

Dark Chocolate Peanut Butter Pretzel Brownies – Comfort du Jour

I'm not trying to ruin anyone's diet or anything; just hear me out for a sec on these brownies. Soft and fudgy, peanut butter swirly, crunchy pretzel salty, holy moly, yum. My creation was inspired by a scratch recipe from Valerie Bertinelli, the actress-turned-food maven. This decadent dessert smelled fantastic while baking and I don't feel one bit ashamed for taking a major shortcut—a box brownie mix.

I gleaned a few bits of wisdom from the reviews for [Valerie's scratch-made recipe](#), such as using a smaller pan and a lesser amount of the peanut butter swirl mixture, and then I leaned in to enjoy what so many fellow bakers had to say—"best brownies ever!"

INGREDIENTS

1 box Ghirardelli brand "dark chocolate" brownies, + ingredients to make them, which included an egg, 1/2 cup oil and 1/4 cup water.

1 Tbsp. dark cocoa powder

1/3 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips or chunks

1/2 cup smooth and creamy peanut butter (not the "natural" variety)

1/3 cup confectioner's sugar, sifted to remove lumps

3 Tbsp. salted butter, melted

A handful of salted mini pretzels, broken by hand

An extra sprinkle of coarse sea salt, if you like a bit more of this contrasting flavor

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 325° F, with rack in center of oven. Butter a glass 8 x 8" baking dish.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, combine the peanut butter, confectioner's sugar and melted butter. I used my handheld mixer for this step, but Valerie mixed it up just fine with a spoon, so do what you like there. Set this mixture aside while you prepare the brownie base.
3. Add dark cocoa to the brownie mix. Add the egg, oil and water, blending together until all dry ingredients are moistened. Fold in the extra chocolate pieces. Spread batter evenly into baking dish.
4. Spoon dollops of the peanut butter mixture randomly over the top of the brownie base. You may find that you have a little bit of the peanut butter mixture left over, as I did. But if that's the case, just follow my lead and eat it straight off the spatula, the beaters, the bowl, and that little bit that spattered on the counter. No problem (it's delicious).
5. Use a butter knife blade to drag the peanut butter dollops through the brownies, marbling as much or as little as you like.
6. Use your hands to break the mini pretzels into pieces, scattering them all over the brownies. Sprinkle on a few pinches of coarse sea salt (optional).
7. Bake brownies 45 to 50 minutes, according to package instructions. Cool completely before cutting, and try not to eat the whole batch in one evening.