

Title:

Observe Passover with Macaroons

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Summary:

For centuries, food has played a prominent role in numerous springtime festivals celebrated by people of various faiths.

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Article Body:

For centuries, food has played a prominent role in numerous springtime festivals celebrated by people of various faiths.

For Jews, the last of ten plagues, the night before the Hebrews' flight from Egypt, was the taking of each family's firstborn son. According to Exodus, though, Jews who followed the rules of Moses by sacrificing a lamb, sprinkling its blood on the doorframe and eating the lamb along with other specific foods were passed over and their sons lived. In modern times, for seven to eight days each spring, Jews celebrate Pesach, or Passover, with a ritualistic dinner called a Seder.

An egg, hard-cooked and usually roasted in the oven until the shell browns, is one of five symbolic foods on the Seder plate. Called beitzah, the egg represents life itself as well as burnt temple offerings, grief for the destruction of the temple and the hope of salvation. Under Jewish dietary laws, eggs are neutral and may be served with either milk or meat dishes, so eggs are often used in other parts of the meal, too.

It's egg whites which star in macaroons, a traditional cookie served during Passover. Macaroons are simple to prepare and make a welcome hostess gift for many occasions, especially for working people who haven't time to bake. For a pretty presentation, tie up a patterned gift bag full of cookies, wrap the cookies in colored plastic wrap or place them in a decorated tin. Whether you're Jewish or not, comforting macaroons are a sweet treat that can warm the soul, lift the spirit and help end a celebration memorably.

What about the yolks? Simply cook them in water just as you would hard cook eggs

in the shell. Then crumble the cooked yolks over a green salad for a sunny protein source.

Cherry Macaroons

about 3 1/2 to 4 dozen

3 egg whites

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 teaspoon kosher-for-Passover vanilla

1/2 teaspoon kosher-for-Passover almond extract

1 1/3 cups (3.5 oz.) flaked coconut

1/2 cup chopped red glace cherries

Additional red glace cherry halves, optional

In small mixing bowl at high speed, beat egg whites until foamy. Add sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time, beating constantly until sugar is dissolved and whites are glossy and stand in soft peaks. (Rub just a bit of meringue between thumb and forefinger to feel if sugar has dissolved.) Beat in flavorings. Stir together coconut and chopped cherries. Gently, but thoroughly, fold into beaten whites. Drop by rounded tablespoonsful onto greased or lined (foil or waxed, brown or parchment paper) baking sheets. Top each cookie with cherry half, if desired.

Bake in preheated 325 degree F oven until lightly browned, about 18 to 20 minutes. Cool completely on wire rack. Store in airtight container between sheets of foil or waxed paper. Wrap for presentation, if desired.

Nutrition information per serving of 1/48 recipe without cherry garnish: 26 calories, 1 gm total fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 4 mg sodium, 13 mg potassium, 5 gm carbohydrate, 0 gm protein. - NU