

FAMILY RECIPES

Great Dishes From Local Chefs | By Christina Elston

SPREADING THE LOVE FROM THEIR FAMILY TO YOURS

A wedding can mark the beginning of a life together. For Val and Zach Fishbain, it also marked the beginning of a business venture that feeds their family and so many others.

The idea was sparked by the couple's DIY wedding favors. "I was already using my Vitamix that I got from my bridal shower a couple of months before, and I was making peanut butter for Zach," says Val. The pair liked her creation so much that they decided to make little jars of peanut butter for their 150 guests - and the favors were a huge hit. After many post-wedding requests from family and friends, the two decided to launch Spread the Love, making organic nut butters and jams available online and locally at Erewhon Markets and Mother's Market & Kitchen.

Val and Zach are now parents to two daughters, ages 4 and 5, and they use their products at home. "We put it on everything: oatmeal, ice cream, cereal," Val says. This shows in their ingredients and manufacturing. "We use premium quality ingredients, and the way we process things is a lot different," she explains. The almonds for Spread the Love almond butter are steam pasturized instead of sprayed with antibacterial chemicals. The nut butters don't contain palm oil (cited as a culprit in deforestation) and the jams don't include pectin, just fruit and sugar. "If it doesn't sit good with me, then we don't include it in our products," says Val.

The goal is to make products that taste good and are good for



Val and Zach Fishbain

PHOTOS COURTESY SPREAD THE LOVE

you. "Nut butters are full of fat, and a lot of people are scared of that, but it's good fat," Val says. "It's really good for the heart. It's really good for balancing your cholesterol." The protein, she adds, is great for an energy boost. "Before I work out in the morning, I take a spoonful of peanut butter, and I'm ready to go."

But the company is about more than just good food. With experience gained from her eight years as an L.A. County social worker supporting teens on the streets, Val wanted Spread the Love to give back. "We kind of have to live up to the name, right?" she says. Through its Spread the Love Forward charitable component, the company has raised funds for PATH (People Assisting The Homeless) and St. Joseph Center's culinary training program.

On the [Spread the Love](#) website, you can learn more and purchase Spread the Love products, check out the latest charitable initiatives and find tasty recipes created in consultation with friends "who happen to be recipe experts."

They call these brownies "ultra-fudgy," with a peanut butter swirl as the perfect contrast. They taste best the second day after baking, so make them ahead, cool completely, wrap tightly and store at room temperature. They're a great - virtual or on campus - school lunch treat.



PB SWIRL BROWNIES FROM SPREAD THE LOVE

Makes 15 large brownies

For the brownie layer:

- 2 sticks (1 cup) butter or vegan butter, plus more for greasing pan
- 8 ounces chopped dark chocolate
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 4 eggs
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour

For the peanut butter swirl layer:

- 1 cup Spread The Love Naked Peanut Butter
- ¼ cup melted butter, melted vegan butter or canola oil
- ½ cup powdered sugar, sifted
- ½ teaspoon salt

Grease a 13-by-9-inch baking pan and line with greased parchment paper. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

For the brownie layer: In the top of a double boiler over simmer-

ing water, or in a microwave, melt two sticks of butter and the chocolate together and stir until smooth. Whisk in the sugars until well combined. Allow to cool slightly.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, ½ teaspoon salt and vanilla extract to combine. Whisk the chocolate mixture into the egg mixture a little at a time, then whisk until well combined. Fold in the flour, mixing just until it is incorporated.

For the peanut butter swirl layer: In a medium bowl, stir together the peanut butter, ¼ cup melted butter or oil, powdered sugar and ½ teaspoon salt until smooth.

Pour the brownie layer batter into the prepared pan. Drop the peanut butter batter spoonful by spoonful randomly across the top of the brownie batter, then create a swirl pattern using a knife or toothpick.

Bake for 35-45 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out with crumbs stuck to it (not completely wet). Cool completely before slicing and serving (as difficult as that may be!). ♦

