

Apricot Almond Meringue Bars

(Maria Theresa Schnitten)

Makes 12 to 15 Bars:

Ingredients

Shortbread Base:

1 cup blanched sliced almonds, toasted and ground
1 cup (2 sticks) of unsalted butter, room temperature
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 eggs yolks
1 cup all purpose flour

Meringue:

2 egg whites
4 tablespoons sugar

Topping:

1 cup apricot preserves, preferably Bonne Maman
1/4 cup blanched sliced almonds, toasted

Preparation

Make the shortbread base: lightly toast 1 1/4 cups of blanched sliced almonds.

Set aside 1/4 cup of the almonds for the topping.

Place the other cup in a mini or regular food processor and pulse until ground.

In a large bowl, use a stand or hand mixer to cream the butter.

Add the sugar and salt and continue whipping until light and fluffy; mix in the vanilla.

Separate two eggs, reserving the whites in a small bowl for the meringue.

Whip the egg yolks into the butter mixture, one at a time.

Stir in flour and ground almonds until just incorporated.

Be careful not to overwork the dough--it will be very soft.

Spread out evenly in an ungreased quarter sheet pan (9" x 13"); it should be about 1/2 inch thick.

Place the pan in the refrigerator to chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Remove the shortbread from the fridge and bake for 20 minutes until golden.

Cool on a rack.

Raise the oven temperature to 400 degrees.

Make the meringue: using cleaned beaters, whip the whites until foamy, then add in the sugar.

Continue whipping until the meringue has soft to firm (but not stiff) peaks.

Spread the apricot jam over the cooled shortbread base.

With a large spoon, add the meringue in dollops.

Use the back of the spoon to create peaks in the meringue.

Sprinkle the reserved toasted almonds evenly over the meringue.

Place back in the oven for 10 to 12 minutes, until golden brown.

Let cool completely.

Use a sharp knife to cut the *schnitten*--you'll have 12 to 15 bars, depending on how big you cut them.

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