

# Add a Little Spice to Your Life!

## Grab & Go Spice Kits for Adults: Cocoa Powder

**Do you love to cook?** Do you like to try new flavors and recipes? Or maybe you are in a cooking rut and don't know how to start expanding your cooking repertoire. Let us help you get spicy in the kitchen. Your kit includes a pre-measured packet of unsweetened natural cocoa powder and a few recipes.

**What is cocoa powder?** Cocoa powder is made from cocoa beans which come from the plant *Theobroma cacao* L. After the beans are fermented and roasted, they are pressed to remove most of the cocoa butter leaving behind a cake that is ground into a powder. Cocoa powder is packed with nutrients including minerals such as iron, zinc, selenium, and magnesium. It is also rich in micronutrients, polyphenols and powerful antioxidants flavonoids which help reduce inflammation, lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol and blood sugars.

**What is the difference between natural cocoa powder and Dutch cocoa powder?** There are eight different types of cocoa powder with the most common types being natural and Dutch. Natural signifies that it is unprocessed beyond the initial separating from the cocoa butter and grinding into a powder. It is sometimes labeled as "unsweetened cocoa powder" or "pure cocoa powder." It is fruity, complex, and bitter in flavor, and light brown in color. Dutch-process cocoa powder is made by soaking cocoa beans in an alkali solution which neutralizes the acidity and cuts a bit of the bitterness. The resulting product is darker in color than natural cocoa powder. It creates what some people consider a richer, fudgier flavor in baked goods.

**Easy ways to add cocoa powder to your diet.** One tablespoon of unsweetened natural cocoa powder only has 10 calories and is one of the most nutrient-dense plant foods we can eat. So, mix a little cocoa into your espresso or brewed coffee. Sprinkle cocoa powder on plain Greek yogurt, fresh or frozen fruit.

Make a spicy cocoa rub by combining ¼ cup of sea salt, 2 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder, 1 tablespoon white sugar, 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar, 3 tablespoons garlic powder, 1 tablespoon onion powder, 3 tablespoons ground cumin, 2 tablespoons chili powder, 2 tablespoons ground black pepper. Rub the spice mixture onto steak, chicken, thick chops or spare ribs. Let stand for 10 minutes before cooking.

Make a smoothie by combining 1 frozen banana, 2 tablespoons peanut butter, 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder, 1 teaspoon maple syrup, ¼ teaspoon cinnamon, ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract, pinch of cayenne pepper, and 1 cup almond milk in a blender. Blend until smooth.

Make an avocado chocolate mousse by blending 2 very ripe avocados, ½ cup melted bittersweet chocolate chips, ¼ cup cocoa powder, ¼ cup almond milk, 2 tablespoons maple syrup, 2 teaspoons vanilla extract, and a pinch of sea salt. Divide the mousse into 4 bowls and chill for at least an hour before serving.

### Recipes featuring cocoa powder.

• *Slow Cooker Chili* • *Chocolate Zucchini Loaf Cake* • *Cacao-Hazelnut Spread* • *Chocolate Mug Cake*

**Need more inspiration?** You can watch a six-part Great Courses class called *The Everyday Gourmet: Essential Secrets of Spices in Cooking* for free with your library card by using a [Hoopla Great Courses BingePass](#) or streaming on [Kanopy](#).

# Slow Cooker Chili

By Sarah DiGregorio

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large yellow or red onion, finely chopped
- Kosher salt
- 2 pounds ground beef, 80 percent lean, 20 percent fat
- 8 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon sweet paprika
- 2 teaspoons chipotle powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 2 teaspoons mustard powder
- 2 teaspoons hot smoked paprika
- ½teaspoon cayenne powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 12 ounces (1½ cups) pilsner beer, such as Modelo Especial
- 1(14-ounce) can diced or crushed tomatoes in juice
- ¼ cup cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup or dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons beef stock bouillon paste, such as Better Than Bouillon
- 1½ teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 (14-ounce) cans kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 (14-ounce) cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

- Hot sauce, grated sharp Cheddar, sliced scallions, sour cream and crushed tortilla chips, for serving

## PREPARATION

1. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium. Add the onion, season with salt, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is softened and translucent, about 8 minutes. Increase the heat to medium-high, add the beef and garlic, season with salt and cook, breaking the beef into crumbles with a spatula, until the beef has lost its pink color, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste and cook until slightly darkened and caramelized, about 1 minute. Stir in all the spices and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the beer and stir, scraping the bottom of the pan.
2. Transfer the beef mixture into a 5- to 8-quart slow cooker. Stir in the tomatoes, vinegar, maple syrup, soy sauce, beef bouillon paste, cocoa, beans and ½ cup water. Cover and cook on low for at least 4 hours and up to 6 hours. (The chili can hold well on warm for an additional 2 hours.)
3. When ready to serve, stir in the Worcestershire sauce. If the chili is too thick, stir in a bit of water until the texture is to your liking. Season to taste with salt. Serve in bowls and pass the toppings at the table.

## Tip

*You can also cook the chili in a Dutch oven on your stovetop in about 1 hour. In step 2, add 1 cup water instead of ½ cup and let the mixture come to a simmer over medium-high. (Because the cooking liquid reduces further on the stovetop, this method starts with more water.) Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook until the meat is tender, stirring occasionally, about 35 minutes.*

# Chocolate Zucchini Loaf Cake

By Jesse Szewczyk

Yield: 1 loaf (about 8 servings)

## INGREDIENTS

- Nonstick cooking spray or neutral oil
- 2 large eggs
- 1½ cups/330 grams packed light brown sugar
- ¾ cup/180 milliliters neutral oil (such as vegetable or safflower)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (such as Diamond Crystal)
- 2 cups/280 grams lightly packed coarsely grated zucchini (from about 1 large or 2 small zucchini)
- 1¾ cups/223 grams all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup/63 grams unsweetened natural cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup/173 grams bittersweet or semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon coarse sugar (such as turbinado or Demerara)

## PREPARATION

1. Heat oven to 325 degrees. Grease a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray and line with a strip of parchment paper that hangs over the long sides to create a sling.
2. In a large bowl, vigorously whisk together the eggs, light brown sugar, oil, vanilla extract and salt until smooth and glossy, about 30 seconds. Add the grated zucchini and mix with a rubber spatula until incorporated.
3. Using a fine-mesh strainer, sift the flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and baking soda directly into the bowl and stir with a rubber spatula just until combined and no pockets of unincorporated flour remain. (Try not to overmix.) Add all but 1 tablespoon of the chocolate chips to the batter and stir until evenly distributed.
4. Transfer the batter to the prepared pan. Sprinkle the top with coarse sugar and the reserved chocolate chips, pressing them in slightly so they stick. Bake until

the cake puffs slightly and a skewer or cake tester inserted into the center comes out clean with just a few moist crumbs attached or with smudges of melted chocolate chips (the chips will be dark brown versus the lighter color of uncooked cake batter), 75 to 80 minutes.

5. Let the loaf cake cool in the pan for 15 minutes. Using the parchment paper, lift the cake out of the pan and let cool completely on a rack before slicing, about 2 hours.

## Tip

*The cake can be baked in a 9-by-2-inch round cake or springform pan. Grease the pan and line the bottom with a parchment paper round. Bake until a cake tester inserted into the center comes out clean with just a few moist crumbs attached, 50 to 55 minutes.*

# Cacao-Hazelnut Spread

By Shalane Flanagan & Elyse Kopecky

Yield: 1 cup

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups raw hazelnuts
- 3 tablespoons coconut sugar or cane sugar
- 2 tablespoons virgin coconut oil
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder or cacao powder
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

## PREPARATION

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven. Preheat the oven to 275 degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Spread the hazelnuts in a single layer on the baking sheet. Toast in the oven for 10 minutes, then stir and toast for 10 to 15 minutes more, until the nuts are golden in color and fragrant. Transfer the warm hazelnuts to a clean kitchen towel and rub to remove their skins. (Don't worry about getting every last skin off, just the loose ones.) Let cool.
3. Transfer the hazelnuts to a high-speed blender or food-processor and blend on high or process for several minutes, until finely ground, stopping as needed to scrape down the sides and underneath the blade with a rubber spatula. Add the sugar, coconut oil, cocoa powder and salt. Process again until smooth.
4. Transfer to a glass jar with a lid. Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks or in the freezer for up to 3 months (be sure your jar is freezer-safe). Leave out at room temperature for 15 minutes before serving.

# Chocolate Mug Cake

By Deanna F. Cook

Yield: 1 serving

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 egg
- A few drops vanilla extract
- 3 to 4 tablespoons granulated sugar, to taste
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- A pinch of kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon mini chocolate chips (optional)
- Confectioners' sugar or vanilla ice cream (optional)

## PREPARATION

1. Microwave the butter in a microwave-safe mug in 10-second increments until melted, 20 to 30 seconds. Crack the egg into a small bowl; add the vanilla and whisk to combine using a small whisk or fork. Pour the egg mixture into the mug over the butter and whisk to combine.
2. Add the sugar, cocoa powder and salt and whisk until mostly smooth (a few lumps are O.K.). Scrape down the sides the best you can with a spoon or a small silicone spatula. Sprinkle with mini chocolate chips, if desired.
3. Cook in the microwave on high for 1 to 1½ minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out mostly clean. Sift a little confectioners' sugar on top or serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, if desired. Dig in with a spoon.