

MOCA COOKS: Chocolate-Hazelnut Macau-Style Cookies with Kristina Cho

Thursday, January 27, 2022, from 5:30 P.M. - 7:00 P.M. EST

The event is FREE but advance registration is required on mocanyc.org.

Chocolate-Hazelnut Macau-Style Cookies**MAKES 10**

Delicate almond cookies are popular in Macau. Their texture is unique— tender as tender can be, and prone to crumbling in your hands if you handle them even a bit too forcefully. There's always a few of these cookies on the dessert platter at Chinese New Year, and normally Pau Pau is within eyesight, to shout across the room that you need a napkin before you even think about taking a bite. Despite their fragility, the nutty flavor is irresistible. The traditional Macau almond cookie is made with two flours (almond and mung bean) and shaped in a mooncake mold. To be honest, I can never find mung bean flour, so I use kinako (roasted soybean powder), swapping out one bean flour for another. The substitution still achieves that crumbly texture, and also provides a lot of wonderful peanut buttery flavor. Kinako is easy to find at Asian markets and online.

To take things a few more steps away from tradition, I swapped in hazelnut flour for the usual almond flour, and added a hint of cocoa powder as well. As a result, the cookies taste exactly like the gold foil-wrapped Ferrero Rocher hazelnut chocolates, which are also a quintessential gift for special occasions and holidays in Chinese culture (we can't seem to get enough of confections wrapped in gold). Within one crumbly bite, the cookie tastes of tradition, nostalgia, and modern flavors.

Even with a few modifications, these are still a fragile cookie, especially when you bring a mooncake mold into the picture. The cookie dough is crumbly but should stick together when you press it, sort of like wet sand. The dough will stick to all the intricate carvings of the mooncake mold, unless you liberally dust the mold and dough with confectioners' sugar. Use a little more sugar than you think you'll need—it will melt into the cookies as they bake. Cookies fresh from the oven will still be soft and somewhat sticky; resist the urge to move them or sneak a taste until they have fully cooled and set up. The reward for your patience will be tender, chocolatey, nutty, and intricately stamped cookies.

155g (1 1/4 cups) hazelnut flour

70g (3/4 cup) kinako (roasted soybean flour)

15g (2 tablespoons) cocoa powder

18g (2 tablespoons) cornstarch

75g (1/2 cup) confectioners' sugar, plus more for dusting

1/2 teaspoon coarse salt

70g (6 tablespoons) vegetable shortening, chilled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces

1. Preheat the oven to 300°F and line a large, rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large mixing bowl, whisk to combine the hazelnut flour, kinako, cocoa powder, cornstarch, sugar, and salt. Add the shortening, mixing it into the dry ingredients with a pastry cutter or with your fingertips. The dough should be crumbly, resembling wet sand, but should stick together when pressed.
3. Divide the dough into ten pieces (about the size of golf balls), pressing tightly so it sticks together. Arrange the balls on the lined baking sheet, spacing 3 inches apart. Gently flatten the balls until they are about 1/2 inch thick.
4. Using a pastry brush, generously dust the tops of the balls and the mooncake mold with confectioners' sugar. Place the mold over a dough ball and firmly press down with the plunger. Release pressure to gently release the dough from the mold. Repeat with remaining balls of dough, generously dusting the mold between each.
5. Bake cookies until slightly set around the edges but mostly still soft and a little sticky, about 25 minutes. Transfer the baking sheet to a wire cooling rack and allow the cookies to completely cool and set before serving or moving, 35 to 40 minutes.