

Ice Coral

By Mark Seaman, CMSA – www.markedfordessert.com

Materials

- 1kg granulated cane sugar (cane sugar contains fewer impurities than beet sugar so will result in a better end product)
- 300g glucose (the glucose may be microwaved to loosen it prior to adding to the sugar.)
- 400g distilled water (hard water promotes crystallization. Use cold water to slow melting and reduce the risk of grains.)
- Tea strainer
- Ice cubes
- Plastic bucket or bowl
- Candy Thermometer
- Pastry Brush
- Whisk
- ½ sheet tray
- Latex gloves
- Airbrush

Isomalt vs. Sugar

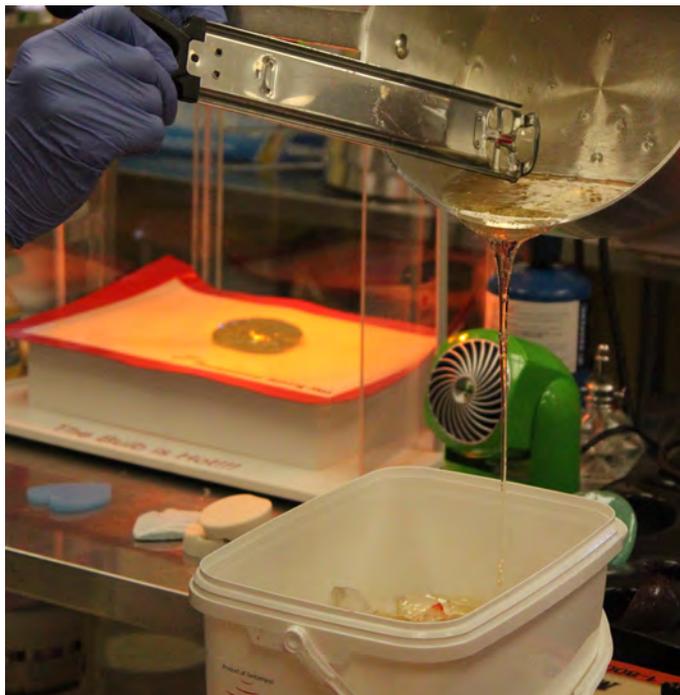
Sugar work requires choosing between using Isomalt and sugar. Here are few features of each to help you choose the most appropriate medium for your next project.

- Isomalt cooks more translucent and clearer than sugar.
- Isomalt is less hygroscopic than sugar, so it has a longer shelf life.
- Isomalt is very sensitive to shock and thermal waves.
- Hot Isomalt will cause vinyl to stick to marble, so you must have a sheet of parchment under the vinyl so it can move freely on the stone when casting over vinyl.
- Sugar's texture can be manipulated by modifying the ratio of glucose, water, and acid added to the sugar during the cooking process, whereas Isomalt is considered a ready-to-use product.

1. The way and rate at which you cook sugar regulates its texture and ultimate visual qualities. Cooking too small a quantity will result in a fast cooking time which generally results in white, hard, grainy sugar. So even if you require only a small finished piece, it is best to cook a full kilo of sugar.
2. Put the sugar and water in a sauce pot; copper is the best choice as it conducts heat evenly. Start the temperature on low-medium to start. Periodically, give the mass a gentle stir with the whisk, storing the whisk in a vessel of warm water when not in use. The goal is to dissolve all of the sugar in the water before the liquid reaches boiling point. If any of the sugar is not dissolved before it starts to boil, it will crystallize. Using rough sugar cubes (such as A La Perruche) will slow the boiling process allowing more time for the sugar to more fully dissolve.
3. At boiling point, skim the impurities from the top with the tea strainer, turn heat to high, and add the glucose. The impurities may come from any of the elements in the pot and will look like a milky foam on the surface of the sugar. Note that adding the glucose too soon during the cooking process causes grains; be sure that the sugar is at a full rolling boil. Once the glucose is in, the only utensil that should be introduced to the pot is the thermometer. If sugar splashes on sides of pot during cooking, wash it down with a wet pastry brush to avoid crystallization.



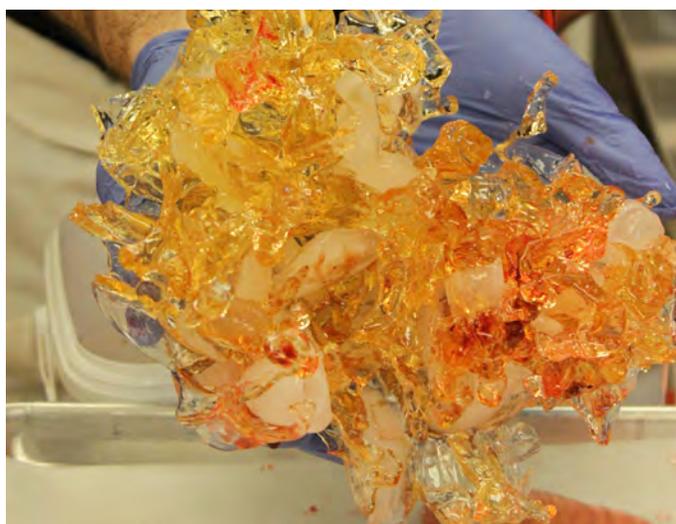
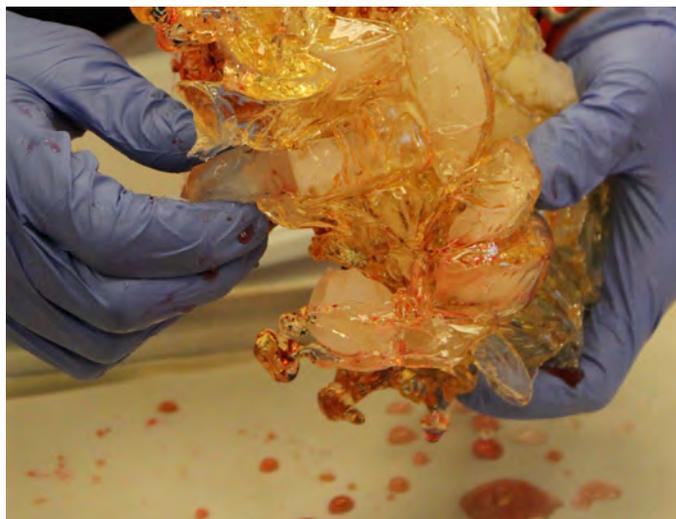
- Continue cooking the sugar to 160°C. Meanwhile, prepare the receptacle by filling the plastic bucket with ice. Add a few drops of brown and red airbrush colors to the ice. Once the sugar has reached 160 degrees Centigrade, wait 1-2 minutes to allow the temperature to drop a bit to reduce the bubbles visible in the finished piece; however, bubbles are sometimes a good added visual effect for sea-themed features.
- Pour the hot sugar over the ice cubes. As the sugar passes over the surface of the cubes, the color will blend naturally throughout the sugar.



- With gloved hands, flex the sides of the plastic tub to release the sugar from the sides. Pull the sugar out of the bowl in as few chunks as possible.



- Place each chunk of sugar on the ½ sheet tray to drain. Remove lodged pieces of ice with your hands and transfer the ice coral to a dry sheet tray.



- Highlight the finished pieces with shades of color from your airbrush. 🍷



All photos courtesy of Christina Arpante of melecotte.com