

FEBRUARY

The Ultimate Brownies



The perfect brownies should be a decadent exploration of what chocolate can bring to the texture and flavor of a baked good. Our Triple-Chocolate Brownies celebrate this tradition and more, receiving a fudgy, chewy boost from Bob's Red Mill Organic All-Purpose Flour and Bob's Red Mill Chickpea Flour. In this lesson, you'll get a master class in chocolate and cocoa, from melting to mixing, and all the sweet details in between.

INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

Great recipes require great ingredients. Here's how each key ingredient helps make these brownies so special.

BOB'S RED MILL ORGANIC

ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR: This versatile all-purpose wheat flour has a protein content of 10% to 12%, so our brownies are tender but have enough gluten structure to form a fudgy crumb that borders on decadently dense. By nature, most brownie recipes don't contain much flour, so it's crucial that the flour you use has enough protein to help bind your batter together.

BOB'S RED MILL CHICKPEA

FLOUR: Chickpea flour, also known as garbanzo bean flour, gram flour, and cici bean flour, has a subtly sweet and creamy taste that makes it a surprising complement to our rich chocolate brownies. It works best in baked goods with strong flavors like chocolate or pumpkin and can replace up to 25% of the flour in a recipe, boosting the iron, protein, and fiber content.

KOSHER SALT: We bake with kosher salt because, unlike most commercial salt, it doesn't contain iodine, making it taste purer and more palatable. Also, the salt crystals are larger. Table salt is much finer, thus you would use half of what a recipe with kosher salt calls for.

DUTCH PROCESS COCOA

POWDER: Dutch process cocoa is treated with an alkaline solution of potassium carbonate to make it milder and less acidic in flavor and darker in color.

DARK CHOCOLATE: This type of chocolate contains a high percentage of cocoa as well as a rich amount of cocoa butter. This boost of fat helps make our brownies decadently fudgy.

MILK CHOCOLATE: A combination of cocoa butter, cocoa, milk solids, sugar, and vanilla, milk chocolate imparts an extra-creamy chocolate note to the brownies.

WHITE CHOCOLATE: Lacking cocoa solids, the bulk of white chocolate is made up of cocoa butter, sugar, and milk solids.

UNSALTED BUTTER: Melted high-quality butter is an essential part of the brownies' fudgy texture. When you cream butter and sugar together, like you might do for a cake or cookie recipe, you're whipping air into the batter, which will give it a cakier crumb. Melted butter stirred into the batter will eliminate the air, creating a close-crumbed texture, meaning maximum fudginess. This, in combination with the rich cocoa butter from the melted dark chocolate, offers a boost of decadent fat to make dense brownies.

GRANULATED SUGAR: A little sugar goes a long way in balancing out the

intense flavor of the dark chocolate and cocoa powder in our brownie batter.

DARK BROWN SUGAR: The added molasses in dark brown sugar helps our brownies retain moisture and deepens the sweet flavor.

ESPRESSO POWDER: In small amounts, espresso powder, like most other coffee products, enhances the flavor of chocolate.

EGGS: The eggs act as our leavener, giving our fudgy brownies a bit of structure.

VANILLA EXTRACT: Vanilla complements and enhances the chocolate in our recipe.



CHOCOLATE CHECKLIST

Our brownies pack a big punch of cocoa. Here's everything you need to know about your chocolate ingredients.

GENERAL BUYER'S GUIDE

Chocolate chips have stabilizers and different kinds of fat added so they keep their shape when baked. This is great for chocolate chip cookies, but for baking our brownies, we like to use bars and couverture chocolate (a chocolate that has a higher percentage of cocoa butter, usually 32% to 38%). They are higher quality and have more flavor and better texture than melted chips.

DARK CHOCOLATE:

For the most precise baking, we use the cacao percentage of the chocolate to act as our guide on what to buy and use. The cacao percentage shows how much cocoa is present in the bar, with higher percentages usually meaning darker, more intense chocolate with a very high cocoa butter content. We use mostly dark chocolate in our recipe because of its increased cocoa butter content. For our dark chocolate, we use a 66% cacao dark chocolate, but anything within the 60% to 70% cacao range will work.

MILK CHOCOLATE:

Milk chocolate will be 30% to 50% cacao, but the important element in milk chocolate is its additional milk content. Milk chocolate is all about a lower-percentage-cacao chocolate getting the creamy blessing of lactose and milk solids during the conching process (when cacao nibs and cocoa butter are pressed and crushed together to create smooth chocolate). It is smoother and sweeter than any other type of chocolate.

WHITE CHOCOLATE:

This chocolate product is, in fact, better classified as a confection because it doesn't contain any cocoa solids in its formula. Instead, cocoa butter, the rich fat pressed from the cacao bean, is combined with sugar and milk solids to create a silky, sweet byproduct. Still, white chocolate is regulated just like regular chocolate: it has to contain at least 20% cocoa butter and 14% milk solids to be called white chocolate.

COCOA:

Cocoa and chocolate have differing effects for brownies. Cocoa brownies will have a chewy crumb and intense flavor, whereas brownies made with melted chocolate will be densely fudgy. For the best of both worlds, we combine the two. We opt for Dutch process cocoa powder because it is slightly less astringent in flavor than natural cocoa powder, so it makes an intense but not bitter-tasting brownie.





TRIPLE-CHOCOLATE BROWNIES

Makes about 15 brownies

Cocoa powder, three kinds of chocolate, and a touch of creamy and sweet chickpea flour make these brownies the ultimate fudgy decadence. A bonus? This is a simple stir-together recipe that can be mixed and baked in a flash.

- 1½ cups (255 grams) chopped 60% to 70% cacao dark chocolate, divided
- 1¼ cups (213 grams) chopped milk chocolate, divided
- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, cubed
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 cup (220 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 1¼ cups (156 grams) Bob's Red Mill Organic All-Purpose Flour
- ½ cup (60 grams) Bob's Red Mill Chickpea Flour (see Note)
- ¼ cup (21 grams) Dutch process cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons (6 grams) kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon (2 grams) espresso powder
- 4 large eggs (200 grams), lightly beaten
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
- ½ cup (85 grams) chopped white chocolate

1. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Spray a 13x9-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In the top of a double boiler, combine 1 cup (170 grams) dark chocolate, ¾ cup (128 grams)

milk chocolate, and butter. Cook over simmering water, stirring occasionally, until melted and smooth. Turn off heat, and whisk in sugars. Remove from heat, and let cool slightly.

3. In a medium bowl, sift together flours, cocoa, salt, and espresso powder. Set aside.

4. Add eggs and vanilla to chocolate mixture, whisking until combined. Fold in flour mixture until a few bits of flour remain. Fold in white chocolate, remaining ½ cup (85 grams) dark chocolate, and remaining ½ cup (85 grams) milk chocolate. Spread batter into prepared pan.

5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with a few moist crumbs, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool completely in pan. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Note: We wanted to highlight the versatility of Bob's Red Mill Chickpea Flour in our brownie recipe, but if you would like to use only Bob's Red Mill Organic All-Purpose Flour, use 1¼ cups (219 grams) all-purpose flour in place of the 1¼ cups (156 grams) all-purpose flour and ½ cup (60 grams) chickpea flour called for.



THE DOUBLE BOILER METHOD

Chocolate needs delicate, indirect heat to melt properly. Here's how to melt your chocolate using a double boiler.

THE TOOL: A double boiler is essentially two pots, one that will be exposed to the heat and hold an inch of simmering water, and a second, shallower pot that fits on top and holds the chocolate above the simmering water, heating the chocolate gently. Though you can buy a special double boiler, all you really need is a pot and a heatproof bowl that sits on top of it without touching the bottom of the pot.

THE METHOD: Place the butter and chocolate in your bowl or second pot, and place the bowl or pot over the simmering water. To prevent scorching, make sure the bowl or pot holding the butter and chocolate isn't actually touching the hot water. Stir ingredients only once they begin to melt.



MELT, MIX, AND BAKE

A step-by-step guide to how and why our brownies are fudgy perfection

Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). At too high a temperature, like 375°F (190°C), brownies can bake unevenly, with overdone edges and an underdone center. At this moderate temperature, the brownies bake steadily for a tender texture.

Spray a 13x9-inch baking pan with cooking spray. Line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan. We line our pan with parchment so we can pick up the brownies and cut them outside of the pan, avoiding scratches. It also makes for easier cleanup.

In the top of a double boiler, combine 1 cup (170 grams) dark chocolate, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (128 grams) milk chocolate, and butter. Cook over simmering water, stirring occasionally, until melted and smooth. (For an in-depth look at this step, see The Double Boiler Method.)



Turn off heat, and whisk in sugars. Remove from heat, and let cool slightly. Letting the mixture cool slightly ensures the eggs don't start cooking before reaching the oven. But don't let it cool too much or the chocolate will begin to solidify and form chunks in your batter.



In a medium bowl, sift together flours, cocoa, salt, and espresso powder. Flour and cocoa powder will often clump up as they sit in your pantry, meaning they won't incorporate properly into the batter. We sift the dry ingredients together to ensure that when we mix them into the wet ingredients, it's a smooth affair.



Add eggs and vanilla to chocolate mixture, whisking until combined. Fold in flour mixture until a few bits of flour remain. Seeing a few pockets of flour in the batter means you haven't overmixed it, which would make your brownies tough.



Fold in white chocolate, remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (85 grams) dark chocolate, and remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (85 grams) milk chocolate. To properly fold in the chocolate (again, ensuring you're not overmixing the batter), use a silicone spatula to lift and "fold" batter over the chopped chocolate, tucking in rather than stirring in.

Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with a few moist crumbs, 35 to 40 minutes. Unlike testing for doneness in cakes where you don't want any crumbs adhering to a wooden pick, perfectly fudgy brownies will have a few moist crumbs clinging to the pick.

Let cool completely in pan. With a dense and fudgy texture, the brownies need to completely set up and cool before you can make cleanly sliced bars. Of course, if gooey, molten brownies are your preference, feel free to dig right in.



EXPERT TIP

Unlike ground spices or other aromatic powders, cocoa powder has a long shelf life. So, don't worry about buying fresh cocoa for the recipe, even if yours is a year old.



EXPERT TIP

Store your chocolate in a cool, dry place for up to 6 months. Resist storing in the refrigerator or freezer, as porous chocolate absorbs flavors of other foods and the drastic temperature change affects its crystalline structure, changing the way it behaves in recipes.

Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan, and cut into bars. If not serving immediately, cover and store brownies in the refrigerator to keep them fudgy. Alternatively, they can be stored, covered, at room temperature for up to 1 week.

HOW TO CUSTOMIZE YOUR BROWNIES

We opt for a trio of chocolate for our mix-ins, but you can flex your creative muscle and make a personalized batch of brownies by following our guide



THE METHOD: In step 4, we have you fold your three chopped chocolates into the batter as the very last step before pouring the batter into the prepared pan. Whatever mix-in you decide to use, be it nuts or dried fruit, you'll want to add it in at this time. The only exception to the rule is jam, which you would swirl on top of the batter once the batter has been added to the prepared pan at the end of step 4.



THE MAGIC NUMBER: Our mix-ins are $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each of white, milk, and dark chocolates, adding up to a total of $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of chopped chocolate going into the batter. As a rule, you can replace any (or all!) of those amounts of chocolate with an equal amount of another ingredient. Your mix-in amount should always equal $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups because adding more or less of the $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups called for will change the bake time of your brownies.



THE MIX-INS: The options are endless! Try nuts, like walnuts, pecans, or peanuts, to add crunchy texture. Dried fruit, such as apricots or cherries, introduces a note of concentrated sweetness. Try incorporating toffee bits or caramel pieces for a boost of butterscotch. You can even swirl in jam once the brownie batter has been added to the pan (just keep the jam at 1 cup, as liquid jam is heavier than your dry mix-ins).