

Coconut Mochi

Much easier to make than the traditional stovetop method.

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Art by ROMULO YANES



If you've never tried mochi, you're in for a treat. These Asian desserts made with sweet rice flour have the pillowy softness of marshmallows and a chewiness similar to salt water taffy. When I bring a big batch of these goodies somewhere—whether to a dinner party or to a school bake sale—they disappear in seconds. The baking technique here is much easier than the traditional stovetop method and yields a pound cake–like tenderness. The floral sweetness of rice flour pairs perfectly with coconut and turmeric, which lends a sunflower hue.

TIP: This makes a lot because it gets gobbled up quickly and it's easiest to dump a whole box of rice flour into a bowl rather than trying to measure the superfine powder. That being said, you can halve the quantities at left and bake in an 8-inch square or round cake pan for 1 hour.

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INGREDIENTS Makes 48

1 (1-lb) box sweet rice flour, such as Mochiko (3 cups)

2 t baking powder

1/4 t ground turmeric

1/4 t salt

4 large eggs, at room temperature

2 C (416 g) sugar

2 (13.5-oz) cans unsweetened coconut milk (3 1/2 cups)

1/4 C (56 g) grapeseed or other neutral oil

1 T pure vanilla extract

1/2 C (50 g) unsweetened finely shredded coconut

PREPARATION

These are best the day they're made, but they will keep at room temperature for up to 3 days.

1. Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat to 350°F.
2. Whisk the sweet rice flour, baking powder, turmeric, and salt in a large bowl. Beat the eggs and sugar in another large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high speed until pale yellow. Reduce the speed to medium and gradually pour in the coconut milk, then the oil and vanilla. Scrape down the bowl. Reduce the speed to low and gradually add the dry ingredients, beating just until incorporated. Scrape down the bowl, then beat on high speed for 30 seconds to make sure the batter is smooth. Pour the batter into an ungreased 9-by-13-inch baking pan. Sprinkle the coconut evenly on top.
3. Bake until the coconut on top is golden brown and the edges are just starting to pull away from the sides of the pan, about 1 1/2 hours.
4. Cool completely in the pan on a wire rack. Cut into sixths crosswise and eighths lengthwise to form 48 (1 1/2-inch) cubes.