

Fudgy, Chewy, Cakey, Brownies

KNOWING WHEN to pull a pan of brownies from the oven is the only difficult part of baking them. If you wait until a toothpick inserted comes clean, they're overcooked. Check your brownies even before the suggested minimum baking time. If a toothpick inserted in the middle comes up with really fudgy crumbs, it's time to take the brownies out and put them on a wire rack for cooling.

2/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
2 ounces unsweetened chocolate
4 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate
10 tablespoons (1 stick plus 2 tablespoons) unsalted butter
1 1/4 cups sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 large eggs
3/4 cup toasted walnuts, pecans, macadamia nuts or peanuts (optional, I use walnuts and double the amount)

Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and preheat oven to 325°F.

Whisk flour, salt and baking powder in a small bowl; set aside. Grease a large muffin tin with butter and then dust with flour.

Melt chocolates and butter in a medium bowl over a pan of simmering water or in microwave.

Remove from heat; whisk in sugar and vanilla. Whisk in eggs, one at a time, fully incorporating each one before adding the next. Continue to whisk until mixture is completely smooth and glossy. Add dry ingredients; whisk until just incorporated. Stir in nuts, if desired.

Pour batter into prepared pan; bake until a toothpick or cake tester inserted into center comes out with wet crumbs, 35 to 45 minutes.

Cool brownies in pan on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Go around edge of each muffin with knife and turn out of wire rack. Completely cool brownies on rack, at least 3 hours. Cut into desired size and serve. If not serving immediately, do not cut brownies. (Whole brownie cake can be wrapped in plastic wrap, then foil, and refrigerated for up to 5 days.)