

Almond Florentines

(adapted from the *Ottolenghi Cookbook*)

- 2 free-range egg whites
- 100g (¾ cup) icing sugar mixture (confectioner's sugar)
- 260g (3 cups) flaked almonds
- splash of Kirsch (optional)
- 70% dark chocolate, tempered (optional)



1. Preheat the oven to 150C (300F) with fan. Line a couple of baking trays with parchment paper, then spray the paper with a little vegetable oil (I used canola oil).

2. Whisk the egg whites gently for about 30 seconds (just to break it up a bit, not to get it whipped up or aerated), then sift in the icing sugar mixture and optional Kirsch and whisk gently to combine. Now using a spatula, carefully stir in the flaked almonds until well coated.

3. Spoon small mounds of the mixture onto the prepared baking trays - you want to end up with about 20 in total. Leave room between each mound. Now, with a wet fork and a wet hand, gently flatten out each mound as thinly as possible without too many gaps between the almond flakes (or they'll fall apart).

4. Bake until the florentines are golden brown - the original instructions recommend 12 minutes, but my three batches took 15, 18 and 14 minutes respectively. All I can suggest is that you keep a close eye on them after the 12 minute mark, as the cooking time will depend greatly on how flat you've managed to get the mixture before baking. What you want to achieve is a well cooked bottom, so once the tops appear done, take the trays out and carefully spatula one over to check.

5. The florentines will harden as they cool on the trays, after which time they can be removed to finish cooling on a wire rack. If you find that some of the bases are still a little undercooked when you start removing them from the parchment, turn those particular florentines upside down and put them back on the trays, and bake for a few more minutes in the oven (I like these really crisp!).

6. The florentines can be left plain, or they can be coated with tempered chocolate. I spread it over the bottom of each cookie, and then place them chocolate side down onto a sheet of parchment to set.

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