

# amelia saltsman FOOD

## SALTED ALMOND AND CHOCOLATE MERINGUES WITH MATZAH SHARDS



*QUARANTINE KITCHEN NOTE: To make this even easier, skip the matzah shard portion of the recipe, and add up to 1/2 cup extra nuts or shredded coconut. If you have unsalted nuts, sprinkle a little finishing or kosher salt on the meringues right before you put them in the oven. Save the yolks to make egg drop noodles for chicken soup (see SJK page 45).*

*Makes 30 to 36 2-inch meringues*

Salty-sweet matzah shards add the sort of addictive crunch that crisped rice cereal gives to a chocolate bar. If you are gluten-free, skip the matzah, or replace it with an equal amount of unsweetened flaked coconut. Serve these on your grandmother's prettiest cut-glass tray alongside a bowl of the season's first strawberries or a bowl of fragrant mandarins. Use fully, rather than "lightly," salted nuts to achieve the right balance of salty and sweet. Avocado and almond oils are good nondairy choices here.

2 sheets matzah

3 tablespoons butter, melted, or avocado or almond oil

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup (150 g) sugar

½ teaspoon fleur de sel  
1 cup (135 g) salted roasted almonds, hazelnuts, or pecans, coarsely chopped  
4 ounces (115 g) bittersweet chocolate (70%), coarsely chopped  
3 egg whites, at room temperature  
Pinch of kosher or sea salt

Position racks in middle and upper third of oven. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Place the matzah sheets on a baking sheet. Brush both sides of each sheet with the butter and sprinkle the tops with 1 tablespoon of the sugar and the fleur de sel.

Toast the matzahs in the oven until crisped and lightly browned, about 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and reduce the oven temperature to 200°F (95°C). When the matzahs are cool, break them into 1- to 2-inch (2.5- to 5-cm) pieces no wider than 1 inch (2.5 cm). In a small bowl, toss together the almonds, chocolate, and 3 tablespoons of the sugar.

Line 2 sheet pans with parchment paper or with foil, shiny side down. Place the egg whites in an impeccably clean bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Beat on medium-high speed until thickened and opaque. Increase the speed to high and continue to beat, adding the salt and the remaining ½ cup (100 g) sugar over a couple of minutes until the whites are very stiff and have developed a sheen.

Using a large rubber spatula, gently fold the chocolate-almond mixture into the egg whites. Fold in the matzah shards and any crumbs. For each meringue, drop about 2 tablespoons of the batter onto the prepared pans, spacing them 1 to 2 inches (2.5 to 5 cm) apart. Verticality is good here.

Bake the meringues for 1½ hours, switching the pans top to bottom and front to back halfway through the baking to ensure the meringues bake evenly. Remove a meringue from the oven and allow it to cool. If it is dry and crisp throughout, turn off the oven. If it is still chewy, bake for another 15 to 30 minutes, and test again. Once the meringues are done, turn off the oven and leave the meringues in the oven until completely cool and crisp, 2 to 3 hours or up to overnight.

Carefully peel off the meringues from the parchment. They will keep in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week.

**The overnight way:** There's a favorite version of meringue cookies that has been floating around for decades, that I learned from my friend, Jane Bard. Prepare meringues as above but leave the oven at 350°F (180°C). Turn off the oven as soon as you put in the meringues. Leave them untouched for at least 4 hours, or overnight. Test for crispness; if necessary, return meringues to a 200°F (95°C)-oven until done as above.

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