



CHEWY BROWNIES

Makes twenty-four 2-inch brownies. Published March 1, 2010. From Cook's Illustrated.

For the chewiest texture, it is important to let the brownies cool thoroughly before cutting. If your baking dish is glass, cool the brownies 10 minutes, then remove them promptly from the pan (otherwise, the superior heat retention of glass can lead to overbaking). While any high-quality chocolate can be used in this recipe, our preferred brands of bittersweet chocolate are Callebaut Intense Dark Chocolate L-60-40NV and Ghirardelli Bittersweet Chocolate Baking Bar. Our preferred brand of unsweetened chocolate is Scharffen Berger. Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 4 days.

1/3 cup Dutch-processed cocoa

1 1/2 teaspoons instant espresso (optional)

1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons boiling water

2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, finely chopped (see note and related illustration)

4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, melted

1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 large eggs

2 large egg yolks

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

2 1/2 cups (17 1/2 ounces) sugar

1 3/4 cups (8 3/4 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour

3/4 teaspoon table salt

6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, cut into 1/2-inch pieces (see note)

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Adjust oven rack to lowest position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Referring to directions in Making a Foil Sling (related), make sling using the following steps: Cut 18-inch length foil and fold lengthwise to 8-inch width. Fit foil into length of 13 by 9-inch baking pan, pushing it into corners and up sides of pan; allow excess to overhang pan edges. Cut 14-inch length foil and fit into width of pan in the same manner, perpendicular to the first sheet (if using extra-wide foil, fold second sheet lengthwise to 12-inch width). Spray with nonstick cooking spray.
- 2.** Whisk cocoa, espresso powder (if using), and boiling water together in large bowl until smooth. Add unsweetened chocolate and whisk until chocolate is melted. Whisk in melted butter and oil. (Mixture may look curdled.) Add eggs, yolks, and vanilla and continue to whisk until smooth and homogeneous. Whisk in sugar until fully incorporated. Add flour and salt and mix with rubber spatula until combined. Fold in bittersweet chocolate pieces.
- 3.** Scrape batter into prepared pan and bake until toothpick inserted halfway between edge and center comes out with just a few moist crumbs attached, 30 to 35 minutes. Transfer pan to wire rack and cool 1½ hours.
- 4.** Using foil overhang, lift brownies from pan. Return brownies to wire rack and let cool completely, about 1 hour. Cut into 2-inch squares and serve.

STEP-BY-STEP

Brownies with a Shiny, Crackly Top

A glossy, crackly top is one of the hallmarks of a great brownie, but achieving it can be elusive. Can the type of sweetener you use help?

THE EXPERIMENT

We baked three batches of brownies, one sweetened with granulated sugar, another with brown sugar, and a third with brown sugar and corn syrup.

THE RESULTS

Only the brownies made with granulated sugar took on an attractive crackly sheen. The other batches had a dull, matte finish.

THE EXPLANATION

Why does granulated sugar work best? It's all due to what might be deemed "special effects." Whether on its own or in combination with corn syrup, brown sugar forms crystals on the surface of the cooling brownie. Crystals reflect light in a diffuse way, creating a matte effect. The pure sucrose in granulated sugar, on the other hand, forms a smooth glasslike surface as it cools that reflects light in a focused way, for a shiny effect. As for the crackly crust, its formation depends on sugar molecules rising to the surface of the batter and drying out during baking. Since both brown sugar and corn contain more moisture than granulated sugar, the surface of brownies made with either of these sweeteners never dries out enough for a crisp crust to form.



**BROWN SUGAR = DULL,
MATTE FINISH**



**WHITE SUGAR = SHINY,
CRACKLY FINISH**

STEP-BY-STEP

The Secret to Chewy Brownies

The secret to a box-mix brownie's chewy texture boils down to one thing: fat—specifically the ratio of saturated to unsaturated fat. By using both butter (a predominantly saturated fat) and unsaturated vegetable oil, we were able to approximate the same 1:3 ratio found in commercially engineered specimens to mimic their satisfying chew.



BOX FORMULA

28% saturated fat

71%unsaturated fat

Besides containing the optimal ratio of different fat types, box brownies make use of highly processed powdered shortening to achieve their chewy texture.



OUR FORMULA

29% saturated fat

71%unsaturated fat

Our brownies contain a low-tech combo of butter and vegetable oil that creates a similar chew—and imparts a far richer taste than shortening ever could.



CLASSIC FORMULA

64% saturated fat

36%unsaturated fat

The classic version of brownies

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

Looking for Chewy Texture? Don't Try This

In our efforts to create a brownie as chewy as the box-mix kind, we tried a range of unusual techniques and ingredients. None of the approaches below got us close to our goal.



MAKE A BISCUIT

Online cooks swear this strange combo creates chew; we found that these ingredients are better left on the shelf.



ADD CARAMEL

Other cooks say folding a caramel made from sugar and butter into the mix leads to chew. We didn't find it so.



BAKE ON A PIZZA STONE

The heat trapped in a pizza stone purportedly melts the sugar in the brownies, contributing to chew. For us, it did nothing.





America's Test Kitchen is a 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of Cook's Country and Cook's Illustrated magazines and is the workday destination for more than three dozen test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes until we understand how and why they work and arrive at the best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of brands that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to America's Test Kitchen (www.americastestkitchen.com) on public television.