

Brown Butter Chocolate Chip Cookies

Fresh milled flour, homemade brown sugar, homemade vanilla and cocoa nib extract, and browned butter chilled completely solid before it ever meets the sugar.

These bake up thick and chewy with crisp edges, deep caramel flavor, and puddles of chocolate. The one thing you cannot rush is the butter. It has to be cold and solid all the way through, so start it the night before if you can.

- **Yield:** About 45 cookies
- **Portion:** A #40 scoop, about 27 g of dough each
- **Butter chill:** 3 to 4 hours, or overnight
- **Dough chill:** 2 hours in the refrigerator, or about 45 minutes in the freezer
- **Oven:** 375°F

That is a lot of cookies, and it is meant to be. Bake one or two trays now and freeze the rest of the dough balls in a bag. They go straight from the freezer to the oven, a minute or two longer, and you have warm cookies on a night you did not plan for them.

Ingredients

Homemade All Purpose Flour Blend

- 227 g sifted freshly milled hard white wheat flour
- 227 g sifted freshly milled soft white wheat flour

You will use 360 g of the finished blend. Store the rest cold.

Homemade Light Brown Sugar

- 200 g granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon unsulphured molasses

Homemade Dark Brown Sugar

- 200 g granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsulphured molasses

This recipe uses the light. The dark is here so you have both.

Toasted Milk Powder Brown Butter

- 226 g unsalted European style butter, 1 cup
- 12 g nonfat dry milk powder, 2 tablespoons

Cookie Dough

- All of the chilled brown butter from above, about 200 g
 - 200 g homemade light brown sugar
 - 50 g granulated sugar
 - 1 large egg, room temperature
 - 1 large egg yolk, room temperature
 - 1 teaspoon homemade vanilla extract
 - 1/2 teaspoon homemade cocoa nib extract
 - 360 g homemade all purpose flour blend
 - 1 teaspoon baking soda
 - 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
 - 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
 - 1 tablespoon whole milk
 - 340 g chopped chocolate or chips, about 2 cups
 - Flaky sea salt, for finishing
 - Optional: 1/2 teaspoon espresso powder
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Make the Flour Blend

1. Mill the hard white wheat and the soft white wheat separately.
2. Sift each one separately, using the sieve you normally use for your all purpose flour.
3. Weigh 227 g of each sifted flour and whisk them together until the color is even and no streaks remain.
4. Measure out 360 g for the dough. Store the rest cold.

Make the Brown Sugar

1. Put the granulated sugar and molasses in a bowl.
2. Work the molasses through with a fork, a whisk, or clean hands until the color is even and there are no sticky dark clumps left.

Why it works. Brown sugar is granulated sugar with the molasses put back in. One tablespoon gives you light, two gives you dark. Once you know that, how brown your brown sugar is becomes your decision instead of the label's.

Make the Brown Butter

1. Melt the butter in a light colored saucepan over medium to medium-low heat. A light pan lets you see the color, which is the whole game here.
2. Whisk in the dry milk powder. It will clump at first. Keep stirring and scraping the bottom and the corners as it melts in.
3. The butter will foam, bubble and hiss while the water cooks off. Keep stirring.
4. When the bubbling calms, watch closely. The milk solids on the bottom will start to toast and go deep golden.

5. The second it smells nutty and the flecks are deep brown but not black, pull the pan off the heat. Scrape every bit of it, solids included, into a heatproof bowl. Do not strain it. Those toasted specks are the flavor.
5. Cool to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate 3 to 4 hours or overnight, until solid all the way through.

Use European style butter here, and do not swap it. European style runs higher in fat and lower in water, usually 82 to 84 percent fat against 80 for standard. Since it is the water that hisses off in the pan, you keep more brown butter from the same starting weight, and the dough comes out where it should. Standard butter will leave you noticeably short and the cookies will spread. Whatever you use, put all of the brown butter in and do not top it up with fresh melted butter to hit a number.

The milk powder. Browning butter toasts the milk solids that are already in it. Adding a little dry milk powder simply gives you more of them, which means more of the caramel flavor you browned the butter for in the first place.

Fully chilled means solid. Not firm on top and soft underneath. Partly chilled butter will not hold air when you cream it, and the cookies spread thin and greasy. Push a finger into the middle. If it gives, it is not ready.

Make the Dough

1. Take the solid brown butter out 10 to 15 minutes before you mix. You want it cool but soft enough to dent with a finger.
2. Whisk together the flour blend, baking soda, baking powder, salt, and the espresso powder if you are using it. Set aside.

3. In a stand mixer with the paddle, beat the chilled brown butter with both sugars on medium for 3 to 4 minutes, scraping down as you go, until creamy and a shade lighter.
4. Add the egg and the yolk. Mix until combined. Add both extracts and mix again.
5. Add the dry ingredients in two additions on low, stopping when the flour is almost in.
5. Add the milk and mix only until the dough comes together.
7. Fold in the chocolate by hand. Do not overmix.

This dough carries almost as much chocolate as flour. It will feel reluctant and a little crumbly when you scoop it. That is correct, and it is why you get puddles instead of dots. For a scoop this size, chop the chocolate on the smaller side so the balls hold together.

Chill the Dough

1. Scoop with a #40 disher, about 27 g each. Roll gently into balls on a parchment lined tray.
2. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours, overnight if you can manage it.

In a hurry, use the freezer. Portion the dough into balls first, then spread them out on the tray and freeze uncovered for about 45 minutes. Small portions with cold coming at them from every side firm up far faster than one big covered bowl in the refrigerator. You are after firm through the middle, not frozen hard, so press one before you commit the tray. Rock solid dough bakes unevenly.

Bake

1. Heat the oven to 375°F and line your sheets with parchment.
2. Space the chilled dough balls about 2 inches apart. Bake one sheet at a time, 8 to 10 minutes, until the edges are golden and set and the centers still look a little soft.
3. Sprinkle each cookie with flaky salt the moment the pan comes out.
4. Rest on the sheet 5 to 8 minutes before moving them to a rack.

Watch the first tray, not the timer. A small cookie goes from set to overbaked in under a minute. Once you know what your oven does with this dough, the timer is fine.

For perfectly round cookies. While they are still slack from the oven, set a round cutter or a glass a little wider than the cookie, around 3 inches, over the top and swirl it in slow circles. The soft edges herd themselves into a circle. You have about thirty seconds before they set.

Notes

- Chopped chocolate gives you puddles. Chips hold their shape and give you dots. Both are good, they are just different cookies.
- The tablespoon of milk puts back a little of the moisture that cooked out of the butter.
- The dough chill is not optional if you want thick cookies instead of flat ones.
- Light brown sugar is the right call here. Dark would take over, and the point of this cookie is the browned butter and the extracts.
- The recipe doubles, but brown the butter in two pans or one very wide one. A deep layer hides the color change until it has gone too far.

