

## **Chocolate Almond Macaroons – “*Make Me Swoon Macaroons*”**

Chocolate Festival 2006 People’s Choice Award – Amateur - made by Nancy Sassano

From Pure Chocolate by Fran Bigelow

*Traditional French macaroons are crisp on the outside, moist and chewy on the inside, and fragrant with almonds. Unlike their coconut haystack cousins, these sophisticates bake up flat, like chubby chocolate wafers. They are delightful eaten plain. Sandwiched with a rich chocolate ganache, however, they reach for greatness.*

Makes about 18 sandwich cookies or 36 singles.

½ recipe Dark Chocolate Truffle Filling (next page)

10 ounces almond paste, room temperature, cut in small pieces

¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar

3 tablespoons Dutch-processed cocoa powder

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons almond flour (1 1/3 ounces slivered blanched almonds, finely ground)

3 large egg whites (3 fluid ounces)

The day before baking the cookies, prepare the Dark Chocolate Truffle Filling.

Position 2 racks in the middle of the oven and preheat the oven to 325. Line 2 cookie sheets with parchment paper or Silpats.

In a mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, cream together the almond paste, sugar, cocoa powder, and almond flour until smooth.

Add the egg whites, one at a time, beating well and scraping down the bowl between additions. Mix until smooth and uniform.

Transfer the mixture to a pastry bag fitted with a large (½-inch) round tip (#808). Holding the pastry bag vertical to the prepared cookie sheet, pipe about 36 disks, 1 ¾ inches round and 1/3 inch high.

For a smoother finish, dampen a smooth cotton tea towel or napkin. Lightly pat the top of each macaroon to moisten.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until puffed. Let cool on trays 10 minutes. Then transfer to racks to cool completely.

To form sandwiches, spread the bottoms of half the cooled cookies with about ½ teaspoon of ganache. Top with the bottom of a second macaroon to make a sandwich. Store in airtight containers as long as a week if totally dry.

## Dark Chocolate Truffle Filling

1 cup heavy cream\*

9 ounces semisweet chocolate, finely chopped

In a saucepan heat the cream over medium-high heat until it begins to boil. Remove from the heat and add the chocolate, stirring until the chocolate is smooth and melted. Pour the ganache into a small bowl, cover with plastic wrap touching the surface to prevent a skin from forming, and set aside. Let the ganache set up at room temperature for 8-12 hours or overnight.

To speed things up, you may let sit at room temperature, uncovered, about 4 hours. Gently fold with a spatula every 20 to 30 minutes until it thickens and becomes the consistency of soft butter.

*\* I used 4T amaretto and reduced the cream by 4T (proportionately when making half the recipe). Heat the amaretto and cream together and then mix with the chocolate.*

### Miscellaneous Tips

1. Almond paste: my first choice was Odense Almond Paste from Kitchen Kneads. I ended up using Sicily Marzipan (also from KK) for the Choc Fest because they ran out of the Odense. Whatever you use, choose a paste with less sugar rather than more and no other ingredients (egg white, etc.). The Sicily was slightly sweeter and smoother (less almond-grainy) than Odense but still worked fine.
2. Almond flour: you can buy it in the health food section or store. More finely ground and even texture than grinding your own almonds.
3. The batter is pretty sticky but working with the pastry bag helps a lot in getting round, even-sized cookies. You can make smaller cookies than the recipe describes using a smaller tip. Smaller cookies take almost as long to bake as the larger ones, but keep an eye on them.
4. I also used the pastry bag to pipe the filling – it was much faster than handling each one, especially for the smaller cookies.
5. Heavier cookie sheets (I used my half sheet pans) seemed to work better than regular cookie sheets.
6. Let the cookies bake a little longer rather than taking them out too soon – they will come off the sheet more easily. They did bake in just about 15 minutes. The larger cookies were sometimes sticky on the bottom and needed to be very carefully removed from the sheet with a metal spatula (rinsed between cookies!). If the bottoms stick or get hollow, the truffle filling will disguise it.
7. I needed to rotate the pans mid-cycle. See what happens in your oven.