

Food Baking

desserts *without flour*

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JUST AS CRANBERRIES taste good when it's not Thanksgiving and Fourth of July lemonade can soothe the palate year-round, flourless desserts can perform not only at Passover but also long after the seder. They're a category of sweets unto themselves, distinctly different but definitely able to hold their own against their starchier cousins.

Perhaps part of their lack of four-season popularity is semantic. The phrase *flourless dessert* reminds us not of what's in the dish, but of what's missing. Even if it doesn't sound quite as sad as Oliver Twist's bowl of gruel, it also doesn't necessarily set taste buds atingle. And yet flour-less can be more. Whether it's a cake, cookies, a tart, or a dacquoise, a seder dessert can be chockablock with seductive flavors such as dark chocolate, honey, espresso, apricot, berries, coconut, vanilla, or cinnamon. An added benefit of such flavor-forward ingredients is that they make it easier to resist a common urge: overcompensating for lack of flour with too much sugar.

Another problem when we anticipate Passover sweets is that the holiday has sometimes meant tolerating a dessert that, however flavorful, has the density of a brick. The challenge presented to bakers, of course, is avoiding not only flour (except in matzo) but also leaveners. One traditional ingredient is matzo meal, and it gives



PASSOVER AND BEYOND A mixed-berry tart gets a jolt from apricot jam, a vanilla-almond filling, and a coconut crust that is unexpected yet reminiscent of a macaroon.

cookies a crumbly crunch that many people associate with the holiday. Yet there are additional ways to achieve a mouthfeel that's substantial without being overly dense. Whipping egg whites and gently folding them into the batter makes for fluffier cakes and cookies than mixing in whole eggs. Nuts add taste as well as texture.

For those who keep kosher and will be ending their dinner with a dairy-free dessert, the many soy-based stand-ins for milk, cream cheese, and other dairy goods offer more options than ever for baking pareve sweets.

But these dishes are good news for anyone, Jewish or not, who loves a delicious dessert any time of the year.

ALMOND-COCONUT TART

SERVES 8

FOR THE CRUST

- Vegetable-oil cooking spray
- 2 cups unsweetened shredded coconut
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 large egg whites
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt

FOR THE FILLING

- ½ vanilla bean, halved lengthwise
- ½ cup vanilla soy milk
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 2 large egg yolks
- 2 teaspoons arrowroot (see the Guide) or cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons almond paste
- 1 cup almond flour (see the Guide)
- ½ cup soy cream cheese, preferably Tofutti (see the Guide)
- 5 tablespoons apricot jam
- 4 cups assorted berries

1. Make the crust: Preheat oven to 350°. Coat a 9-inch fluted tart pan with cooking spray. Combine remaining ingredients. Press into bottom and up sides of pan.

2. Make the filling: Scrape vanilla seeds into a small saucepan, and add pod. Stir in soy milk and 2 tablespoons sugar, and bring to a boil. Whisk yolks, arrowroot or cornstarch and remaining 2 tablespoons sugar in a bowl. Add hot soy milk in a slow, steady stream, whisking until combined. Return to pan, and whisk over medium heat until thickened, about 2 minutes. Discard vanilla pod.

3. Beat milk mixture and almond paste with a mixer on medium speed for 5 minutes. Beat in almond flour and cream cheese. Spread into tart crust. Bake for 15 minutes. Cover edges with parchment, then foil. Bake until set, 15 to 25 minutes more. Let cool completely in pan on a rack. Unmold. Spread jam evenly over the tart. Arrange berries on top.



WHY IS THIS BITE DIFFERENT? The secret to making unleavened chocolate cookies that are chewy and light lies in the technique. Egg whites, beaten until fluffy, are folded into the chocolate batter to produce the distinctive texture. Chocolate chips are added last.

CHOCOLATE PASSOVER COOKIES

MAKES 14

- ½ stick (4 tablespoons) unsalted butter or nondairy margarine, room temperature
- ¾ cup packed light-brown sugar
- 2 large egg yolks
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 8 ounces bittersweet chocolate, melted
- ½ cup matzo meal
- ¼ teaspoon coarse salt
- 4 large egg whites
- 8 ounces semisweet chocolate chips

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Beat butter or margarine and sugar with a mixer on

medium-high speed until fluffy. Beat in egg yolks and vanilla. Add chocolate, matzo meal, and salt. Beat until mixture just comes together. (It should be thick.)

2. In a clean bowl and with a whisk attachment, beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Gently fold into chocolate mixture. Add chocolate chips, and stir. Let stand 15 minutes.

3. Scoop 2-inch balls onto a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake until set, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool on sheet on a wire rack for 2 minutes. Transfer cookies to rack, and let cool completely.



HINT OF COFFEE Flourless chocolate cake is a crumbly and dense classic everyone loves. This version gets subtle coffee flavor from espresso powder used in the batter and in a rich, creamy dark-chocolate glaze served at the table.

CHOCOLATE CAKE WITH ESPRESSO GLAZE

SERVES 8

FOR THE CAKE

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter or nondairy margarine, plus more for pan
- 6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 6 large eggs, separated, at room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons instant espresso powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon coarse salt
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

FOR THE GLAZE

- 3 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons unsalted butter or nondairy margarine
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream or plain soy milk
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon instant espresso powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon coarse salt

1. Make the cake: Preheat oven to 350°. Butter bottom of a 9-inch springform pan, and line with parchment cut to fit. Melt butter and chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water.
2. With a mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg yolks with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar until thick and pale, about 3 minutes. Add espresso and salt, and beat for 1 minute. Add vanilla and chocolate mixture, and beat for 1 minute.
3. In a clean bowl and with a whisk attachment, beat egg whites until foamy. Slowly add remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar, beating until stiff peaks form. Fold whites into chocolate mixture in 3 additions. Pour batter into prepared pan.
4. Bake until set, 40 to 45 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a rack. Remove pan sides. Carefully lift cake with a spatula, and remove parchment.
5. Make the glaze: Place chocolate, butter, and vanilla in a bowl. Bring remaining ingredients to a boil, stirring, and pour over chocolate mixture. Whisk until smooth. Serve glaze warm with cake.

SEE GUIDE FOR SOURCES

WALNUT DACQUOISES WITH HONEY-WALNUT ICE CREAM

SERVES 8

FOR THE ICE CREAM

- 3 ounces chopped walnuts (1 cup)
- 3 tablespoons honey
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 quart vanilla ice cream or nondairy ice cream or sorbet, slightly softened

FOR THE WALNUT MERINGUES

- 8 ounces chopped walnuts (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups)
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon coarse salt
- 4 large egg whites
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cream of tartar

FOR THE APPLES

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey
- $\frac{1}{2}$ stick (4 tablespoons) unsalted butter or nondairy margarine
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon coarse salt
- 3 Fuji apples, peeled, quartered, cored, and cut into $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick slices

1. Make the ice cream: Preheat oven to 350°. Toss walnuts with honey and salt on a parchment-lined baking sheet, and spread evenly. Bake, stirring every 3 minutes, until nuts are toasted and crisp, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool.

2. Fold honeyed walnuts into ice cream or sorbet in a bowl. Freeze until just firm, at least 1 hour (or up to 3 days; soften slightly before serving.)

3. Make the meringues: Raise oven temperature to 375°. Pulse walnuts, sugar, cinnamon, and salt in a food processor until nuts are finely ground.

4. With a mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg whites with cream of tartar until stiff peaks form. Fold walnut mixture into whites in 2 additions.

5. Using a pastry bag fitted with a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch plain pastry tip (such as Ateco #806), pipe walnut mixture into sixteen 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -



WARM, COOL, HONEYED In these individual desserts, disks of meringue are flavored with a mix of walnuts and cinnamon and then used to sandwich ice cream. A warm sauce of honey and cooked apples blends in with a scoop of vanilla as it melts.

inch rounds on parchment-lined baking sheets, spacing them 1 inch apart.

6. Bake, rotating sheets halfway through, until deep gold, 14 to 16 minutes. Let cool completely on sheets on a wire rack. (Meringues can be stored in an airtight container for up to 2 days.)

7. Make the apples: Bring honey to a boil in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat. Cook until amber and fragrant, about 4 minutes. Add butter or

margarine and salt, reduce heat to medium, and swirl pan until butter melts. Add apples, and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 5 minutes. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes.

8. Assemble dacquoises: Place 1 meringue, flat side up, in each dish. Top with 1 scoop of ice cream and some of the apple slices. Drizzle with sauce from pan. Top with remaining meringue, shiny side up. Serve immediately.