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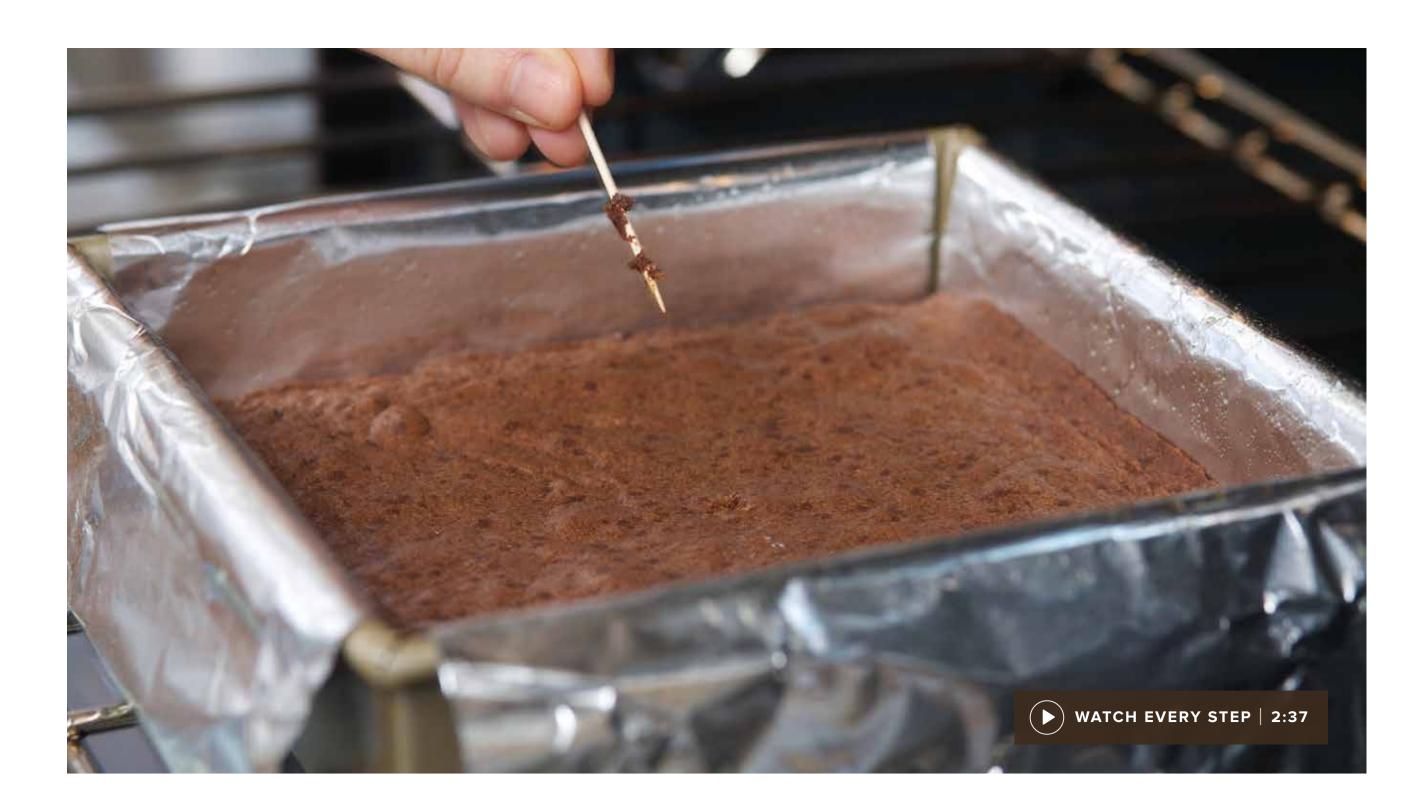
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## Chewy, Fudgy Brownies

BY DAWN YANAGIHARA · PUBLISHED MAY 2000



Baking brownies with a moist, velvety texture, a hint of chew, and deep chocolate flavor is no piece of cake. The secret lies in the perfect balance of ingredients and three different types of chocolate.



mericans are passionate about brownies. Some are passionate about eating them, about a brownie's rich, chocolatey decadence. Others are passionate about a recipe, scrawled on a stained index card bequeathed to them by their mother, guaranteeing people like me that this family heirloom produces the best brownie of all.

I've sampled good brownies, I think, but I know I've never encountered my brownie paragon. And yet somehow I know exactly how the perfect brownie ought to taste and look. Those light cakey versions are not for me. I imagine a moist, dark, luscious interior with a

WHAT SUCCESS WOULD LOOK LIKE

Intense chocolate flavor

- ✓ Not overly sweet
- Chewy, fudgy texture

My perfect brownie must pack an intense chocolate punch and have deep, resonant chocolate flavor, but it must fall just short of overwhelming the palate. firm, smooth, velvety texture that your teeth easily glide through but meet just a little resistance in chewing. My perfect brownie must pack an intense chocolate punch and have deep, resonant chocolate flavor, but it must fall just short of overwhelming the palate. It must not be so sweet as to make your teeth ache, and it must certainly have a thin, shiny, papery crust and edges that crisp during baking, offering a contrast with the brownie's moist center. With all of this in mind, I began my quest, determined to meet my brownie ideal.

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My baking sense told me that the taste and texture of the brownies I sought lay in a delicate balance of the five ingredients basic to all brownie recipes: chocolate, flour, sugar, butter, and eggs. After

gathering a number of recipes that promised to deliver a fudgy brownie, I made a select six that confirmed my expectations. The varying proportions of these five ingredients produced batches of brownies that were soft and pasty; dry and cakey; or chewy, like a Tootsie Roll. Chocolate flavor was divergent, too, ranging from intense but one-dimensional jolts to weak, muted passings on the palate. My next step was to cobble together a composite recipe that would incorporate the best traits of these six recipes. It would serve as the foundation for all of my testing.







SAVE

The two essential qualities I was looking for in these brownies were a chewy, fudgy texture and a rich chocolate flavor. I went to work on flavor first. After making the six initial test recipes and reading earlier Cook's articles on Cream Cheese Brownies and Chocolate Cookies, I knew that unsweetened chocolate was a good source of assertive chocolate flavor. Semisweet and bittersweet chocolates don't have much chocolate punch because of the large amount of sugar they contain. But this is also why they are smoother and milder. One of my favorite recipes from the initial test yielded a brownie with exceptional chocolate flavor; this recipe combined unsweetened and bittersweet chocolates, so to the composite recipe I tried adding varying amounts of the two chocolates. (Semisweet and bittersweet chocolates are not identical but can be exchanged for one another in many recipes depending on what's available at the supermarket; I'll refer to semisweet from here on because it's what I used when testing the recipes.)

Too much unsweetened chocolate and the brownies were sour and acrid, too much semisweet chocolate and they were one-dimensional and boring. I found that 5 ounces of semisweet and 2 ounces of unsweetened created just the right flavor balance. Next I thought to add some cocoa powder, which typically adds flavor but no harshness. I was pleased with this combination. The unsweetened chocolate laid a solid, intense chocolate foundation, the semisweet provided a mellow, even, sweet flavor, and the cocoa smoothed any rough edges and added depth and complexity. I tried both Dutch-processed cocoa and natural cocoa and found them to work equally well.

I then fiddled with the type and quantity of sugar needed to sweeten the brownies, given the amount and types of chocolate and cocoa they contained. In addition to white sugar, I tried brown sugar to see if it might add flavor, but it didn't. I also tried a bit of corn syrup, thinking it might add moistness and chew, but it only made the brownies wet and gummy and the crust dull. Satisfied that white sugar was the best sweetener for the job, I tested varying amounts. I knew I didn't want overly sweet brownies. Too little sugar, though, left the brownies with a chocolate flavor that was dull, muted, and flat, much like mashed potatoes without salt. Just the right degree of sweetness was provided by 11/4 cups sugar; the flavor of the brownies was now spot-on.

### **SCIENCE** How Mixing Affects Brownie Texture



### **PERFECTLY MIXED** The brownies that were folded just right with streaks of flour remaining in the batter, baked up fudgy and tender, just as we like.

### Chew, Chew

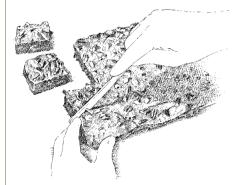
Satisfied with the flavor of the brownies, I moved on to refining the texture, starting with flour. My composite recipe contained 3/4 cup flour, but wanting to exhaust all reasonable quantities, I baked brownies with as little as 1/4 cup and up to 11/4 cups, increasing the quantity in 1/4 cup increments. The batch with the least amount of flour was like goopy, sticky, chocolate-flavored Spackle, so pasty it cemented your mouth shut. The one with 11/4 cups flour had good chew, but it verged on dry, and the chocolate flavor was light and muted. One cup was perfect. The chocolate flavor remained deep and rich, and the texture was fudgy, smooth, and dense, the moist crumb putting up a gentle resistance when chewed.

Butter was up next. Melting butter, rather than creaming it with sugar and eggs, makes for a dense, fudgy texture. Creaming produces an aerated batter, which bakes into lighter, cakier brownies. Had I questioned this baker's axiom after the initial test, in which all of the six recipes employ the melted butter technique, any doubts would be dispelled. But now the question of how much butter remained.

Semisweet chocolate contains more fat than unsweetened chocolate, yet many recipes that call exclusively for one type of chocolate frequently call for the same amount of butter (some 16 tablespoons) per cup of flour. As it stood, my working recipe used semisweet and unsweetened chocolate, cocoa, 1 cup flour, and 10 tablespoons butter. The texture of the brownies this recipe produced was moist and dense, albeit a bit sodden and pasty. Improvement came with eight tablespoons of butter. Minus these two tablespoons, the brownies shed their soggy, sodden quality but still remained moist and velvety.

With butter and flour set, I went to work on eggs. I tried as few as two and as many as six. Two eggs left the brownies dry and gritty and compromised the chocolate flavor. With four or more eggs, the brownies baked into cakey rubber erasers with an unattractive, high-domed, dull matte crust. Three was the magic number—the brownies were moist and smooth, with great flavor and delicate chew.

I finalized the recipe by making adjustments to vanilla and salt and then began to examine other factors that might have an impact on the brownies. First I tried baking in a water bath, a technique used for delicate custards, reasoning that gentle heat might somehow improve texture. Not so. I got a grainy, sticky, puddinglike brownie. NEATLY CUTTING BROWNIES



Neatly cutting brownies can be tricky because half the crumbs end up sticking to the knife, especially if the brownies are really fudgy. Here's a neat remedy. Instead of using a serrated or chef's knife, use a sturdy plastic knife. It glides easily through even the stickiest brownies, picking up no crumbs.

#### FOR FASTER BROWNIES



These treats are perfect for tossing into a lunchbox or for portable snacking. Fill regular muffin tins with brownie batter to a depth of 1 inch, or two-thirds full. Bake for 15 minutes, which is less than half of the normal baking time.

The chocolate flavor remained deep and rich, and the texture was fudgy, smooth, and dense, the moist crumb putting up a gentle resistance when chewed. I experimented with midrange oven temperatures. Three-hundred-fifty degrees did the job and did it relatively quickly, in about 35 minutes (many brownies bake for nearly an hour). As is the case with most other brownies, if baked too long, these brownies run the risk of drying out; they must be pulled from the oven when a toothpick inserted into the center comes out with some sticky crumbs clinging to it.



Extracting brownies from baking pans can be tricky. Aluminum foil solves this problem, prevents sticking, and makes cleanup a breeze in recipes.

After making more than 50 batches, I really began to appreciate an aspect of brownies quite beside their rich flavor and texture—with only a couple of bowls, a whisk, and a spatula, the batter can be mixed and in the oven in 10 minutes.

#### **KEYS TO SUCCESS**

#### Intense chocolate flavor

A combination of unsweetened & semisweet chocolate with cocoa powder makes for a chocolate flavor with depth and complexity.

Not overly sweet

Finding the right balance of unsweetened & semisweet chocolate as well as the perfect amount of sugar created spot-on flavor.

Chewy, fudgy texture Melting butter, rather than creaming it with sugar and eggs, makes for a dense, fudgy texture.

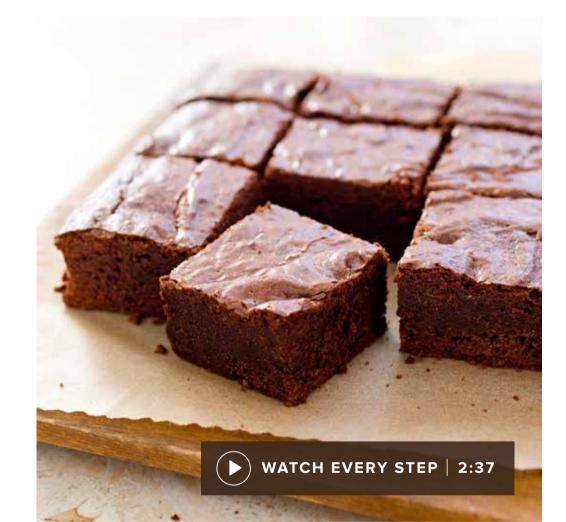
# Chewy, Fudgy Brownies

BY DAWN YANAGIHARA · PUBLISHED MAY 2000

#### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

T o develop a rich, deep chocolate flavor for our fudgy brownie recipe, we ultimately found it necessary to use three types of chocolate: unsweetened chocolate laid a solid, intense foundation; semisweet chocolate provided a mellow, even, somewhat sweet flavor; and cocoa smoothed out any rough edges introduced by the unsweetened chocolate (which can contribute a sour, acrid flavor) and added complexity to what can be the bland flavor of semisweet chocolate. We focused on flour, butter, and eggs to arrive at the chewy texture we wanted in our brownie recipe. Too little flour meant the batter was goopy; too much made the brownies dry and muted the chocolate flavor.

**Print Shopping List** 



#### INGREDIENTS

- 5 ounces semisweet chocolate or bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter (1 stick),
  cut into quarters

#### INSTRUCTIONS

#### Makes 64 1-inch brownies

Either Dutch-processed or natural cocoa works well in this recipe. These brownies are very rich, so we prefer to cut them into small squares for serving.

Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees.
 Spray 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick vegetable cooking spray. Fold two
 12-inch pieces of foil lengthwise so that they measure 7 inches wide. Fit one
 sheet in bottom of greased pan, pushing it into corners and up sides of pan;

- **3** tablespoons cocoa powder
- **3** large eggs
- **1**<sup>1</sup>⁄<sub>4</sub> cups granulated sugar
  - 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon table salt
- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour

#### FEATURED EQUIPMENT





All-Purpose Whisks Buy the winner



Baker's Edge Brownie Pan Buy the winner overhang will help in removal of baked brownies. Fit second sheet in pan in same manner, perpendicular to first sheet. Spray foil with nonstick cooking spray. **See Recipe Techniques below.** 

**2.** In medium heatproof bowl set over a pan of almost-simmering water, melt chocolates and butter, stirring occasionally until mixture is smooth. Whisk in cocoa until smooth. Set aside to cool slightly.

**3.** Whisk together eggs, sugar, vanilla, and salt in medium bowl until combined, about 15 seconds. Whisk warm chocolate mixture into egg mixture; then stir in flour with wooden spoon until just combined. Pour mixture into prepared pan, spread into corners, and level surface with rubber spatula; bake until slightly puffed and toothpick inserted in center comes out with a small amount of sticky crumbs clinging to it, 35 to 40 minutes. Cool on wire rack to room temperature, about 2 hours, then remove brownies from pan using foil handles. Cut into 1-inch squares and serve. (Do not cut brownies until ready to serve; brownies can be wrapped in plastic and refrigerated up to 5 days.)



**WATCH EVERY STEP** Chewy, Fudgy Brownies

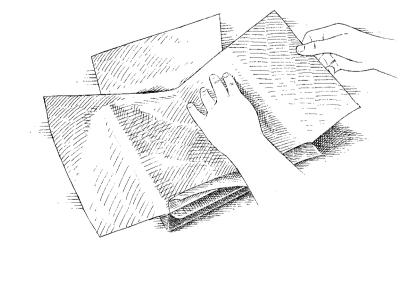
**RECIPE VARIATION** Triple-Chocolate Espresso Brownies

> ACCOMPANIMENT Vanilla Ice Cream

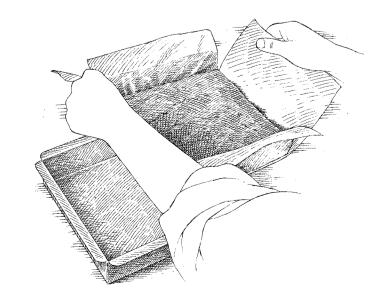
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#### RECIPE TECHNIQUES

Lining and Lifting



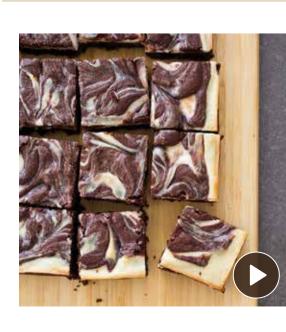
Line the baking pan with two sheets of foil placed perpendicular.



Use the foil handles to lift the cooked brownies or bar cookies

from the pan.

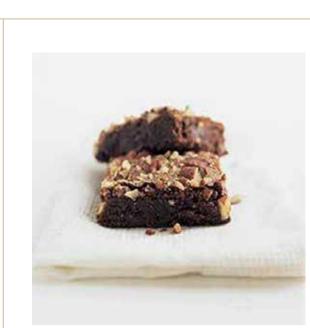
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