

How to make an Ice Lantern

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Alberta Clipper, Polar Vortex, winter in Minnesota, call it what you wish, it means temperatures will fall below freezing for a while; It also means time for ice lanterns.

On cold, dark winter nights the glow of a small candle from ice lanterns along the walkway or deck can be a warm sight. Making ice lantern globes is easy and fun, and requires only a few, simple components, besides the frigid weather.



First, buy the best quality party balloons you can find. Twelve-inch balloons make an eight-inch diameter ice globe. You also will need disposable hard plastic bowls or a six-inch disposable plate with a slight rim. These can be re-used year after year. I store balloons and bowls /plates in a zip lock bag, so my ice lantern kit is ready to go.

Fill each balloon with almost one gallon of water. As the old adage about water explains, *A pint's a pound the world around*, so each globe, can weigh up to eight pounds.

Fill the balloon by slipping the neck of the balloon over the kitchen sink faucet. Lay the balloon in a bowl or colander, as close to the faucet as possible, while you fill it. *Hold on to the section of balloon that slips over the faucet with your finger and thumb securely, because it can pop off and squirt water every which way.* Very hot tap water and very cold nights will make the ice clear; streaks in the ice globe are caused by impurities, or minerals in the water.

Fill the balloon until it measures about eight inches across. Carefully pinch the neck of the balloon, pull it free from the tap and tie a single knot. Leave the filled balloon in the bowl to transfer it outside; a water-filled balloon is very unstable. Place the balloon, with the tied end down, into the plastic bowl.

The water will freeze from the outside to the center, which takes 4 to 10 hours, depending on the temperature and wind-chill.

The trick is to keep the center liquid and freeze the walls enough to form the sphere. I check the lantern every two hours. Tap on the lantern to determine if the walls are thick enough, then clip the balloon and pour out the unfrozen water and remove the remainder of the balloon and place scraps in the garbage as small animals or birds may ingest the scraps of the balloon.

The walls of the lantern should be $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ ", with an opening in the top. Over freeze and you can end up with a frozen bowling ball in place of a lantern. If this happens, peel away the balloon pieces



and set the globe of ice under a stream of hot tap water to carve out a channel or indent to set in the votive light.

To prepare the lights, set a tea light into a clear or colored glass votive light holder. Set all lights in an aluminum cake pan and light each candle. Use a set of tongs to lower the lights into the center of the ice lanterns. The heat from the candle makes the inside of the lantern smooth and clear.

Lanterns can be prepared ahead of time. They last from two to ten weeks depending on the sun and temperature. Ice lanterns cast a magical light through the deep winter night.

Some ice lanterns have bits of pine boughs holly, or flowers embedded in the walls.

[Check in with Pinterest or YouTube](#) for other ways to decorate your ice lanterns.

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