

## NUTS FOR CHOCOLATE-COVERED ALMONDS!

Looking for a healthy snack that feels indulgent? Chocolate-covered almonds are a great option! Almonds and chocolate have health benefits such as lowering blood sugar, blood pressure, cholesterol, and lower hunger levels for people who consume them. The combination of these factors equates to a lower risk for heart disease.

Chocolate-covered almonds can also help reduce inflammation and provide healthy fat and fiber. This does not mean people can eat unlimited amounts; moderation is still very important.

Almonds provide the “good” unsaturated fat. They also contain plant protein, fiber, magnesium, and are cholesterol-free. The recommended daily serving of almonds is about 23, or about a handful. Choosing chocolate-covered almonds over other crunchy foods such as chips, candy, or cookies is almost always the healthier option.

Almond trees originated in the Mediterranean and originally grew in the wild. Now they are grown in orchards. In the United States, almonds are produced in California. It is the only place in North America where almonds are grown commercially. The almond nut that we eat is the seed from a fruit called a drupe, which has an inedible outer shell and hull. The leftover shells and hulls are used for livestock feed and bedding.

Chocolate also has natural origins and has been around for approximately 4,000 years. Originally from Central America, chocolate is made from cacao beans. To make chocolate, pods are harvested from the cacao trees, and the beans are removed, fermented, and dried. Then the beans are roasted and ground, creating a cocoa powder. The powder produced is then sweetened, re-ground, and molded while it solidifies. Ancient civilizations made drinks with cacao beans, water, spices, and honey. The chocolate we eat today is far more processed, but depending on the type of chocolate, it goes through different steps during processing and has varied nutritional content.

Dark chocolate contains from 35 to 85 percent cocoa versus milk chocolate that generally has around 10 percent cocoa in addition to powdered milk and sugar. Milk chocolate is sweeter, but dark chocolate has lower sugar content. Some people find dark chocolate to be bitter, while others enjoy the deeper flavor. Mass-produced chocolate of today often contains additives like butter and vegetable fats.

Try making homemade chocolate-covered almonds to create the perfect recipe for your taste buds.

### **Chocolate Covered Almonds**

Recipe from <https://www.shelovesbiscotti.com/chocolate-covered-almonds/>

Servings 16 Tablespoons

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 cup almonds whole, unsalted, and roasted if desired
- 14 ounces dark chocolate (70% cacao)

## Instructions

1. Line a standard baking sheet with parchment paper. Set aside.
2. Break the dark chocolate into little pieces and place it in a heatproof bowl.
3. Set the bowl of chocolate over a pot of water. Ensure water does not touch the bottom of the bowl.
4. Bring a pot of water to a simmer.
5. When chocolate is *almost* completely melted, remove from heat and stir to finish melting.
6. Combine and stir to thoroughly coat the almonds with the melted chocolate.
7. Using 2 forks, pick up one almond at a time and transfer to the parchment-lined baking sheet. Remove as much excess chocolate as possible.
8. Continue in this manner until all the almonds have been transferred. Separate the nuts or they will stick together.
9. Allow the nuts to air dry for at least one hour. Remove the nuts and place in an airtight jar. They will keep at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

## Notes

- **Always use fresh and unsalted almonds.** Whole natural almonds and nothing else. Use a high-quality nut to get a high-quality final product.
- **As an option, sprinkle with sea salt.** If you like the sweet and salty combination of flavors, lightly sprinkle some sea salt on the nuts before the chocolate hardens.

**Can any chocolate be used?** Yes. Bittersweet, semi-sweet, or milk chocolate can be used to make this chocolate snack.

**Can I use chocolate chips?** Yes, but the final product has the potential to have streaks. Still delicious but not as pretty.

**Why did my melted chocolate turn white?** Overheating the chocolate and/or using chocolate with excess moisture (previously frozen/cold chocolate) are potential causes.

**Can I make chocolate nut clusters?** Yes. Place 3-4 chocolate almonds piled together on the parchment paper.

**Can I use roasted almonds?** Yes, if you have the time, chocolate-covered roasted almonds provide a superior flavor with a crunch.

**How do I roast almonds?** Scatter the whole almonds in a small roasting pan and place in a preheated 350°F oven for about 6-8 minutes. Shake the pan occasionally to prevent scorching the nuts.

**How do I store these chocolates?** Place in an airtight container and store at room temperature for about 2 weeks.

(Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture; [www.everydayhealth.com](http://www.everydayhealth.com); [www.hsph.harvard.edu](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu); [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com))