

**SOMEONE'S GOT
TO DO IT...**
THE FUDGE-BEATER

Bobby Richardson, 36, is production manager at Burnt Sugar, a fudge-making business in Yorkshire. He lives in Hull.

You personally make about half a tonne of fudge a week. By hand. It's a laborious business. How's it done?

I weigh the ingredients – clotted cream, sugar, golden syrup, glucose syrup, butter and milk. We do 40 kilos per batch. I put the ingredients into a copper bowl that could fit three men, and turn the burners on. It takes 40-45 minutes to cook and it all melts and bubbles before being divided into four plastic bowls.

And that's when your real hard work begins. The all-important beating.

Yes. I beat them all with a thick plastic spoon.

And there's a real skill to it?

It's all in the wrist. You've got to be careful because the mixture gets to a temperature of 248C, although I let it cool for a few minutes, to about 220C, before I start beating. I hold the middle of the big, long spoon and beat at an angle, then switch hands and beat in the other direction. All in all I beat for about five minutes, but that's a long time. You have to be careful you beat long enough, because if you don't the sugar crystals will taste like lump sugar. You beat to dissolve the crystals and get the taste of the cream. A lot depends on the weather. In the summer it keeps the heat and you beat for less.

How long do you beat each day?

I make between 10 and 14 batches a day so it can be on and off all day. It's hard work. But the days fly by because I love the job.

Are you fit?

My arms are massive – it's good for the biceps.

Might I say the unsayable and ask why a machine can't do the beating? You could save yourself an awful lot of effort.

My hands would go limp and I'd lose my muscles! We've always done it this way and you wouldn't get the same product. It wouldn't be crumbly and melt-in-the-mouth. Some machine-made fudge has fondant in it to try to get the same effect, but it doesn't work. You need to judge it by hand and by looking at it. That's how you know how long to beat it for. A machine can't know. Fudge has to be home-made. The best always is and we get some really nice letters from customers saying so. CANDIDA CREWE