

Amaretti Morbidi

As I wrote the words, amaretti morbidi, for these little Italian almond cookies, auto correct, perhaps understandably, changed morbidi to morbidity. However, morbidi in Italian actually means soft and there's nothing to be morbid about when you have some of these delightfully moist almond cookies. Amaretti morbidi are very easy to make but everything is in the timing, too long in the oven and you will end up with amaretti friabile (hard), the crunchy variety of amaretti, better for dunking into your coffee. Italian language lesson aside amaretti are composed of three base ingredients; almond meal, sugar and egg white. There is no requirement for electric mixers, just your hands to do a little kneading and rolling. Amaretti can be flavoured in a variety of ways by the addition of lemon zest, orange zest and cocoa powder, almond essence, vanilla essence, dried sour cherries or the almond meal can be substituted with ground pistachio nuts. Once you get the hang of them you can start to be creative by adding a piece of glacé fruit or an almond on top and even package them as gifts. Just remember 12 minutes is the magic number.

makes approximately 40

- 300 g almond meal
- 250 g caster sugar
- 2 egg whites from larges eggs
- pure icing sugar for dusting

variations

- zest of a lemon
- 3 drops almond essence
- 2 tbs unsweetened cocoa and zest of a small orange
- 1 tsp vanilla essence or paste
- 1 tbs finely minced dried sour cherries

Preheat the oven to 160°C fan-forced. Line baking trays with baking paper or silicon sheets.

In a medium sized bowl mix the almond meal and sugar together, add the zest or other desired flavourings and mix well to distribute evenly. Now you will have to trust me here, there is no need to beat the egg whites, just add them to the bowl and stir and then use your finger tips to knead and bring the dough together. The mixture will seem dry at first but surprisingly will quickly moisten as you begin to work it into a ball of dough. Pinch off a small walnut-sized amount and roll it between your hands into a smooth ball. Continue to roll out the rest into about 40 small balls. Sift the icing sugar into a small bowl to remove any large lumps. Roll one or two amaretti balls at a time in the icing sugar and then roll the ball between your hands to even the coating. Place the ball on the baking tray and gently press down with your thumb to slightly depress the middle. These cookies do not spread on baking, so you only need an amaretti's width in spacing between them. Bake for 12 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

