

## **Bloom Cocoa Powder for Rich Results**

Many of our favorite rich, gooey, chocolatey desserts share one thing in common – and that’s cocoa powder. When purchasing cocoa powder, it is important to know about the different types and their distinguishing features so you can determine which type is the best fit for your recipe.

### *Natural vs. Dutch-process*

Natural cocoa powder is the cocoa you will commonly find on the shelves of your local market and in recipes. The word “natural” may not be found on the label of the natural cocoa. It might simply say “cocoa,” or “unsweetened cocoa,” or “baking cocoa,” but they are all the same. Natural cocoa is light-brown, acidic, and has a more intense flavor than Dutch-process cocoa.

Dutch-process cocoa powder (also called “alkalized,” “European style,” or “Dutched”) has been treated with an alkali solution to neutralize acidity to a pH of around 7. When cocoa is alkalinized, it becomes darker in color, more mellow tasting, and dissolves easily in liquids.

Recipes will often specify the type of cocoa you should use, and it is important to use the type that is on the ingredient list. When baking, if the recipe is leavened with baking soda, natural cocoa will be used, but if the recipe is leavened with baking powder, it will call for Dutch-process cocoa. Due to basic chemistry, bases need acids to create CO<sub>2</sub> bubbles to make the baked goods rise. Natural cocoa powder can be substituted for Dutch-process, but do not substitute Dutch-process for natural! The recipe probably needs that acid.

Always store cocoa powder in an airtight container in a dry, cool place. Do not store your cocoa powder in the freezer or refrigerator. Cocoa is labeled with expiration dates, but those should be considered a suggestion. Cocoa powder that’s past its expiration date is acceptable to use. If stored properly, cocoa powder is good for up to 3 years.

### *How to Bloom Cocoa Powder*

Many recipes call for cocoa, but do not access the full potential of the ingredient. Blooming cocoa enhances the flavor of baked goods and is simple to do. It should always be included in its preparation before adding it to your recipe.

Blooming the cocoa powder helps to intensify the chocolate flavor by releasing flavor that is trapped in the solid particles. Blooming cocoa powder is

accomplished by adding a hot liquid, like water, coffee, milk, oil, or melted butter, to cocoa powder in order to draw out its rich flavor. When the cocoa powder dissolves, it thickens the liquid. This releases the flavor within the powder particles. Stir it well to break up any lumps and then let it sit for a couple of minutes.

Most recipes call for a liquid or fat and cocoa powder, which allows the adaptation of adding the cocoa powder to the warm liquid or fat to bloom it. However, some recipes don't include enough liquid to dissolve the cocoa powder. In this case, it's better to NOT bloom the cocoa and add the cocoa powder as directed. If the recipe calls explicitly for cold or soft butter, don't be tempted to melt the butter and bloom the cocoa powder with it because this will most likely change the texture of the product.

Assuming that the recipe has some liquid to work with, you need to heat the liquid up and add the cocoa powder. The mixture of liquid and cocoa should be stirred until the cocoa is fully dissolved and has a smooth texture. Then, let the mixture cool while you assemble the rest of your ingredients.

Now that you know about cocoa powder and how to "bloom" it, what chocolate delight will you make first?

(Sources: [www.joyofbaking.com](http://www.joyofbaking.com); [www.kingarthurbaking.com](http://www.kingarthurbaking.com); [www.thekitchn.com](http://www.thekitchn.com); [www.thespruceeats.com](http://www.thespruceeats.com))