

CHOCOLATE HEARTS

(from Christmas Cookies by Lisa Zwirn)

5 oz. good-quality bittersweet chocolate, chopped (I used Baker's Unsweetened since it also avoids soy lecithin)

2 c. (about 8 oz.) finely ground blanched almonds or almond meal (I ground unblanched almonds in my vitamix)

3/4 c. sugar, plus more for rolling out the dough

3 Tbsp. kirsch (or, I used 3 Tbsp. brandy plus 1/2 tsp. almond extract)

Place the chocolate in a food processor and process until finely ground. Add the ground almonds and 3/4 cup sugar and pulse a few times to combine. Add the kirsch and 2 Tbsp. of water and pulse until the dough starts to hold together. If it's too crumbly, add up to one tablespoon more water. When you squeeze the dough it should stick together.

Sprinkle a clean work surface with sugar. Working with half the dough at a time, place it on the sugar and roll it out to about 1/3-inch thickness. Sprinkle the dough with a little sugar if the rolling pin sticks to it. Using a cookie cutter, stamp out hearts. Transfer hearts to a cooling rack. Reroll the scraps with the remaining dough. Let the cookies dry on the rack overnight to firm up.

Store, layered between sheets of wax paper, in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks; or freeze for up to 3 months.

Makes 2-3 dozen.

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