

Almond Tea Cakes

Yields: 4 dozen

A butter sugar-coated cookie with a nutty melt in your mouth texture.

The nutty flavor comes from roasting the almonds. Roasting the almonds first forces the almonds to release their oils and take on a richer and nuttier flavor. The cookie dough itself is not very sweet because the cookie balls are coated twice in powdered sugar. The first coating happens two minutes after the cookies come out of the oven. The warm exterior of the cookie causes the powdered sugar to stick, and as they cool, the powdered sugar adhering to the surface becomes very sticky. It is this sticky surface that makes the second coating of powdered sugar cling to the cookie and form a dry and powdery sweet casing for the rich and nutty cookie.

Special equipment:

- Mixing bowls
- A simple food chopper or food processor
- A hand mixer or stand mixer with a paddle attachment
- 3 large rimmed, baking sheets
- Parchment paper or 2 silicon baking mats
- Wire cooling racks

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
- 1/2 cup unsifted powdered sugar
- 2 1/4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon pure almond extract
- 1 cup powdered sugar, sifted, for rolling

Directions

Almond Tea Cakes Dough

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Roast almonds in a single layer in a large baking sheet 6 minutes or until toasted and fragrant, stirring halfway through. Cool completely, about 20 minutes.
3. Place the roasted almonds in the bowl of a food processor, and process until finely ground or the texture of coarse cornmeal, 15 to 30 seconds. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
4. In a large bowl, sift together the flour and salt. set aside.
5. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat together butter and sugar on medium-high speed until light and creamy, 3 to 4 minutes. Scrape down sides of the bowl and add the vanilla and almond extracts; beat to combine.
6. Reduce the speed to low; gradually add the flour mixture to the creamed mixture and mix on low until incorporated, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Mix in the roasted ground almonds.
7. Use your hands to press the dough into a solid mass. Wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Making the Almond Tea Cakes

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicon baking mats. Set aside.
3. Remove dough from refrigerator.
4. Pinch off and shape dough into 1-inch ball, by rolling about two teaspoons of dough between the palm of your hands. (Note: The dough will be crumbly, so you will be rolling dough into spheres between the palms of your hands.)
5. Place cookies 1 inch apart on lined baking sheets.

6. Bake cookies until edges are lightly browned, about 10 to 12 minutes. (Note: Do not allow these cookies to get brown. it is better to undercook them than to overcook them. Cookies look very pale when done and will immediately fall apart if handled straight out of the oven, but firm up nicely when cooled.)
7. Allow cookies to cool on baking sheet until cooled enough to handle but still quite warm, about 2 minutes.
8. When cookies are cooled enough to handle, place the sifted powdered sugar into a shallow dish and roll each warm cookie gently in the powdered sugar until completely coated. Transfer the sugar-coated cookies to a wire rack to cool completely, about 10 minutes.
9. Once completely cooled, roll cookies again in powdered sugar until completely coated.
10. Once the cookies are completely cooled, they can be stored in an airtight container for up to a week, or place in a sealed plastic container, using parchment paper to separate the layers and freeze for up to 2 months. To defrost, simply remove cookies from the freezer and thaw at room temperature. Re-roll in powdered sugar before serving, if desired.