116°C)	High attention required
4. Add Butter, Cream & Salt	4-6 min	Medium — return to 236°F	High attention
5. Remove from Heat & Add Vanilla	1-2 min	Off heat	Low
6. Beat to Thicken	2-4 min	Off heat	High intensity — rapid beating
7. Drop & Set	30-40 min	Room temperature	Low

Total active time: ~30 minutes | Total passive time: ~40 minutes

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1 — Prep & Toast the Pecans (8-10 minutes)

Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Spread the pecan halves in a single layer on a baking sheet and toast for 6–8 minutes, until fragrant and slightly darkened. Watch carefully — nuts burn quickly. Remove and let cool. Line two baking sheets with parchment or lightly buttered silicone mats.

Step 2 — Combine & Dissolve the Sugars (5-6 minutes, medium-low)

In your heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine the granulated sugar, brown sugar, and heavy cream. Stir gently with a wooden spoon over medium-low heat until the sugars dissolve and the mixture is smooth. Use a wet pastry brush to wipe down any sugar crystals clinging to the sides of the pan — this is the single most important step to prevent a grainy praline.

Step 3 — Boil to Softball Stage (8-10 minutes, medium heat, HIGH attention)

Clip on your candy thermometer. Raise the heat to medium and bring the mixture to a rolling boil without stirring. Let it boil undisturbed until it reaches 235–240°F (113–116°C) — the softball stage. This takes roughly 8–10 minutes. Do not walk away; the mixture can climb from 230°F to 250°F in under a minute.

Step 4 — Add Butter, Cream & Salt (4-6 minutes, medium, HIGH

attention)

Once at softball stage, add the butter, salt, and baking soda (if using). The mixture will bubble up vigorously. Stir constantly with a wooden spoon and return it to a boil, cooking until it hits 236°F (113°C) again — about 4-6 minutes. Stir frequently and keep the heat steady at medium.

Step 5 — Remove from Heat & Add Vanilla (1-2 minutes, off heat)

Pull the pan off the burner and stir in the vanilla extract. It will sizzle and steam — that's normal. Let the mixture rest undisturbed for 3-4 minutes to cool slightly. This brief rest is critical: beating too hot produces crumbly candy; beating too cool produces rock-hard candy.

Step 6 — Beat to Thicken (2-4 minutes, HIGH intensity)

Add the toasted pecans and begin beating vigorously with your wooden spoon. The mixture will go from glossy and thin to opaque, thick, and creamy, losing its shine. This takes 2-4 minutes. Stop the moment the candy thickens and just begins to lose its gloss — over-beating causes the pralines to set before you can drop them.

Step 7 — Drop & Set (30-40 minutes, room temperature)

Working quickly, drop rounded tablespoonfuls of the mixture onto the prepared baking sheets, spacing them about 2 inches apart. Use two spoons — one to scoop, one to push. The pralines will spread slightly and flatten into their classic patty shape. Let them set undisturbed at room temperature for 30-40 minutes until firm to the touch.

Storage: Store in an airtight container with parchment between layers at room temperature for up to 1 week, or refrigerate for up to 3 weeks. Bring to room temperature before serving for the best texture.

Recipe Notes & Tips

- Calibrate your thermometer: Boil water and check that it reads 212°F (100°C) at sea level. Adjust your target temperature accordingly if you’re at altitude.
- Humidity matters: Pralines struggle on rainy or very humid days. If possible, make them on a dry day — the sugar absorbs moisture and the candy won’t set properly.
- Don’t stir during the first boil. Stirring at softball stage invites crystallization and grainy candy.
- Work fast at the drop stage. Once the candy thickens, it sets quickly. If it stiffens in the pan, return it to low heat for 30 seconds with a splash of hot cream, stir, and continue.
- For a firmer praline: Cook to 240°F (116°C). For a softer, creamier praline: pull at 235°F (113°C).

Nutrition Information (Per Praline, Based on 22 Servings)

	Nutrient	Amount
Calories		~185 kcal
Total Fat		10 g

Nutrient		Amount
Saturated Fat		3.5 g
Cholesterol		16 mg
Sodium		35 mg
Total Carbohydrates		23 g
Sugars		22 g
Dietary Fiber		0.7 g
Protein		1.2 g
Calcium		10 mg
Iron		0.3 mg
Potassium		40 mg