

ALMOND FLOUR: PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PROFESSIONALS

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Almonds are among the most widely used nuts in baking worldwide, and almond flour has become a key ingredient across everything from artisan pastries to large-scale production. Throughout my career, I've turned to almond flour for its versatility and the unique qualities it brings, especially its ability to add tenderness, richness, and flavor while serving a functional role in recipes.

With more than twenty years of experience in professional kitchens and baking education, I've worked closely with brands and teams to develop plant-based, gluten-free, allergen-conscious, and functionally focused recipes that use almond flour.

Almond flour is a versatile ingredient with a lot to offer. The insights provided here are grounded in hands-on experience and are intended to help professionals unlock the potential of almond flour in their baking.

WHY ALMOND FLOUR?

Almond flour contributes moisture and richness to baked goods and offers a fine, tender crumb, making it ideal for cookies, cakes, and tea breads. Its mild, nutty flavor complements both sweet and savory applications and adds nutritional value, including protein, fiber, good fats, and calcium.

Functionally, almond flour supports a wide range of product claims: gluten-free, vegan, grain-free, keto, paleo, plant-based, organic, and Non-GMO Project Verified. The naturally occurring fat in almond flour helps retain moisture, which can improve texture and extend shelf life—particularly in packaged products.

While it does not form the same elastic network as wheat flour, almond flour can be used successfully in many different applications by understanding how it interacts with other ingredients.



TYPES OF ALMOND FLOUR

Almond flours are all made by grinding almonds into a fine powder. Choosing the right type of almond flour is key to achieving the desired texture and appearance in a finished product:

- **Blanched Almond Flour:** Made from almonds with skins removed and ground to a fine texture, this is the most commonly used type in baking. It provides a smooth, neutral base, making it the essential choice for iconic products like macarons and tea cakes.
- **Natural Almond Flour:** Made from almonds with skins, this flour is slightly more textured and has a deeper, nuttier flavor. I often blend 20–30% natural almond flour with blanched almond flour to introduce depth and visual texture to my recipes. Natural almond flour works well in baked goods such as cookies, quick breads, and muffins, where its rich color and robust flavor enhance the overall look and taste.
- **Almond Meal:** Typically coarser than natural almond flour, almond meal also contains the skins and is best used in applications where a more pronounced texture is desired. It's ideal for crumble toppings, nut-based shortbread cookies, and other recipes where a heartier bite is preferred.
- **Defatted Almond Flour:** A relatively new almond ingredient, this flour is created by pressing out some of the oil from the almonds before grinding. The result is a lighter, drier flour with a more neutral flavor. Due to its lower fat content, it behaves differently in batters and doughs, making it useful in specific applications such as low-fat cakes, protein bars, and snack bites, where fat management is critical.

ALMOND FLOUR IN BAKING

- **Moisture and Fat:** Almond flour's fat content provides moisture and contributes to a soft, tender crumb. This can benefit products prone to drying, such as gluten-free baked goods.
- **Texture and Structure:** Without gluten, almond flour yields a more delicate texture with less elasticity. In high concentrations, it works best in products where a soft crumb is desirable. For items requiring more structure, combining almond flour with higher-protein flours or starches can help.
- **Color and Browning:** Almond flour browns faster than many other flours due to its natural oils and low starch content. In gluten-free formulas, this is especially valuable, adding warmth and color that many starch-based blends lack.
- **Flavor:** Almond flour's subtle sweetness and nutty character enhance complexity in both sweet and savory items. I often reduce added sugars by 10–15% when using almond flour without compromising flavor.
- **Shelf Life:** By retaining moisture and fat, almond flour can help extend the shelf life of baked goods. This makes it especially useful in retail or manufacturing environments where freshness over time is critical.



WORKING WITH ALMOND FLOUR

- **Ratios and Substitutions:** In recipes with lower flour content, such as brownies or sponge cakes, you can often replace a large portion of the flour with almond flour. I typically start with 80–90 grams of almond flour for every 100 grams of wheat flour and adjust based on the texture of the batter or dough.

For more structured items like muffins or quick breads, I would begin by replacing 25–30% of the wheat flour with almond flour. If the goal is a gluten-free product, I replace the remaining flour with a blend of starches, gluten-free flours, and xanthan gum to provide structure. Alternatively, you can start by blending 30% almond flour with a commercial gluten-free flour mix.

When adapting a recipe to be gluten-free, adjustments to hydration and leavening may be necessary, depending on the specific characteristics of the flours, starches, and binders being used.

Because almond flour does not provide elasticity, structure-building ingredients such as eggs, egg whites, psyllium husk, or

xanthan gum are helpful. These elements improve cohesion and allow the product to rise and hold its shape during baking.

- **Fat and Sugar Adjustments:** In practice, dense or oily textures are usually the result of excess added fat, not almond flour itself. If a reduction in fat is desired, you can reduce added fats starting at 10%. If you simply want to balance the texture, you can slightly increase starches or flours. Almond flour's natural sweetness can also allow for slight reductions in sugar.
- **Nutritional Value:** Almond flour adds nutritional benefits that support the development of better-for-you indulgent baked goods. A one-ounce (28 g) serving of almonds contains approximately 6 grams of protein, 4 grams of fiber, 13 grams of unsaturated fat, and only 1 gram of saturated fat (USDA data). These attributes contribute to almond flour's ability to enhance the protein content, fiber, and good fat profile of baked products, making it a valuable ingredient for formulations focused on nutrition as well as flavor and texture.

Through years of working with almond flour across a range of settings, I have found it to be a versatile ingredient that delivers both flavor and functionality.

Used with intention, it enhances texture, adds complexity, and contributes to longer shelf life. Its nutritional value and compatibility with gluten-free and grain-free formulations make it especially useful for professionals developing products that align with the preferences and dietary needs of today's consumers.

