



Almond Biscotti

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 14: From an Italian Bakery

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

We wanted biscotti that were hard and crunchy, but not hard to eat, and bold in flavor. To keep the crumb hard, we used just a small amount of butter (4 tablespoons), and to keep the biscotti from being too hard, we ground some of the nuts to a fine meal, which helped minimize gluten development in the crumb. To ensure bold flavor in a biscuit that gets baked twice, we increased the quantities of aromatic ingredients.

Makes 30 cookies

The almonds will continue to toast while the biscotti bake, so toast the nuts only until they are just fragrant.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/4** cups (6 1/4 ounces) whole almonds, lightly toasted
- 1 3/4** cups (8 3/4 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2** teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4** teaspoon salt
- 2** large eggs, plus 1 large white beaten with pinch salt
- 1** cup (7 ounces) sugar
- 4** tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 1/2** teaspoons almond extract
- 1/2** teaspoon vanilla extract
- Vegetable oil spray

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Using ruler and pencil, draw two 8 by 3-inch rectangles, spaced 4 inches apart, on piece of parchment paper. Grease baking sheet and place parchment on it, ink side down.
- 2.** Pulse 1 cup almonds in food processor until coarsely chopped, 8 to 10 pulses; transfer to bowl and set aside. Process remaining 1/4 cup almonds in food processor until finely ground, about 45 seconds. Add flour, baking powder, and salt; process to combine, about 15 seconds. Transfer flour mixture to second bowl. Process 2 eggs in now empty food processor until lightened in color and almost doubled in volume, about 3 minutes. With processor running, slowly add sugar until thoroughly combined, about 15 seconds. Add melted butter, almond extract, and vanilla and process until combined, about 10 seconds. Transfer egg mixture to medium bowl. Sprinkle half of flour mixture over egg mixture and, using spatula, gently fold until just combined. Add remaining flour mixture and chopped almonds and gently fold until just combined.
- 3.** Divide batter in half. Using floured hands, form each half into 8 by 3-inch rectangle, using lines on parchment as guide. Spray each loaf lightly with oil spray. Using rubber spatula lightly coated with oil spray, smooth tops and sides

of rectangles. Gently brush tops of loaves with egg white wash. Bake until loaves are golden and just beginning to crack on top, 25 to 30 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking.

4. Let loaves cool on baking sheet for 30 minutes. Transfer loaves to cutting board. Using serrated knife, slice each loaf on slight bias into 1/2-inch-thick slices. Lay slices, cut side down, about 1/4 inch apart on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet. Bake until crisp and golden brown on both sides, about 35 minutes, flipping slices halfway through baking. Let cool completely before serving. Biscotti can be stored in airtight container for up to 1 month.

TECHNIQUE

WHY NUTS TAKE SOME BITE OUT OF BISCOTTI

We wanted our biscotti to pack just as much crunch as the traditional Italian kind but also to break apart easily when you take a bite. Adding extra butter to the dough helped, but our ultimate solution was cutting the flour with finely ground nuts. While butter merely made the cookie more tender, ground nuts actually weakened its structure.

Both ingredients influence the texture because of their effect on gluten, the web of flour proteins that gives baked goods structure. The fat in butter “shortens” the gluten strands by surrounding individual strands and preventing them from linking up into larger networks. Ground nuts interfere with gluten formation in a slightly different way, getting in between pockets of gluten to create microscopic “fault lines” in the biscotti, which allow the hard cookie to break apart easily under the tooth.

CRUNCHY—BUT NOT A JAWBREAKER



TECHNIQUE

FOR DOUBLE-BAKED COOKIES, DOUBLE—OR TRIPLE—THE SPICE

While turning out batch after batch of biscotti, we noticed that many of the flavors we added to the dough—almond extract and aromatic herbs and spices—started off strong and fragrant but faded once the cookies had baked twice, since the successive exposure to heat kills off many of their volatile flavor compounds. To compensate, we loaded up on them, in some cases tripling the amount we started with.