

# Decorated and decadent brownies make a festive dessert

By Susie Iventosch



Photo Susie Iventosch

## Brownies with Cranberries, White Chocolate and Pistachios

When the sweet tooth hits, it's hard to go wrong with a good old-fashioned brownie! They check all of the boxes — rich,

sweet, chocolate and decadent. This is a really fun twist on your favorite brownie recipe and it's festive for the

holidays. White chocolate chips, dried cranberries and roasted pistachios add a bit of chewiness and crunchiness. To top off the goodness, I like to add white chocolate icing with more goodies decorating the top for a holiday flair.

This is our favorite brownie recipe, but you can use any brownie recipe you love best, even if that means box mix brownies, and then add the goodies. And, if you are not a huge white chocolate fan, you can substitute dark chocolate chips and frosting.

When it comes to white chocolate, though, be sure to buy real white chocolate, one made with cocoa butter and not just white baking chips. If you cannot find the chips, then find a white chocolate bar and cut it into small chunks, and that will be perfectly satisfying!

### INGREDIENTS

#### Brownies

- 4 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chips or chunks
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 cube unsalted butter
- Dash of salt
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup unbleached flour
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped roasted unsalted pistachios
- 1/2 cup white chocolate chips (best if you can find actual white chocolate and not white baking chips)
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries (pour 1 cup boiling water over for 15 minutes to plump up, then squeeze out excess liquid)

#### Frosting

- 1/2 stick 2 oz. unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 4 oz. white baking chocolate melted and cooled
- 1 cup confectioners powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon milk +/-

#### Toppings

- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped roasted unsalted pistachios

#### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease or spray an 8-inch baking pan. Set aside.

Put the dried cranberries for the brownie batter in a bowl and pour 1 cup boiling water over them. Let them sit for about 15 minutes to plump up and then squeeze excess liquid from cranberries. Set aside.

Melt bittersweet chocolate, cocoa powder, and butter in medium-sized pot over low heat on the stovetop and stir until well blended. Remove from heat. Add salt and sugar and stir until both are dissolved into the chocolate-butter mixture. Add two eggs, one at a time, mixing thoroughly after each. Stir in flour and vanilla and mix well. Fold in chopped pistachios, white chocolate chips, and cranberries.

Pour batter into the prepared pan and bake in a 350-degree oven for 18 minutes. (If you use a glass baking pan, reduce heat to 325 and bake slightly longer.) Test with a cake tester and if brownies still seem too wet, bake for one minute longer. If they seem just right, turn off the oven and leave them in the oven for another minute. The brownies should be just slightly wet in the center when they are done baking.

Remove from oven and cool completely on rack. Once completely cooled, spread frosting (recipe below) over the entire pan of brownies. Sprinkle dried cranberries and chopped pistachios evenly over frosting.

#### Frosting Directions

In a medium-sized bowl, cream together melted, cooled white chocolate and butter until fluffy. Beat in powdered sugar until integrated. It will be a bit lumpy at this point. Add vanilla and milk, and beat well. You may need a little more or less milk, to get to the desired spreading consistency. Spread over cooled brownies.



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# Peter Pan Foundation production of 'Beauty and the Beast' opens Dec. 2

By Ashley Dong



Photo Ashley Dong

Singing teapots, nosy townspeople, and dancing silverware will come to life through the performers of the Peter Pan Foundation (PPF) this winter. On Dec. 2, 9, and 10, the Lafayette-based nonprofit will proudly present "Beauty and the Beast."

In this classic Disney movie-turned-musical, an enchantress curses a young, arrogant prince into the body of a hideous Beast. To teach him a lesson, the spell cannot be broken until the Beast learns to love another and earns her love in return, and until then, he is forced to live alone in his castle. Meanwhile, in a nearby village, Belle, a spirited, sharp-witted girl longs for a life beyond what the townspeople have in mind for her. When her father is taken prisoner by the Beast, Belle bravely takes

her papa's place. Together, in the enchanted castle, both Beauty and the Beast finally discover what they are looking for.

"I suggested 'Beauty and the Beast' for our winter show because it has a beautiful message and is such a wonderful, family-oriented, feel-good musical," Rehearsal Manager Kirsten Torkildson said.

This year, there are three casts of performers of all backgrounds and ages – the youngest performer is 5 years old; the oldest is 46 – and the show is directed by PPF's founder, Leslie Noel Hansen. In addition to the three full-length shows, there will be an In-Concert Performance featuring the powerful voices of PPF's adult performers on Dec. 2 at 5 p.m.

"Our talented performers are putting their all into the characters, and I am confident that this performance will be nothing short of beautiful," Production Assistant Larrolyn Patterson Parms-Ford said.

All four performances will take place at the PPF home. Although unaffiliated, PPF shares its rehearsal and performance space with Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette, in a building not originally designed for theater. However, Leslie uses this unconventional space to her advantage.

"PPF is very fortunate to have Leslie as a director because her vision and the magic she can create in unique spaces is amazing. Our set-up makes the show more special because it pulls the audience right into the story, so they feel like they're a part of the magic," Torkildson said.

With every musical, song, and interaction, the performers of PPF bring a spirit of philanthropy. "The heart of the PPF is about giving back to those in need. We are dedicated to forever finding ways to always be the most loving, inclusive, inspiring safe space we can be," PPF's website states.

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