

Coconut Macaroons

We grew up with this recipe; these macaroons are disgracefully simple to make, store well, and even freeze beautifully. (In fact, I have served them directly from the freezer.) These have no flour – but it’s surprising how many recipes for coconut macaroons do include flour. You can generally find dried unsweetened shredded coconut in the bulk food section of natural food stores or packaged by Bob’s Red Mill.

For reasons that are not clear, many patients with irritable bowel syndromes such as Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis seem to get a noticeable degree of improvement in their symptoms by having a small amount of coconut each day. Not surprisingly, a popular coconut delivery system is a couple of these macaroons.

(Makes a scant 2 dozen)

2 egg whites (scant $\frac{1}{3}$ cup)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white sugar
 1 teaspoon pure almond extract
 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 2 cups dried unsweetened shredded coconut

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Set rack in middle of oven. Mist baking sheet with non-stick spray.

1. Whisk egg whites, sugar, extracts, and salt in a mixing bowl until smooth and foamy and sugar is dissolved.
2. Add coconut and mix thoroughly with a large fork or a sturdy rubber spatula. The mixture should be thick and sticky.
3. Form tablespoon-sized mounds of mixture (see note) and place about an inch apart on the oiled baking sheet. The cookies won’t spread unless the mixture is too wet. *(Stir the mixture from time to time – the liquid tends to settle.)*

4. Bake in the middle of the oven for 20 minutes, or until macaroons are golden on top and bottom. Transfer from baking sheet to cooling rack with a thin-edged metal spatula. Store in covered container for a week (I’ve kept them successfully for 2 weeks) or store for a few months in the freezer, well sealed.

Note:

- ▶ Macaroons are my favorite use for extra egg whites. (See note on page 155.)
- ▶ I use the tablespoon from my Oxo measuring spoon set to make evenly sized and shaped macaroons. I scoop it full of the coconut mixture, scrape off the excess on the edge of the mixing bowl, and unmold it with a firm tap on the cookie sheet. I rinse the spoon about every 3 cookies or so, which keeps the coconut mixture from sticking to the inside of the spoon.
- ▶ This recipe uses what I think is the minimum of sugar; another $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar will make a crispier macaroon.
- ▶ Macaroons made with a higher egg-white-to-coconut ratio will spread slightly as they cook. They will also be chewier, and stay moist longer.

Almond Macaroons

Replace all or part of the coconut with almond meal/flour (see note on page 272) or ground toasted almonds (see directions for *Toasting Slivered Almonds* on page 225). Depending on the proportion of almonds to egg white, the cookies may spread a bit; place them at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches apart on the baking sheet. It is safer to err on the side of too wet for this batter. Otherwise, the other ingredients and instructions are the same. I love the firm chewiness of these cookies and bake them until an even golden brown.