



✕
chocolate-
caramel truffles

SWEETS FOR YOUR SWEETIE

A box of chocolates is anything but cliché when they are handmade with love and heart-meltingly gorgeous. These eight creations taste as delicious as they look—and they're sure to surprise and delight.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHELSEA CAVANAUGH • RECIPES BY GREG LOFTS • TEXT BY SARAH DIGREGORIO



○
dark- and white-
chocolate
shortbread hearts



←
LOVE BITES

Chocolate-caramel truffles are a Valentine's Day triple threat. They're amazingly quick to make (the mixture comes together in 10 minutes), long-lasting (they keep in the fridge for weeks), and beyond divine. Inspired by brigadeiros, the supersweet Brazilian dulce de leche treats, these beauties enlist bitter chocolate and cocoa to balance out the rich condensed milk; then they're rolled in cheery sprinkles.

For recipes, see page 112.

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HYPNOTIC HEARTS

These striking shortbread cookies were made with two doughs: one flavored with cocoa and espresso powder, and the other with white chocolate. Using a set of nested cookie cutters, we stamped out heart shapes in descending sizes and fit them together like puzzles before baking (the smallest one is solid). For crisp lines, chill the dough twice—after cutting and after assembling.



○
no-bake
chocolate-peanut
butter cup bars

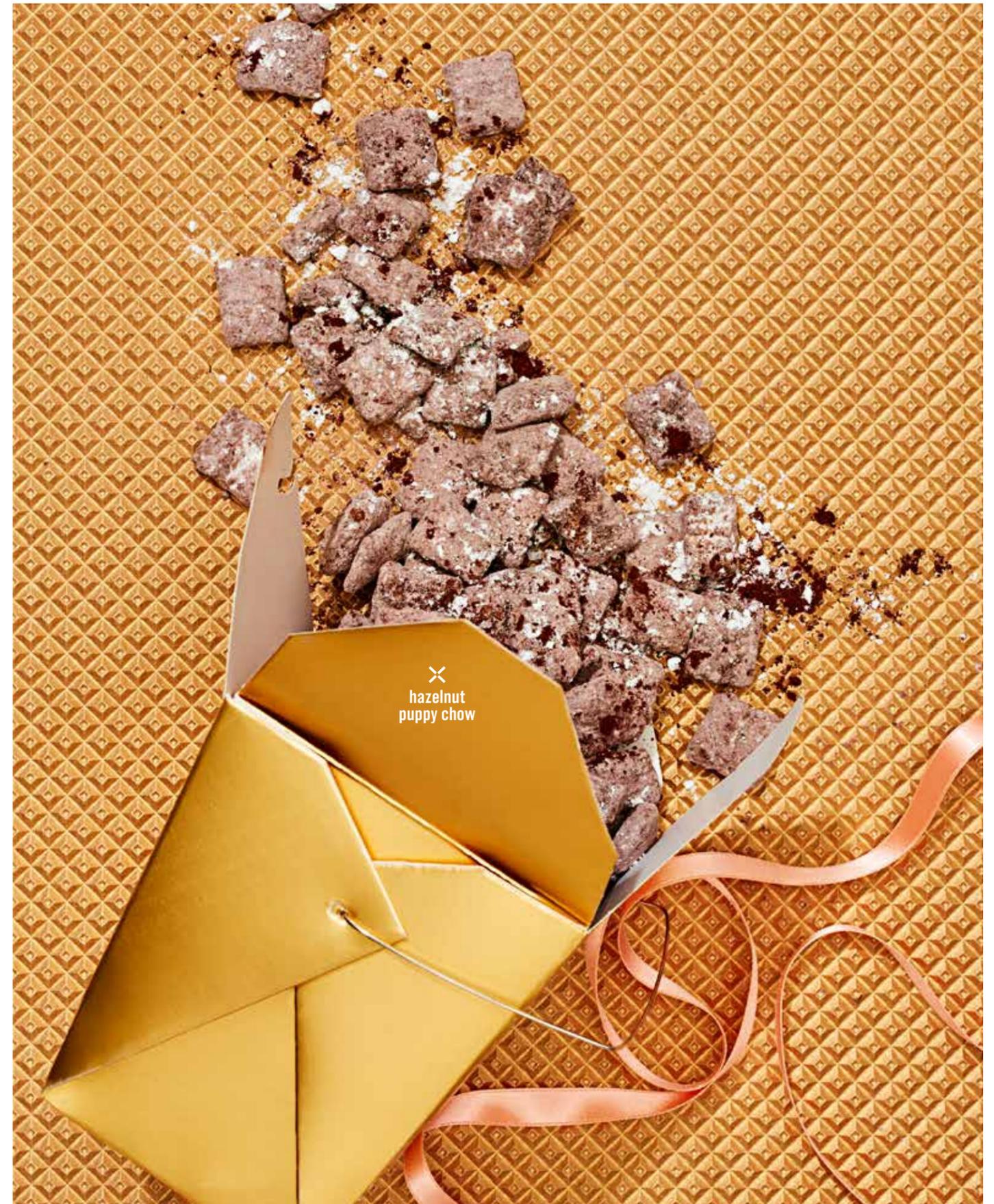
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DECADENCE, SQUARED

Our creamy no-bake bars are the sophisticated older sisters of peanut butter cups. Use a smooth supermarket PB rather than chunky, which won't have the same melt-in-your-mouth effect. The swirly-heart designs look fancy, but they're simple to create. Just dot the chocolate surface with spoonfuls of the peanut butter mixture and drag a toothpick through them.

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PARTY IN A BOX

Think of puppy chow as the dessert version of Chex Mix, that crunchy, addictive childhood snack. Also referred to as muddy buddies, the classic recipe calls for chocolate and peanut butter; however, we've replaced the latter with Nutella for a grown-up hazelnut twist. And instead of dusting it only with confectioners' sugar, we added unsweetened cocoa powder to the coating.

THE DETAILS: Gold metallic takeout gift box, 32 oz., \$1, containerstore.com.



✕
hazelnut
puppy chow

○ chocolate-dipped Luxardo cherries



BON(BON) MOTS

To make chocolates like a pro, you need to master one skill: tempering, which is the process of heating and cooling chocolate to particular temperatures (for instructions, see page 114). The result is a snappy texture and a glossy sheen that's showcased in these charming peppermint patties, marshmallow-pretzel-almond rounds, and Luxardo-cherry truffles.

THE DETAILS: Gold candy inserts, from 35¢ each, nycake.com. Gold gift boxes, from \$6 each, paperpresentation.com.

✕ chocolate-peppermint hearts



○ rocky-road bites



CRUNCH TIME

Turtles—caramel, nut, and chocolate clusters—are a candy-shop classic, but they can be time-consuming in the kitchen. We remixed the ingredients into an easy toffee studded with pecans and drizzled with chocolate. Toast the nuts to a very deep brown to punch up their flavor, and sprinkle them over the hot toffee right away to ensure that they stick.

✕ turtle brittle

