

WHAT'S THAT?

# black onyx cocoa

**Want to turn your basic brownies into the darkest of chocolate desserts? Add a little of this stuff.**

Like all Dutch process cocoas, black onyx cocoa, or black cocoa, is washed in a solution that strips away much of its natural acidity and fat. Because black onyx is *ultra*-Dutched, it lends an almost purplish-black hue to baked goods (it's the key ingredient in Oreos!) and results in a smoother and distinctly darker (some say more pronounced, some say mellower) chocolate flavor. You can use it to replace up to a quarter of the regular cocoa or half of the Dutch process cocoa in many baking recipes. Find it at [savoryspiceshop.com](http://savoryspiceshop.com), [kingarthurfLOUR.com](http://kingarthurfLOUR.com), and specialty shops. —*Grandma'sGirl*



TECH NEWS

# GLUTEN DETECTOR

Nope, it's not science fiction, it's for real: The new Nima sensor is a handheld device that you can use to determine whether food is truly gluten-free. You put a sample of food into a tiny capsule, screw on the lid (twisting grinds the food and activates the chemicals inside), insert the capsule into the device, and wait for the display to give the all clear (a smiley face) or a no go (a wheat symbol). A company spokeswoman says Nima can detect gluten in quantities at least as small as 20 parts per million, the threshold below which gluten-free claims are allowed on food packaging. Nima planned to begin shipping its first devices this spring to folks who preordered them last fall and has a wait list for future orders (\$280 at [nimasensor.com](http://nimasensor.com)). Versions that detect other allergens (such as milk and peanuts) are in the works.



ON TREND

# DINNER'S IN THE MAIL

If it seems like you're getting an offer from a new meal-kit delivery company every week, it's probably because you are.

Companies that deliver ready-to-cook meal kits racked up \$1 billion in global sales in 2015, about 40 percent of it in the U.S. There are now at least 170 such services worldwide, and they're expected to become a multibillion-dollar market in the next five years.

Who's driving the boom? Urban couples, dual-income families, and millennial singles bored with takeout and dining out. Assemble-and-heat kits are confidence-boosting for beginner cooks, convenient for those who don't have time to shop, and efficient for those who want to experiment with new flavors without buying lots of exotic ingredients.

In the U.S., popular national services include Blue Apron (the largest), Plated, HelloFresh, and Home Chef. Specialty additions include Marley Spoon, which features Martha Stewart's recipes; PeachDish, which serves up Southern fare; and Purple Carrot, which offers vegan meals. Other companies target chef wannabes, smoothie addicts, and those with specific

health or dietary needs. Some services emphasize speed: Gobble (not yet nationwide) promises meals you can make in 10 minutes with only three steps. There are also city-based services that focus on local foods.

Most ship carefully portioned ingredients (down to the tablespoon of olive oil, teaspoon of cumin, and exact number of garlic cloves), along with instructions for a few meals that you can assemble, cook, and serve in 30 to 45 minutes. Services typically bill monthly and ship kits weekly in chilled packaging. Prices vary depending on type, size, and number of recipes ordered, but many services charge \$9 to \$15 per serving or \$60 or more for kits that make enough to feed two people three different meals.

Critics worry about the environmental impact of the packaging (even the recyclable sort) and shipping used for the kits. But the upside is that people are *cooking* instead of buying fast or premade foods, and that has benefits on many levels. —*ScandoGirl*