

# COCOA POWDER 101

Great pastry chefs know that cocoa powder is a secret weapon—a magical ingredient as essential to the dessert maker’s pantry as good chocolate. With a great cocoa powder up your sleeve (and we think two kinds are better than one), you can produce simple but spectacular chocolate desserts almost effortlessly.

We asked Alice Medrich, expert on all things chocolate, to demystify cocoa powder and clarify the “what” and the “why” of using it to up your baking game.



*Guittard*  
CHOCOLATE COMPANY



## Cocoa Powder 101

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### **But what is cocoa powder?**

You may know that chocolate is made from ground roasted cocoa beans (aka cacao beans) to which sugar and milk may be added to create your favorite chocolate bar or baking ingredient.

Cocoa powder is also made from cocoa beans! In fact, cocoa powder is 100% cocoa beans—with nothing added. Cocoa powder is made by pressing unsweetened chocolate to extract a portion of the cocoa butter, leaving a mixture of cocoa butter and cocoa solids. What remains is what we know as cocoa powder. With 22-24% cocoa butter content, our Cocoa Rouge and Organic Natural cocoa powders retain more of the cocoa beans' original fat (cocoa butter) than most other cocoa powders.

Higher cocoa butter content in cocoa powder makes superior cakes and desserts with richer chocolate flavor. With just about all the flavor and a fraction of the fat, cocoa powder is essentially a concentrated form of chocolate. Since it requires no chopping or melting, cocoa powder is also a super convenient ingredient to use.

### Why do I need cocoa powder if I have chocolate?

Both cocoa powder and chocolate can make decadent chocolate desserts, but each has its own superpowers. In addition to being extra convenient to use (no chopping or melting), cocoa powder can make exceptionally light and tender baked goods even while delivering tons of chocolate flavor! Thus, for layer cakes, pound cakes, angel and chiffon cakes—or any type of cake prized for deep chocolate flavor and a light, tender crumb—cocoa powder is the best ingredient for the job. Cocoa powder is also a superior ingredient for chewy cookies, as well as tender crispy chocolate cookies and wafers.

### Dutch-process versus natural cocoa powder, huh?

This is not really a contest! The two types of cocoa powder are both delicious and versatile. Many recipes work perfectly with either cocoa—although each has a different color, aroma, and flavor profile.

Natural cocoa powder is simply the ground roasted cacao beans mentioned above. It has a medium reddish-brown color and retains the inherently complex flavor notes of the beans from which it is made, often including a vibrant fruity acidity. Dutch-process, or alkalized cocoa, is treated with alkali such as potassium carbonate or sodium bicarbonate, to reduce acidity. It gives the cocoa a mellow, toasted, nutty flavor that may remind you of childhood treats (like everyone's favorite chocolate sandwich cookie), and a darker brown color.

Both types of cocoa are unsweetened, so they are strong and bitter when tasted plain. Both types realize their most delicious potential with the addition of sugar or other sweeteners along with the other ingredients in your recipe.

*Having both cocoas in the pantry gives the baker a creative advantage.*

# Get to Know Natural and Dutch-Process Cocoa for Yourself

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## **The Blind Aroma Experience**

Have a container of each type of cocoa on the table. Close your eyes and ask a friend or family member to give one of the containers a little shake before loosening the top and handing it to you. With eyes still closed, uncover the cocoa and take a whiff. Notice the aroma. Can you imagine its flavor? Repeat with the second container. Notice the difference? Does one smell more chocolatey or delicious or stronger to you? Open your eyes and compare the colors of the cocoas. Are the colors consistent with your impressions from the aromas? Change places with your partner...

## **The Blind Taste Test**

Make two batches of Cocoa Brownies with Brown Butter or Cocoa Fudge Sauce, one with Guittard Organic Natural Cocoa Powder and one with Guittard Cocoa Rouge. Notice the color difference, then taste, and compare. Serve them both and watch everyone insist on tasting both!





## Which Cocoa Should I Use for Recipes?

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Surprisingly, many recipes work beautifully—but differently—with either type of cocoa. Other recipes are only successful when you stick to the type of cocoa called for. Luckily, we've broken it down so you can know when you can have creative license, when you should stick with the type of cocoa called for in the recipe, plus what to do when a recipe is not specific.

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## WHEN CAN I USE EITHER COCOA?

In any recipe that does not contain baking powder or baking soda, you may use whichever type of cocoa you feel like using. You can choose based on your mood or preference in the moment, or what you think your guests might like. This means that you get to choose the cocoa for sauces and frostings, beverages, ice creams and sorbets, puddings, and soufflés, as well as brownie recipes or any other baked goods that do not include baking powder or soda. You could even blend the two types of cocoa for an entirely new flavor profile!

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## WHEN SHOULD I USE THE TYPE OF COCOA CALLED FOR IN THE RECIPE?

Cakes and baked goods that call for baking powder or baking soda to make them rise usually require a specific type of cocoa powder. In these, the type of leavening—baking soda and/or baking powder—interacts with the other ingredients in the recipe to make the cake rise properly and taste good. The wrong cocoa powder can sink the ship—or, in this case, the cake—and ruin its flavor! Cakes with natural cocoa powder are sometimes leavened solely with baking soda, while cakes made with Dutch-process cocoa powder are sometimes leavened solely with baking powder—but there are too many exceptions to make good rules. Meanwhile, it's even harder to predict which cocoa powder is correct in recipes that include both baking powder and baking soda! Bottom line: for baked goods with leavenings, the best advice is to stick with the type of cocoa powder called for.

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## WHAT IF A RECIPE DOES NOT SPECIFY WHICH TYPE OF COCOA TO USE?

If the recipe does not contain baking powder or baking soda, you are free to use whichever cocoa you feel like using, as described above or as shown in the chart on the next page! If a cake recipe is leavened only with baking soda, natural cocoa powder is probably the correct choice. If a cake is leavened only with baking powder, or with both leavenings, it's hard to predict which cocoa is correct. The safest thing to do is look for a recipe that calls for a specific type of cocoa powder.

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# Cocoa Powder Cheat Sheet - What to Use When

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Follow this cheat sheet to know when you can choose which kind of powder to use and when you need to follow the recipe.

TYPE OF RECIPE								
WHICH COCOA POWDER TO USE	BROWNIES (WITHOUT LEAVENING)	SAUCES & FROSTINGS	BEVERAGES	ICE CREAM & SORBET	CAKES & QUICK BREADS (WITH LEAVENING)	YEAST BREADS	SHORTBREAD & COOKIES (WITHOUT LEAVENING)	COOKIES, BROWNIES & BARS (WITH LEAVENING)
YOUR CHOICE OF POWDER	X	X	X	X			X	
FOLLOW THE RECIPE					X	X		X

# Recipes

The recipe collection that follows showcases the spectacular possibilities of having two great cocoas in your pantry. Some of our recipes allow you to choose which cocoa to use based on the color, texture, and flavor you are interested in—and we give you plenty of hints to make that choice!

Others illustrate the splendid results that can be had with a well-crafted recipe and the perfect cocoa powder for the job.

Let the cocoa adventure begin!



\*All recipes by Alice Medrich unless otherwise noted.



# Cocoa Fudge Sauce

This luxurious bittersweet sauce is super versatile—it behaves like fudge sauce when it's warm, stiffening slightly over ice cream. When cooled it's a perfect spreadable frosting. Makes 1 2/3 cups.

## Ingredients

2/3 cup (70g) Guittard Organic Natural Cocoa Powder or Cocoa Rouge  
2/3 cup (133g) sugar  
1/8th teaspoon salt  
2/3 cup heavy cream  
4 tablespoons (56g) unsalted butter, cut into bits  
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract, optional

Mix the sugar, cocoa, and salt in a medium saucepan. Stir in just enough of the cream to make a smooth, thick paste, then stir in the rest of the cream and add the butter pieces. Stir over low heat until the butter is melted and the sauce is smooth and hot to the touch but not simmering. Taste and correct the salt if necessary—so that chocolate flavor is heightened but not at all salty. If desired, add the vanilla (especially recommended if using Cocoa Rouge).

Serve warm sauce over ice cream. Or, for frosting, let the sauce cool until spreadable. Sauce keeps in a covered container in the refrigerator for a week, or it can be frozen for up to 3 months and thawed in the microwave or at room temperature. To reheat, put the sauce in a heatproof bowl set in a wide skillet of barely simmering water, and stir occasionally until the sauce is the desired consistency. Or microwave on medium (50%) power, using short bursts and stirring frequently. Do not allow the sauce to simmer or boil. Tips and tricks: When the sauce is done and still warm (or when you reheat it for serving) you are free to whisk in additional cocoa powder for a more bittersweet effect, or more sugar if you want a sweeter sauce!

## THE POWDER BREAKDOWN: THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Make it with Cocoa Rouge (with the optional vanilla) for a deep dark sauce that tastes like a melted blackout cake.

Or, try it with Organic Natural Cocoa for a reddish brown sauce with bright fruity chocolate flavor notes.

# Cocoa Brownies with Brown Butter

These decadent brownies are enhanced with the flavor of browned butter. Make two batches—one with each cocoa powder—for two entirely different flavors, textures, and even colors! Makes 16 brownies.

## Ingredients

10 tablespoons (142g) unsalted butter  
1 1/4 cups (250g) sugar  
3/4 cup (70g) Organic Natural Cocoa Powder or Cocoa Rouge  
Rounded 1/4 teaspoon salt  
2 teaspoons water  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
2 large cold eggs  
1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon (50g) all-purpose flour  
1 cup (85g) walnut pieces, optional

**Equipment:** 8-inch square pan, bottom and sides lined with foil

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat to 325° F.

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan until it bubbles. Continue to cook, whisking gently until the butter is golden brown and the milk particles suspended in it are reddish-brown. Remove the pan from the heat and immediately add the sugar, cocoa powder, and salt. Stir to blend. Stir in the water and vanilla. Set aside for 10 minutes to cool slightly. The mixture will still be fairly hot. Add eggs, one at a time, mixing vigorously with a spatula after each one. When the mixture looks thick, shiny and well blended, add the flour and stir until blended. Then beat vigorously 50-60 strokes with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula. Stir in the nuts, if using. Spread the batter in the lined pan. Bake until a toothpick plunged into the center emerges fairly clean, 20-25 minutes (the brownies will still be soft and gooey even if the toothpick looks clean). Cool on a rack. Lift the edges of the foil liner and transfer the brownies to a cutting board. Cut into 16 or 25 squares. Brownies can be stored, airtight, for 2-3 days.

## THE POWDER BREAKDOWN: THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Brownies made with either cocoa will have a thin glossy crust.

Cocoa Rouge produces brownies with a deep black-brown color and slightly cakey—almost chewy—texture. The flavor is pure chocolate comfort food!

Brownies made with Organic Natural Cocoa Powder are medium reddish-brown on top with a rich creamy interior and complex fruity chocolate flavor. Sophisticated!

# Extra Rich Chocolate Pudding

These ultra-creamy chocolate puddings redefine the genre. They are super satisfying with or without the luxurious addition of dark chocolate. Serves 6.

## Ingredients

1/3 cup (31g) Guittard Organic Natural Cocoa Powder or Cocoa Rouge  
2 tablespoons cornstarch  
1/3 cup (66g) sugar  
Generous 1/8 teaspoon salt  
1 3/4 cups whole milk  
1/4 cup heavy or whipping cream  
3 ounces (85g) dark chocolate (such as Guittard Organic Semisweet 66% Wafers or coarsely chopped Guittard Semisweet 64% Baking Bar), optional  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Whipped cream for serving, optional

**Equipment:** Six 4-ounce dessert cups or ramekins

Have the dessert cups and a timer near the stove.

In a medium-sized heavy saucepan whisk the cocoa, cornstarch, sugar, and salt. Add about 3 tablespoons of the milk and whisk to form a smooth paste. Whisk in the remaining milk and cream. Add the chopped chocolate, if using. Use a heat-proof spatula to stir the mixture constantly over medium heat, sweeping the sides, bottom and corners of the pan constantly, until the pudding thickens and begins to bubble at the edges, about 5 minutes. Continue to cook and stir for 1 minute. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the vanilla. Divide the pudding among the cups. Serve warm, at room temperature, or chilled. Pudding can be covered and refrigerated for up to 3 days.

## THE POWDER BREAKDOWN: THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Cocoa Rouge produces an ultra-dark chocolate pudding with a mellow old-fashioned comfort food flavor—a perfect dessert for kids of all ages. Organic Natural Cocoa Powder makes a lighter-hued but gorgeously reddish-brown pudding with bright and complex flavors that develop on your palate the way a bar of fine dark chocolate does. Add a dollop of whipped cream and serve it for a dinner party.

# Chocolate Chiffon Cake

*By Chef Donald Wressell, Executive Pastry Chef, Guittard Chocolate Company*

A light and fluffy chocolate cake ideal for breakfast or an after-dinner treat. Makes two cakes; each cake serves 8-10.

## Ingredients

1/2 cup + 1 tablespoon (55g) Guittard Organic Natural Cocoa Powder  
3/4 cup boiling water  
1 1/2 cup (175g) cake flour  
1 1/3 cup (275g) sugar  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup vegetable oil  
9 egg whites  
6 egg yolks  
1/4 cup (50g) sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 teaspoon crème of tartar

## Equipment: two standard tube pans

Pre-heat oven to 325° F. Hydrate cocoa powder with boiling water. Allow to cool to room temperature.

Whisk together cake flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Set aside. Whisk together cocoa powder/water mixture with egg yolks. Whisk all above into a smooth mixture. Beat whites with remaining sugar and creme of tartar and fold into cocoa, egg yolk-oil mixture. Divide evenly into standard tube pans (approximately 625g into each pan). Bake for about 60 minutes.

## THE POWDER BREAKDOWN: GO AU NATUREL

Organic Natural Cocoa Powder with its fresh acidic note and beautiful medium reddish-brown color gives a visual sense of lightness and delivers a clean delicate chocolate eating experience

# Chocolate Pound Cake

This perfect “plain” chocolate cake with a soft velvety crumb is perfectly addictive with nothing added! Take it on a picnic, nibble it for breakfast, or dress it up for company with fruit and cream, or ice cream and chocolate sauce. Serves 10.

## Ingredients

1 cup (127g) all-purpose flour	1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1/2 cup (46g) Cocoa Rouge	10 tablespoons (140g) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1/4 teaspoon baking powder	1 1/3 cups (265g) sugar
Scant 1/4 teaspoon baking soda	3 large eggs, at room temperature
Scant 1/2 teaspoon salt	Powdered sugar for dusting (optional)
2 teaspoons instant espresso or coffee powder	
1/2 cup buttermilk, at room temperature	

**Equipment:** 6-8 cup Bundt pan, sprayed with oil spray, or 6 cup loaf pan, lined with parchment paper

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Whisk together and sift the flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Set aside. Combine the buttermilk with the vanilla and espresso powder. Set aside. Using a stand mixer with a paddle attachment, beat butter for a few seconds until creamy. Add the sugar in a steady stream and continue to beat at medium speed until light and fluffy, 4 to 5 minutes. Meanwhile, break the eggs into a cup and whisk to combine whites and yolks. Take 2 1/2 to 3 minutes to dribble the eggs into the butter mixture, beating constantly.

Stop the mixer and add one-third of the flour mixture. Beat on low speed only until no flour is visible. Stop the mixer and add half of the buttermilk. Beat only until the liquid is absorbed. Repeat with half of the remaining flour, then all the remaining buttermilk and finally the remaining flour. Scrape the batter into the pan and spread it evenly. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out dry, 40-45 minutes for the Bundt pan, 50-60 minutes for the loaf. Set the pan on a rack for 10 minutes before tipping it out to cool, right side up, on a rack, before wrapping or storing.

## THE POWDER BREAKDOWN: GO DUTCH

Cocoa Rouge in combination with buttermilk produces a beautiful dark reddish-brown cake with a close-grained soft tender crumb. The deep well-balanced cocoa flavor falls somewhere between old-fashioned and what we want right now!

# Tips and Tricks for Using Cocoa Powder

## **Got lumps?**

Whether you are making a beverage, sauce, or other recipe that requires adding liquid to cocoa powder, start by stirring just enough of the liquid into the cocoa (with or without sugar) to make a smooth paste—then gradually stir in the rest of the liquid.

## **Feeling creative?**

In any recipe that works with either cocoa powder, feel free to create your own personal blend by mixing the two.

## **Rolling chocolate truffles or candies in cocoa powder?**

Some chefs like the rich color and relative mildness of Cocoa Rouge, others go for the lighter color of our Organic Natural.

## **Decorating cakes or cookies with stencils?**

Substitute cocoa powder for the usual powdered sugar for a rich and sophisticated look. Use both types of cocoa and separate stencils for a two-toned effect


## **Measuring cocoa for a recipe?**

When recipes give both volume and weight, it's always easier, less messy, and more accurate to use a scale.



# ABOUT ALICE MEDRICH

Alice Medrich is a self-taught pastry chef and chocolatier and a cookbook writer and teacher. She is credited with popularizing chocolate truffles in the United States at her influential dessert shop, Cocolat, in the 1970's. The New York Times recognized her for creative leadership in the decades that saw the gourmet and specialty foods segment take on national culinary stature and she was awarded the prestigious Wine and Food Achievement Award from the American Institute of Wine and Food in 1991. Since then, Medrich has written 10 cookbooks and won multiple awards from the James Beard Association and the International Association of Culinary Professionals, including 3 Cookbook-of-the-Year Awards and the 2018 IACP award for best food-focused column for her "Rouge Baking Tips" at Food52. Her most recent book, 'Gluten-Free Flavor Flours' (Artisan; 2014), was a pioneering approach to baking with gluten-free whole grain flours. She is currently working with visionary local and international start-ups, creating innovation recipes and plant-based products using upcycled flours.

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