

amaretti

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Amaretti

Almond, sugar and egg white — no flour, no butter, no leavening. Two versions exist and they are genuinely different cookies: the hard *amaretti di Saronno*, dry enough to keep for months and to be crushed into fillings, and the soft Sardinian and Piedmontese *amaretti morbidi*, chewy at the centre with a cracked, sugar-dusted crust.

Both are naturally gluten-free, which makes this the most useful cookie on the site for a coeliac guest. See [Gluten Free Grains](#).

What makes it work

- **Bitter almond is the flavour, and it comes from apricot kernels.** Italian amaretti use a small percentage of bitter almonds or apricot kernels alongside sweet almonds. Outside Italy, almond extract stands in — it is the same compound, benzaldehyde. See [Almond extract](#) and [Apricot](#).
- **Egg white is the only binder.** Beat it to soft peaks, not stiff: stiff meringue folded into almond meal makes a macaron, and the cookie then needs a skin and a foot. Soft peaks give a dense chew.
- **Rest the piped cookies 30–60 minutes before baking.** The surface dries, and the dry skin is what cracks into the characteristic fissures as the inside expands.
- **Powdered sugar twice.** Rolled in it before the rest and dusted again after, which is what gives the crackle its white contrast.

Ingredients

Makes about 24 soft amaretti.

- 250 g ground [almonds](#)
- 200 g granulated sugar
- 2 egg whites, about 70 g
- 1 tsp [almond extract](#), or 6 crushed apricot kernels
- 2 g fine salt
- 100 g powdered sugar, for rolling
- optional: zest of 1 [lemon](#)

Method

Mix the ground almonds, granulated sugar and salt.

Beat the egg whites to soft peaks — they should slump when the whisk is lifted. Fold them into the almond mixture with the extract and zest. You want a stiff, sticky paste; if it will not hold a ball, add ground almonds 10 g at a time.

Roll 20 g balls, roll each in powdered sugar until thickly coated, and set them on parchment 4 cm apart. Press a whole almond into the top if you like. Rest uncovered 30–60 minutes.

Bake **160 °C / 325 °F for 18–20 minutes**, until cracked and pale gold. They firm as they cool and should stay soft in the middle.

Notes

- **For hard amaretti**, drop the granulated sugar to 180 g, bake at 150 °C for 35–40 minutes, and leave them in the switched-off oven with the door ajar for another hour to dry.
- Crushed hard amaretti are a standard component of Italian fillings — in stuffed peaches, in pumpkin ravioli, and folded through mascarpone.
- **Keeps two weeks soft, three months hard.** The soft ones stale by drying, so store them with a strip of parchment rather than in with anything moist.
- Ratafia biscuits are the small English version, and *ricciarelli* the Sienese oval one, softer still and traditionally left to dry overnight before baking.

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