

chinese almond cookies

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Chinese Almond Cookies

A short, crumbly, cracked cookie with a whole almond pressed into the top, standard on Cantonese bakery counters and at Lunar New Year, where the round gold shape stands in for a coin. The traditional fat is lard, which is why the texture is unlike any European almond biscuit — sandier, cleaner-breaking, and almost powdery.

What makes it work

- **Lard makes this cookie.** It has larger fat crystals than butter and no water at all, so it shortens more aggressively and the crumb collapses rather than crumbles. Shortening is the closest substitute; butter gives a good cookie that is not this one. See [baking fats](#) and [Shortening](#).
- **Almond extract, not ground almonds, is the flavour.** Chinese bakeries use the extract heavily — a full two teaspoons here. See [Almond extract](#).
- **Egg wash the tops** for the glossy, deep-gold finish; the crack comes from pressing the almond in hard enough to split the surface.
- **Do not overwork.** Mix only until the dough coheres. Worked dough bakes dense and loses the shatter.

Ingredients

Makes about 24.

- 225 g lard, or [shortening](#)
- 150 g granulated sugar
- 1 [egg](#)
- 2 tsp [almond extract](#)
- 300 g all-purpose flour
- 60 g ground [almonds](#)
- 5 g baking soda
- 3 g baking powder
- 3 g fine salt
- 24 whole blanched almonds
- 1 egg yolk beaten with 1 tsp water, to glaze

Method

Beat the lard and sugar for two minutes, then the egg and almond extract.

Fold in the flour, ground almonds, soda, powder and salt until it just comes together. The dough is soft and slightly greasy.

Roll 25 g balls, flatten to 1 cm, and press a whole almond firmly into the centre of each so the edges crack.

Brush with the yolk glaze. Bake **175 °C / 350 °F for 15–18 minutes**, until deep gold.

Cool completely on the tray. They are very fragile until cold.

Notes

- **The crack is the tell.** A smooth, uncracked cookie was pressed too gently or the dough was too wet.
- Some Hong Kong bakeries add a spoonful of custard powder for colour and a faint vanilla note.
- **Keeps three weeks** in a tin, and this is one of the few cookies that is genuinely as good on day fourteen as on day one.

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