

Weight of Baker's Chocolate Squares — Halved!



*The old 8-oz. box holding 8 individually-wrapped squares (left);
the new 4-oz. box holding one 4-oz. block of chocolate (right).*

I recently learned that my sister Middie, who bakes huge — and I mean *HUGE* — batches of Christmas cookies every year, had had to make two trips to the supermarket for the same ingredient. Why? Because the makers of that ingredient had done something not very cook-friendly — they'd halved the weight on their boxes of chocolate squares but replaced them with boxes of almost identical dimensions; so it's no wonder a cook picking up the new 4-oz. boxes would think they were the 8-oz. boxes of chocolate.

But the problems don't end there . . .



Old packaging (left), new packaging (right).

For years, one square of Baker's Chocolate — whether the unsweetened or the semi-sweet kind — was equal to one ounce. One 8-oz. box held 8 individually-wrapped squares, each with a deep score down the centre. The new 4-oz. boxes hold one wrapped block of chocolate, scored into 16 pieces, and on the back of the box it says '4 pieces = 1 oz.' The problem is, Baker's chocolate squares have been a staple in American kitchens for years and American cooks and cookery book writers all know that 1 square = 1 ounce. However, 1 *new* chocolate square looks nearly the same as one of the old squares — you'd need to see them side by side to spot the difference, but the new square weighs only $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce. I'd be surprised if this has not already made for a few less-chocolatey mousses and brownies.

I rang Baker's Chocolate to ask why the change. The representative I spoke with said they'd done research and that customers had said they were left with squares of chocolate from the 8-oz. box, but this doesn't explain why they hadn't simply cut the boxes in half, retaining the 1-oz.-square size. I mentioned to her that my sister had had to make two trips to the supermarket due to the package re-sizing looking virtually the same as the old boxes, and the fact that American cookery books equate 1 Baker's chocolate square with 1 ounce. For instance:

'Mousse au Chocolate II' recipe from *The NY Times Cookbook*, ed. Craig Claiborne, calls for: 4 squares (ounces) unsweetened chocolate.

'Chocolate Brownie Pie' recipe from *Half a Can of Tomato Paste and Other Culinary Dilemmas* by Jean Anderson & Ruth Buchan calls for: 2 squares (1 ounce each) unsweetened chocolate.

'Pear and Chocolate Tart' recipe in *The New James Beard* cookbook calls for: 6 squares (6 ounces) semisweet chocolate.

'Katharine Hepburn's Brownies' recipe in *New York Cookbook* by Mollie O'Neill calls for: 2 ounces (2 squares) unsweetened chocolate.

Most American cooks measure by volume rather than weight and I'm baffled as to why a company — an American company, yet — would decide to complicate things in this way. I don't know whether they still have their old 1-ounce-square chocolate moulds but in case they do, here's the number to ring if you, like me, think Baker's Chocolate got this one wrong: 1-800-431-1001 (current as of December 2013).

Nb: If you have a copy of *Measurements for Cooking* — or any other book that lists ingredients equivalents, you'll want to amend the weights listed for the Baker's chocolate squares entry. Perhaps use pencil, just in case they decide to reverse their decision.

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