

Lady Arianna's Favorite Chocolate Recipes

A special compendium
created by

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Inspired by the *Lady Arianna* historical mystery series



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Dear Friends,

Writing a book can be very stressful. It demands fortitude, patience—and unlimited chocolate! You see, The Muse often gets cranky, and decides to behave like a Diva. She sulks. She pouts. She refuses to buckle down and provide her share of scintillating prose. Groveling and pleading have no effect. But offering a fudgy brownie or a chocolate chip cookie works magic. So I've had to do a lot of research on chocolate recipes (yes, I know—work, work, work!)

Whether or not you have your own Muse to feed, I hope you enjoy the following compendium of some of my favorites.

Enjoy!

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Fudgy Coffee Brownies

2 sticks (1/2 lb) unsalted butter

5 oz unsweetened chocolate

2 tablespoons instant-espresso powder

2 cups sugar

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

5 large eggs

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon salt

1. Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle. Butter and flour a 13- by 9-inch baking pan.
2. Melt butter and chocolate with espresso powder in a 3-quart heavy saucepan over low heat, whisking until smooth. Remove from heat and cool to lukewarm. Whisk in sugar and vanilla. Whisk in eggs 1 at a time until mixture is glossy and smooth.
3. Whisk together flour, cinnamon, and salt, then whisk into chocolate mixture.
4. Spread batter in pan and bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with crumbs adhering, 25 to 30 minutes. Cool completely before cutting.



Chocolate Stout Cake

1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter plus 2 melted tablespoons

1/2 cup stout such as Mackeson or Guinness

(pour beer slowly into measuring cup; do not measure foam)

1/2 cup packed soft pitted prunes (6 oz), chopped

3 1/2 ounces fine-quality bittersweet chocolate (not unsweetened or extra-bitter),
chopped

1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

2 large eggs

1 cup packed dark brown sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

1. Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly brush 6 cup bundt pan or 8"x3" ovenproof ring mold with melted butter and chill 2 minutes, then butter again and chill while making batter.
2. Bring beer to a boil in a small saucepan and add prunes. Remove from heat and let stand until most of liquid is absorbed.
3. Meanwhile, melt chocolate and remaining butter together in a small heavy saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly. Sift together flour, baking soda, and salt into a bowl.
4. Beat together eggs, brown sugar, and vanilla in a large bowl with an electric mixer at high speed until thick, about 2 minutes. Add chocolate mixture and beat until just combined. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture, mixing until just combined. Stir in prune mixture until combined well. Spoon batter into pan and bake until a wooden skewer inserted into middle of cake comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes.
5. Cool cake in mold on a rack 10 minutes, then invert onto rack to cool completely, at least 30 minutes.



Rum Truffles

8 ounces 60% dark chocolate

2/3 cup heavy cream

2 1/2 tablespoons dark rum

1/4 teaspoon fresh lime juice

1. Heat cream in saucepan on medium until steaming. Remove from heat and add 8 oz. dark chocolate, stirring until melted. When mixture cools to room temperature, add rum and lime juice. Refrigerate until firmly chilled.
2. Form 1 inch balls from the chilled mixture using a melon baller, teaspoon, or your hands. Roll in unsweetened cocoa powder.
3. Store in airtight container between layers of waxed paper.



Cacao Shortbread

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
2/3 cup confectioners sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 cups all purpose flour
1/4 cup Dutch process cocoa powder
1/2 teaspoon salt

1. Preheat oven to 350°F degrees.
2. Using an electric mixer, beat butter and sugar until creamy, about 2 minutes.
3. Add vanilla and beat well.
4. Mix in flour, cocoa and salt on low speed until just combined. Form dough into disk, wrap in plastic and chill for at least 2 hours.
5. Roll dough between 2 sheets of wax paper to a 1/4" thick rectangle. Use a sharp knife to cut shortbread into 2-inch squares.
6. Place squares on baking sheet 1 inch apart and prick tops with fork. Bake for 15-18 minutes. Cool completely on wire rack



Mini Brownie Cupcakes

4 sticks unsalted butter, cut into pieces
8 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder (preferably Dutch-process)
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 3/4 cups granulated sugar
8 large eggs
Vegetable-oil cooking spray
Confectioner's sugar (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and line 2 mini-muffin tins with liners. Spray liners with cooking spray.
2. Melt butter and chocolate in a 4-quart heavy pot over moderately low heat, stirring until smooth. Whisk together flour, cocoa, and salt. Remove pan from heat and whisk in granulated sugar. Add eggs, 1 at a time, whisking after each addition until incorporated, and stir in flour mixture just until blended.
3. Spoon batter into muffin liners, filling cups to top, and bake in middle of oven 25 to 30 minutes, or until a tester comes out with crumbs adhering. Cool 5 minutes in tins and turn out onto racks. Repeat with remaining batter.
4. Dust with confectioners sugar if desired.



Salted Chocolate Caramels

2 cups heavy cream
10 1/2 ounces fine-quality bittersweet chocolate (no more than 60% cacao if marked), finely chopped
1 3/4 cups sugar
1/2 cup light corn syrup
1/4 cup water
1/4 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into tablespoon pieces
2 teaspoons flaky sea salt such as Maldon
Vegetable oil for greasing

1. Line bottom and sides of an 8-inch straight-sided square metal baking pan with 2 long sheets of crisscrossed parchment.
2. Bring cream just to a boil in a 1- to 1 1/2-quart heavy saucepan over moderately high heat, then reduce heat to low and add chocolate. Let stand 1 minute, then stir until chocolate is completely melted. Remove from heat.
3. Bring sugar, corn syrup, water, and salt to a boil in a 5 to 6-quart heavy pot over moderate heat, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Boil, uncovered, without stirring but gently swirling pan occasionally, until sugar is deep golden, about 10 minutes. Tilt pan and carefully pour in chocolate mixture (mixture will bubble and steam vigorously). Continue to boil over moderate heat, stirring frequently, until mixture registers 255°F on candy thermometer, about 15 minutes.
4. Add butter, stirring until completely melted, then immediately pour into lined baking pan (do not scrape any caramel clinging to bottom or side of saucepan). Let caramel stand 10 minutes, then sprinkle evenly with sea salt. Cool completely in pan on a rack, about 2 hours.
5. Carefully invert caramel onto a clean, dry cutting board, then peel off parchment. Turn caramel salt side up. Lightly oil blade of a large heavy knife and cut into 1-inch squares.



Spiced Hot Chocolate

8 cups milk
¼ cup achiote seeds
12 blanched almonds
12 toasted and skinned hazelnuts
2-3 Mexican vanilla beans, split lengthwise, seeds scraped out
¼ ounce dried rosa de Castillo (rosebuds)
2 3-inch Canela (soft Ceylon cinnamon sticks)
1 tablespoon aniseeds
2 whole dried Serrano chiles
8 ounces 70% dark chocolate
sugar to taste

1. In a heavy saucepan, heat milk with achiote seed over medium heat. Bring to low boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to low and let steep for 10 minutes, until milk is brightly colored with the achiote.
2. Grind almond and hazelnuts together to the consistency of fine breadcrumbs. Set aside.
3. Strain out achiote seeds from milk and return milk to saucepan. Add the ground nuts along with the vanilla beans and rosebuds, cinnamon, aniseeds and chiles. Bring to low boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from heat.
4. Stir in chocolate. Taste for sweetness and add sugar to taste. Strain through a fine mesh strainer.
5. Transfer chocolate to tall narrow pot and whisk vigorously with a molinillo (wooden chocolate mill) or handheld immersion blender. Serve immediately.



Chocolate Cookies With Gin-Soaked Raisins

1/2 cup golden raisins
1/3 cup gin
3 cups sifted confectioners sugar (sift before measuring)
2/3 cup sifted unsweetened cocoa powder, preferably Dutch-process (sift before measuring)
1 teaspoon instant espresso powder
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour (unsifted)
1/8 teaspoon salt
3 large egg whites
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
8 oz pecans, toasted, cooled, and coarsely chopped

1. Combine raisins and gin in a cup and let stand at least 8 hours to macerate.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter and flour 2 large baking sheets, shaking off excess flour.
3. Mix confectioners sugar, cocoa, espresso powder, flour, and salt with an electric mixer at low speed. Add egg whites and vanilla and continue mixing until smooth.
4. Drain raisins in a sieve, without pressing, then add raisins to dough with pecans. Stir until thoroughly mixed. (Dough will be thick and sticky.)
5. Working quickly, drop 1/4 cup dough for each cookie onto a baking sheet, spacing cookies at least 3 inches apart, and gently pat down each mound to about 1/2 inch thick.
6. Bake cookies, 1 sheet at a time, in middle of oven, rotating sheet halfway through baking, 15 to 17 minutes total, or until cookies appear cracked and centers are just set. Cool cookies on sheet 1 minute, then transfer carefully to a rack to cool completely.



Banana Chocolate Walnut Cake

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, softened, plus 2 tablespoons, melted and cooled
1 cup sugar, divided
2 large eggs
1 1/4 c mashed very ripe bananas (about 3 medium)
2/3 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 (3 1/2- to 4-oz) bar 70% cacao bittersweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
1 cup walnuts, toasted, cooled, and coarsely chopped
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 375°F with rack in middle. Butter a 9-inch square cake pan.
2. Stir together flour, baking soda, and salt.
3. Beat together softened butter (1 stick) and 3/4 cup sugar in a medium bowl with an electric mixer at medium speed until pale and fluffy, then beat in eggs 1 at a time until blended. Beat in bananas, yogurt, and vanilla (mixture will look curdled).
4. With mixer at low speed, add flour mixture and mix until just incorporated.
5. Toss together chocolate, nuts, cinnamon, melted butter, and remaining 1/4 cup sugar in a small bowl. Spread half of banana batter in cake pan and sprinkle with half of chocolate mixture. Spread remaining batter evenly over filling and sprinkle remaining chocolate mixture on top.
6. Bake until cake is golden and a wooden pick inserted in center of cake comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes. Cool cake in pan on a rack 30 minutes, then turn out onto rack and cool completely



Arianna's Special Brownies

16 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus more for greasing pan

8 oz. bittersweet chocolate. cut into 1/4" pieces

4 eggs

1 cup sugar

1 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar

2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/2 teaspoon fine salt

1 cup flour

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Grease a 9" x 13" baking pan with butter and line with parchment paper. Then grease the paper.
2. Pour enough water into a 4-quart saucepan that it reaches a depth of 1". Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low. Combine butter and chocolate in a medium bowl; set bowl over saucepan. Cook, stirring, until melted and smooth, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat; set aside.
3. Whisk together eggs in a large bowl. Add sugar, brown sugar, vanilla, and salt; whisk to combine. Stir in chocolate mixture; fold in flour. Pour batter into prepared pan; spread evenly. Bake until a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean, 30–35 minutes. Let cool on a rack. Cut and serve.



Coconut Chocolate Bites

3/4 cup sweetened flaked coconut

3/4 cup unsweetened dried coconut

1/3 cup sweetened condensed milk

3 1/2 to 4 ounces fine-quality bittersweet chocolate (preferably 70% cacao),
finely chopped

1. Line bottom and 2 opposite sides of an 8-inch square metal baking pan with a sheet of wax paper, leaving a 2-inch overhang on both sides.
2. Mix together flaked and dried coconut and condensed milk with your fingertips until combined well, then firmly press into pan in an even layer with offset spatula. Chill, uncovered, 5 minutes.
3. Melt chocolate in a metal bowl set over a saucepan of barely simmering water or in top of a double boiler, stirring until smooth. Spread chocolate evenly over coconut layer with spatula and chill until firm, 5 to 7 minutes.
4. Lift confection onto a cutting board using overhang and halve confection with a sharp knife. Sandwich halves together, coconut sides in, to form an 8- by 4-inch rectangle, then discard wax paper. Cut rectangle into 32 (1-inch) squares. Arrange paper cups (if using) on a platter and fill with candies. Chill, covered, until ready to serve.



Chocolate Angel Food Cake

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder, plus more for dusting

1 1/2 cup sugar, divided

1/2 teaspoon salt, divided

12 large egg whites (1 1/2 cups), at room temperature 30 minutes

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.
2. Sift together flour, cocoa powder, 3/4 cup sugar, and 1/4 teaspoon salt.
3. Beat whites with lemon juice, vanilla, and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt using an electric mixer on medium-high speed until they just hold soft peaks. With mixer on high speed, add remaining 3/4 cup sugar in a slow stream and beat until whites hold stiff, glossy peaks, 3 to 5 minutes.
4. Sift flour mixture over whites and beat on low speed until just blended (folding in any unblended flour mixture by hand if necessary).
5. Spoon batter into ungreased tube pan and smooth top. Run a rubber spatula or long knife through batter to eliminate any large air bubbles.
6. Bake until a wooden pick inserted into middle of cake comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes. Remove from oven and immediately invert pan. If pan has “legs,” stand it on those. Otherwise, place pan over neck of a wine bottle. Cool cake completely, upside down, 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Turn pan right side up. Run a knife around edge and center tube of pan. Lift cake, still on bottom of pan, then run a knife under bottom of cake to loosen. Invert to release cake from tube, then reinvert onto a plate. Dust lightly with cocoa powder.
7. Serve with vanilla yogurt or lightly sweetened whipped cream and fresh berries.



Mexican Chocolate Pudding

1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
2 cups plain unsweetened almond milk
1 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into bits
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Mix together brown sugar, cocoa, cornstarch, cinnamon, and 1/8 teaspoon salt in a heavy medium saucepan, then whisk in almond milk. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring often, then boil, whisking, 1 minute.
2. Remove from heat and whisk in butter and vanilla.
3. Chill in a bowl, surface covered with a piece of buttered wax paper, until cold, at least 1 1/2 hours.



Chocolate Peanut Toffee

4 sticks (1 pound) unsalted butter, cut into pieces

2 cups sugar

1/4 teaspoon salt

4 cups whole cocktail peanuts plus 1 cup chopped (1 lb 10 ounces)

7 to 8 ounces 70% cacao bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped

1. Butter baking pan and put on a heatproof surface.
2. Bring butter, sugar, and salt to a boil in a 4- to 5-quart heavy pot over medium-high heat, whisking until smooth, then boil, stirring occasionally, until mixture is deep golden and registers 300°F (hard-crack stage) on candy thermometer, 15 to 20 minutes.
3. Immediately stir in whole peanuts, then carefully pour hot toffee into center of baking pan. Spread with spatula, smoothing top, and let stand 1 minute, then immediately sprinkle chocolate on top. Let stand until chocolate is melted, 4 to 5 minutes, then spread over toffee with clean spatula. Sprinkle evenly with chopped peanuts, then freeze until chocolate is firm, about 30 minutes. Break into pieces.



Chocolate Bread Pudding

4 cups milk
1 vanilla bean split and scraped
3 cinnamon sticks
1 pound loaf of brioche bread
14 ounces roughly chopped bittersweet chocolate
8 large egg yolks
3/4 cup sugar
3/4 cup blanched and sliced almonds
1 cup crème fraiche

1. Preheat oven to 325°F degrees. Place milk, vanilla seeds, cinnamon sticks in a medium saucepan, and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and allow to sit for 30 minutes to infuse milk with cinnamon and vanilla flavors.
2. Slice brioche into 3/8" slices. Cut slices into triangles. Line a 9"x12" baking pan with the bread slices, fitting them well into the pan, scattering 1/2 cup of the almonds between the layers.
3. Bring milk back to a boil after removing the cinnamon sticks. Add the chocolate and whisk until smooth. Whisk egg yolks and sugar in large bowl to combine. Slowly pour the chocolate mixture into the egg yolk mixture, whisking until completely combined.
4. Carefully pour the chocolate mixture over the bread, making sure all the bread is completely soaked with the custard. Sprinkle the remaining almonds over top. Cover with plastic wrap, press down to compact the mixture and allow to rest 30 minutes after removing the plastic wrap. Bake 30-40 minutes or until custard is set.
5. Whip the crème fraiche. Serve a dollop alongside each portion of warm bread pudding, and sprinkle with cinnamon and/or chocolate.



Chocolate Pistachio Fudge

12 ounces 70% dark chocolate, chopped
or 12 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped

1 14-ounce can condensed milk

Pinch salt

1 cup shelled pistachios

1. Melt the chopped chocolate, condensed milk and salt in a heavy saucepan on a low heat.
2. Put the nuts into a freezer bag and bash them with a rolling pin, until broken up into pieces.
3. Add the nuts to the melted chocolate and condensed milk and stir well to mix.
4. Pour the mixture into a 9-inch square foil tray, smoothing the top.
5. Let the fudge cool and then refrigerate until set. Cut into small squares..



Chocolate Date Pudding Cake

6 ounces pitted dates, about 2 cups

3/4 cup water

1 1/4 cups sugar

1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

6 large egg whites

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

Confectioners sugar, for dusting

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Spray a 1 1/2 quart souffle dish with non-stick spray.
2. Put the dates and water in a pot over medium-low heat. Cook and stir for 10 minutes until the dates are very soft. Transfer the softened dates to a food processor and puree until smooth. Add the sugar and vanilla, puree again until well-blended. Scoop out the puree into a mixing bowl. Sift together the cocoa powder and flour and add to the date mixture. Using a rubber spatula, combine gently until well mixed.
3. In a mixing bowl, whip the egg whites until they form stiff peaks. Fold the egg whites into the date mixture.
4. Pour the batter into the coated souffle dish, spreading it evenly with a spatula. Bake on the middle rack for 25 minutes until the outside is just set. Cool to room temperature. Dust with confectioners sugar and serve.



Chocolate Mousse Cake

10 ounces bittersweet chocolate

9 tablespoons unsalted butter

6 large eggs, separated

Pinch of salt

3/4 cup sugar

2 tablespoons brandy

1 teaspoon confectioners sugar.

1. Heat oven to 350°F. Cover the outside of a 9-inch springform pan with a double layer of foil.
2. Using a microwave oven or double boiler, melt together chocolate and butter. Set aside to cool.
3. Using an electric mixer, whisk egg whites and salt until thick. Add 1/4 cup sugar, and continue to whisk until stiff and shiny but not dry; set aside. In another bowl, whisk together egg yolks and remaining 1/2 cup sugar until pale, frothy and increased in volume. Whisk in brandy, then fold in cooled chocolate mixture.
4. Place a kettle of water over heat, and bring it to a boil. Fold about 1/2 cup whisked egg whites into the chocolate mixture to lighten it. Gently fold in remaining whites, being careful not to let the mixture deflate. Pour mixture into prepared springform pan, and place springform pan in a roasting pan. Add boiling water to roasting pan to come halfway up side of springform pan. Bake for 45 minutes; top of cake will be hard and inside will be gooey.
5. Remove cake pan from water, and place on a rack to cool completely. Unwrap foil and remove side of springform pan. Place cake on a serving platter. Just before serving, dust top with confectioners sugar.



Double Chocolate Walnut Biscotti

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
3/4 stick (6 tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 cup walnuts, chopped
3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter and flour a large baking sheet.
2. In a bowl whisk together flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt. In another bowl with an electric mixer beat together butter and granulated sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs and beat until combined well. Stir in flour mixture to form a stiff dough. Stir in walnuts and chocolate chips.
3. On prepared baking sheet, form dough into two slightly flattened logs with floured hands, each 12 inches long and 2 inches wide, and sprinkle with confectioners' sugar. Bake logs 35 minutes, or until slightly firm to the touch. Cool biscotti on baking sheet 5 minutes.
4. On a cutting board cut biscotti diagonally into 3/4-inch-thick slices. Arrange biscotti on baking sheet and bake until crisp, about 10 minutes.
5. Cool biscotti on a rack.



Whole Wheat Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies

2 3/4 cup rolled oats (not instant)
1 cup whole wheat flour
2/3 cup wheat bran (or germ)
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon fine grain sea salt
1 cup unsalted butter
1 cup natural cane sugar or light brown sugar
1 cup firmly packed Muscovado or dark brown sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
10 ounces semi-sweet chocolate, chopped

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F, with racks placed in the middle. Line two baking sheets with unbleached parchment paper and set aside.
2. In a medium bowl combine the oats, flour, wheat bran, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Set aside.
3. Either by hand, or using an electric mixer, cream the butter until light and fluffy. Beat in sugar for 3 minutes, scraping down sides a few times along the way. Add the eggs one at a time, then the vanilla.
4. Add the dry mixture, and stir until everything barely comes together. Stir in the chocolate, mixing until it is evenly distributed throughout the dough.
5. Using about 1/4 c of the mixture, roll into uniform dough balls. Arrange each cookie at least 3 inches apart on the prepared baking sheet. For extra crisp cookies, bake until deeply golden on the bottom, about 15 minutes. For chewier cookies, bake for less time.
6. Cool on a rack.



Dark Chocolate-Cherry Ganache Bars

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup confectioners' sugar
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
12 tablespoons cold unsalted butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons cherry jam
12 ounces bittersweet chocolate, at least 62%
2/3 cup heavy cream
3 tablespoons kirsch, rum, brandy or other spirit
1/2 teaspoon fleur de sel, for sprinkling.

1. In a food processor, pulse together the flour, sugar, cocoa powder and fine sea salt. Pulse in the butter and vanilla until the mixture just comes together into a smooth mass. Line an 8-inch square baking pan with parchment or wax paper. Press the dough into the pan. Prick all over with a fork. Chill for at least 20 minutes and up to 3 days.
2. Heat the oven to 325°F. Bake the shortbread until firm to the touch and just beginning to pull away from the sides, 35 to 40 minutes.
3. Cool in the pan for 20 minutes on a wire rack. Brush cherry jam over the top of the shortbread and let cool thoroughly.
4. Place chocolate in a heatproof bowl.
5. In a saucepan, bring the cream to a simmer. Pour over the chocolate and whisk until smooth. Whisk in the kirsch. Spread over shortbread. Sprinkle with fleur de sel.
6. Cool to room temperature. Cover and chill until firm. Slice and serve.



Double Chocolate Scones

3 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 cup sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup butter
3 large eggs
1/2 cup milk
3/4 cup mini chocolate chips, divided
1 tablespoon grated orange peel
1/4 cup white chocolate chips

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Grease a large cookie sheet.
2. Stir the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. Use a pastry blender or two knives to cut in the butter into the dry ingredients until coarse crumbs form.
3. Beat the eggs and milk in a small bowl with a wire whisk or a fork. When thoroughly blended, add into flour mixture, along with 1/2 cup of the mini chocolate chips and the orange peel. Stir just until blended.
4. Shape the dough with lightly floured hands into an 8-inch round on the prepared cookie sheet; dust with flour. Score the top of the dough into 8 wedges with a sharp knife.
5. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes until golden. Cool completely on a wire rack.
6. Stir the remaining 1/4 cup of mini chocolate chips and the white chocolate chips in separate small, heavy saucepans over very low heat until melted and smooth. Drizzle each chocolate from the tip of a spoon in random lines over the top of the scones. Let stand for 15 minutes to set the chocolate.
7. Cut the scones into wedges along the score lines.



Chocolate Oat Cakes

1/4 cup hazelnuts, finely chopped
2/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/3 cup Dutch-process cocoa powder
1/4 cup wheat germ
1/2 cup rolled old-fashioned oats
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground cardamom
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon fine salt
1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
3/4 cup sugar
2 large egg yolks

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line 2 mini muffin tins with mini muffin liners, or set out 20 mini muffin liners on a baking sheet. Lightly spray liners with nonstick spray and sprinkle the hazelnuts into the bottom of each muffin liner.
2. Whisk the flour, cocoa, wheat germ, oats, spices and salt together in a medium bowl.
3. With an electric mixer on medium speed, beat the butter and sugar in another bowl until combined, about 2 minutes. Add the egg yolks and beat together. Add dry ingredients and mix until just combined.
4. Scoop a tablespoon of dough into the mini muffin tins or liners, on top of the nuts. (Alternatively, drop heaping tablespoons of the dough onto a parchment-lined baking sheet and top with chopped nuts.) Bake until the cookies are cooked through and nuts are toasty, about 15 minutes (drop cookies will bake slightly faster).
5. Transfer cookies to a rack to cool.



Pecan-Mocha Meringues

1/3 cup (packed) golden brown sugar
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
1/3 cup egg whites (from about 3 large eggs)
1/4 teaspoon coarse kosher salt
1/8 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/3 cup sugar
2 teaspoons instant espresso powder
1 cup finely chopped toasted pecans
1/2 cup semisweet or bittersweet chocolate chips (optional)
18 (about) untoasted pecan halves

1. Preheat oven to 300°F. Line heavy large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Press brown sugar and cocoa powder through sieve into small bowl to remove any lumps. Whisk to blend.
3. Using electric mixer, beat egg whites, coarse salt, and cream of tartar in medium bowl until very soft peaks begin to form. With mixer running, gradually add sugar, then espresso powder; beat until medium peaks form. Beat in brown sugar mixture by tablespoonfuls. Continue beating until meringue is very stiff and glossy, 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Fold in chopped pecans and chocolate chips, if desired. Drop mixture by rounded tablespoonfuls onto prepared sheet, spacing about 1 inch apart. Place 1 pecan half atop each meringue, pressing very lightly to adhere.
5. Bake meringues until dry but still slightly soft when pressed with finger, about 25 minutes. Turn off oven. Cool meringues in oven with door closed until crisp, about 1 1/2 hours.



Chocolate-Dipped Dates Stuffed with Spiced Nuts

36 salted roasted almonds, divided
2 teaspoons finely grated orange peel, divided
1 teaspoon honey
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
12 Medjool dates
3/4 cup bittersweet chocolate chips

1. Toss 24 almonds, 1 teaspoon orange peel, honey, and spices in small bowl.
2. Cut slit in each date and remove pit. Press 2 spice-coated almonds into each slit and enclose nuts in date.
3. Line small baking sheet with foil. Melt chocolate in a double boiler. Grasp the end of a stuffed date and dip 3/4 into melted chocolate. Shake off excess chocolate. Place date on foil. Repeat with remaining dates.
4. Sprinkle remaining orange peel over chocolate-dipped dates. Dip 1 plain almond halfway into chocolate; place atop 1 date. Repeat with remaining almonds and dates. Chill until chocolate sets, 30 minutes.



Coffee Crunch Bars

2 cups all purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 cup (2 sticks) plus 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature

1 1/4 cups (firmly packed) dark brown sugar

2 tablespoons instant espresso powder

1/2 teaspoon almond extract

1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

1/2 cup sliced almonds

1. Preheat oven to 325 F. Whisk first 3 ingredients in medium bowl to blend.
2. Using electric mixer, beat butter and sugar in another medium bowl until blended, about 2 minutes. Add espresso powder and almond extract; beat 1 minute.
3. Stir in flour mixture in 3 additions, mixing until just absorbed after each addition. Stir in chocolate chips and almonds (dough will be thick).
4. Turn dough out onto ungreased rimmed baking sheet. Using hands, press dough into 12-inch square. Pierce all over with fork at 1-inch intervals.
5. Bake until edges are lightly browned and beginning to crisp, 45 to 50 minutes. Cool on sheet 1 minute. Cut into 48 bars. Immediately transfer to rack and cool. (bars will crisp as they cool).



Chocolate-Ginger Muffins

2 1/2 cups all purpose flour
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 cup oats
6 tablespoons butter, melted and cooled
1 large egg
3/4 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups chocolate chips, dark or semisweet
3/4 cup candied ginger, finely chopped

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. Line a muffin pan with paper liners (I simply buttered my silicone muffin pan).
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, ground nutmeg, and oats.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together melted butter, egg, yogurt, milk and vanilla extract until smooth. Pour into dry ingredients and stir just until no streaks of flour remain. Stir in chocolate chips and candied ginger.
4. Divide batter into prepared muffin pan, overfilling each muffin cup so that the batter slightly rises above the top of the pan.
5. Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until muffins are lightly browned and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
6. Cool on a wire rack. Serve slightly warm.



Whiskey-Soaked Dark Chocolate Bundt Cake

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened, more for greasing pan
2 cups all-purpose flour, more for dusting pan
5 ounces unsweetened chocolate
1/4 cup instant espresso powder
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup bourbon, rye or other whiskey, more for sprinkling
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
2 cups granulated sugar
3 large eggs
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking soda

1. Grease and flour a 10-cup-capacity Bundt pan (or two 8- or 9-inch loaf pans). Preheat oven to 325°F. In microwave oven or double boiler over simmering water, melt chocolate. Let cool.
2. Put espresso and cocoa powders in a 2-cup (or larger) glass measuring cup. Add enough boiling water to come up to the 1 cup measuring line. Mix until powders dissolve. Add whiskey and salt and let cool.
3. Using an electric mixer, beat 1 cup butter until fluffy. Add sugar and beat until well combined. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, beating well between each addition. Beat in the vanilla extract, baking soda and melted chocolate.
4. On low speed, beat in a third of the whiskey mixture. When liquid is absorbed, beat in 1 cup flour. Repeat additions, ending with whiskey mixture. Scrape batter into prepared pan and smooth top. Bake until a cake tester inserted into center of cake comes out clean, about 1 hour 10 minutes for bundt pan (loaf pans will take less time, start checking them after 55 minutes).
5. Transfer cake to a rack. Unmold after 15 minutes and sprinkle warm cake with more whiskey. Let cool before serving. Dust with confectioners sugar if desired.