

# Salt and Serenity

## Florentine Cookies

This recipe for classic Florentine cookies comes from Anna Olsen. I watched, mesmerized, as she created them on her Food Network show "Bake with Anna Olsen." These are not cookies for the novice baker. Read the notes at the end of the recipe before making them.

Makes 48 cookies.

1 ½ cups sliced almonds

½ cup + 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar

¼ cup honey (or maple syrup)

⅓ cup whipping cream

5 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped (Not chocolate chips)

4 Cocoa butter transfer sheets \*

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180 °C). Line a baking tray with parchment paper or a silicone-coated liner.
2. Place the sliced almonds in a re-sealable bag and crush them a little using a rolling pin or even your hands. Set aside.
3. Place the sugar, honey and whipping cream in a small saucepot and bring up to a full boil while stirring, and continue to boil and stir until the mixture reaches 244°F on a candy thermometer. Remove the pot from the heat, stir in the almonds and transfer this to a bowl to cool for about 15 minutes.
4. Have a bowl of cool water on hand as well as a 2 ½-inch round cookie cutter. Drop small teaspoonfuls of the almond batter onto the prepared baking tray, leaving at least 3 to 4 inches between the spoonfuls to allow for spreading. With wet fingers, press down the almond batter a little. Bake the Florentines for about 12 minutes, until they have flattened and have browned evenly (you may find rotating the pans halfway through baking promotes even browning).
5. Let the Florentines sit for 1-2 minutes to set a little (but not fully). Dip the cookie cutter in the cool water and press it into each cookie to cut a precise circle. Allow the cookies to fully cool and using an offset spatula, lift them off the tray, carefully pulling away the trimmings. Repeat with the remaining batter (and keep the cookie trimming scraps for snacking!)

6. Lay a cocoa transfer sheet, cocoa side up on a baking sheet and set aside.
7. While cookies are cooling, temper chocolate. Place 4 ounces of the bittersweet chocolate in a glass-measuring cup. Microwave on medium power for 45 seconds. Stir. Microwave for another 20 seconds on medium power. Stir again until melted. Check the temperature of the chocolate with the instant read thermometer. You are aiming for between 110-120°F. Do not let it get hotter than that.
8. Add remaining one ounce of chocolate and stir in until melted and chocolate has cooled to 90°F. It is now tempered and ready for brushing onto cooled Florentine cookies.
9. Use a pastry brush to brush an even layer of the chocolate onto the back of each Florentine and place these, chocolate side down, on the cocoa transfer sheet to set. The cookies can be placed very close together on the transfer sheet. Once the sheet is full with cookies, begin with a new tray and transfer sheet. Once the chocolate is set, pop the trays in the fridge for 3-5 minutes, for a final "cure". Peel Florentines off the transfer sheets to reveal a lovely, shiny design. Store at room temperature in an airtight container.

## **Notes**

These are not cookies for novice bakers. They are a bit of work, but they are so beautiful (and delicious), they are worth it. You will need parchment paper or a silicone coated baking sheet liner (like a Silpat sheet), a candy thermometer and an instant read thermometer.

These are very fragile, lacy cookies, so they need a coating of bittersweet chocolate on one side of the finished cookie to give them some strength. It is best to temper the chocolate, so the coating will remain glossy and not melt at room temperature. There's a simple method for tempering in the recipe above.

\*Chocolate transfer sheets are flexible plastic sheets that are coated with a mixture of cocoa butter and food coloring and etched with beautiful designs. Once the cookies are coated with tempered chocolate, you place them, chocolate side down on the transfer sheet to set before peeling off the cookie and revealing the beautiful pattern. There are tons of gorgeous designs available online at Amazon. I also found some great ones at Golda's Kitchen online store.

