

Microwave Brownies

MAKES 9 LARGE BROWNIES

TIME: 25 MINUTES (INCLUDES 10 MINUTES COOLING TIME)

For mocha brownies, add 1 tablespoon instant espresso powder to the batter. For nut brownies, add ½ cup toasted, chopped walnuts to the batter along with the other dry ingredients. The brownies must be eaten warm; they turn rock hard after they cool completely.

- 3 large eggs
- 1½ cups (10½ ounces) sugar
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
- ¾ cup (3¾ ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup (4 ounces) cocoa powder
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅓ cup semisweet chocolate morsels

1. Spray an 8 by 8-inch microwave-safe baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.

2. Whisk together the eggs and sugar in a medium bowl. Slowly whisk in the butter. Stir in the flour, cocoa powder, and salt. Stir in the vanilla and chocolate morsels. With a spatula, scrape the batter into the prepared pan.

3. Microwave on high until a toothpick or skewer inserted into the center comes out clean, 5 to 7 minutes. You can tell the brownies need more time in the microwave if, when the pan is tilted, the brownies slouch to the lower side. Cool the brownies for 10 minutes, cut into squares, and serve warm.

➤ VARIATION

Frosted Microwave Brownies

Follow the recipe for Microwave Brownies, microwaving them for only 4 minutes. Remove the pan from the microwave and

evenly sprinkle ½ cup semisweet chocolate morsels over the top of the brownies. Return the pan to the microwave and cook for an additional 1 to 3 minutes (or until a toothpick or skewer inserted into the center comes out clean). Remove the pan from the microwave and, using the back of a spoon, spread the softened chocolate morsels (they will not melt in the microwave) over the top of the brownies. Cool and cut into squares as directed.

TOFFEE BARS

TOFFEE BARS CAN BE MADE IN MANY ways. Some recipes call for a condensed milk topping that includes milk, eggs, and toffee. Others call for a topping of corn syrup, egg, sugar, and toffee, perhaps with almonds tossed in. Still others simply call for sprinkling chocolate chips over a hot crust, spreading them with the back of a spoon, and then sprinkling toffee chips over the warm chocolate. We found none of these methods produced quick, easy, and delicious toffee bars.

The problem with the first two methods is that they take too long. As the crust cooks, you make the filling and then bake the filling on top of the crust. By the time the bars come out of the oven and cool, you are far over the 1-hour time limit. The third method (with the chocolate chips) turned out decent toffee bars—but, even after 20 minutes of cooling in the freezer, the top chocolate layer was still wet.

However, as we tried variations of this third method out (all to no avail), we ended up developing quite a satisfying crust. We began by beating together softened butter with brown sugar, an egg, flour, and salt. We packed the somewhat crumbly mixture into a square baking pan and baked it at 375 degrees for just shy of 30 minutes. We concluded the egg was unnecessary; it produced a cakey crust. In