

Pretzel Crusted Turtle Brownies

Inspired by the Turtle Bar recipe from Gourmet Magazine (December 1991). The brownie layer recipe is from Chef Michael Smith. The caramel layer recipe is from Sally's Baking Addiction blog.

250 grams (2 cups) pecan halves

Pretzel Crust Layer:

140 grams (4 heaping cups) of small pretzel twists

135 grams (1 cup) all-purpose flour

213 grams (1 cup) packed light or dark brown sugar

¼ teaspoon baking soda

227 grams (1 cup) unsalted butter, melted

Brownie Layer:

227 grams (1 ⅓ cups) bitter-sweet chocolate, coarsely chopped

227 grams (1 cup) unsalted butter, cut into 1-inch cubes

135 grams (1 cup) all-purpose flour

42 grams (½ cup) unsweetened cocoa powder

2 teaspoons instant espresso powder or instant coffee

1 teaspoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon salt

4 large eggs

426 grams (2 cups) light brown sugar

1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste

170 grams (1 cup) milk or dark chocolate chips

Caramel Layer:

510 grams (2 ¼ cups) 35% cream

297 grams (1 ½ cups) granulated sugar

160 grams (¾ cup) light brown sugar

156 grams (⅓ cup plus 2 Tablespoons and 1 teaspoon) light corn syrup

1 teaspoon Diamond Crystal Kosher salt

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste or vanilla extract

21 grams (1 ½ Tablespoons) unsalted butter

2 teaspoons flaky sea salt (optional, for topping caramel layer)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Toast pecans for 7-9 minutes, until they just begin to have a beautiful, toasted aroma. Set aside to cool.
2. Spray an 9x13 inch Pyrex pan with cooking spray and line pan with parchment paper. [Watch this video for a tutorial](#) on the best way to do this.
3. **Prepare pretzel layer:** Place pretzels into a zip-loc bag. Using your hands, crush pretzels quite finely. There can be a few big chunks of pretzels still in the mix. The back of a metal measuring cup works quite well to assist with the crushing.
4. In a medium bowl, mix crushed pretzels, flour, brown sugar, baking soda and melted butter. Pat the mixture evenly into the bottom of the prepared pan. Bake in 350°F oven for 10 minutes. Set aside and allow to cool slightly. Do not turn oven off.

5. **Prepare brownie layer:** To protect the chocolate from direct heat, melt it and the butter in a heatproof bowl set over a small pot of simmering water, stirring constantly. When the chocolate and butter have melted, whisk until smooth.
6. While the chocolate mixture cools slightly, sift together the flour, cocoa powder, espresso powder, baking powder and salt. Add the eggs, sugar and vanilla to the chocolate and mix thoroughly. Stir in the flour mixture and chocolate chips until incorporated.
7. Pour batter over baked pretzel crust. Bake for 25 minutes. The brownies will be a bit wobbly in the center but will firm up with cooling. Let cool for at least one hour before preparing caramel layer. Arrange the toasted pecans in a single layer on top of the brownie layer.
8. **Prepare Caramel layer:** Combine the cream, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and corn syrup in a 3-quart heavy duty saucepan over medium heat. Using a wooden spoon, stir constantly as the sugars dissolve. The mixture will be thick and cloudy looking.
9. Once boiling, brush down the sides of the pan with a water-moistened pastry brush. Attach a candy thermometer to the pan, making sure not to let it touch the bottom.
10. Without stirring, cook until the temperature reaches 245°F (118°C). Immediately remove from heat and stir in 1 teaspoon of salt, the vanilla extract, vanilla bean seeds, and butter. The mixture may burst and bubble, so be careful stirring.
11. Pour the hot caramel over the pecans and gently smooth it out with a spatula. Top with flaky sea salt, if desired. Allow to cool at room temperature, uncovered, for 4 hours or overnight (no need to cover).
12. Run a thin knife around the edges of the pan, turn the confection out onto a cutting board, and using a large serrated knife, cut it into 24 bars. The bars keep, separated by sheets of wax paper, in an airtight container, chilled, for 1 week or up to 3 months in the freezer.