



SIS GESSNER'S MANDEL BREAD

My husband's mother, Florence, or "Sis" Gessner, was a great baker who learned her craft working at her father's Pittsburgh bakery from 1930 until 1939, the year she married the accountant who kept the bakery's books. We have inherited all their recipes. This is one of the simplest—and most delicious.

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- 2¾ cups all-purpose flour
 - 1 cup granulated sugar
 - 1 cup ground almonds (see Note)
 - ¾ cup canola oil
 - 3 large eggs
 - 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 - 1 teaspoon pure almond extract

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper or silicone pan liners.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour, sugar, and ground almonds. In a separate, smaller bowl or large measuring cup, combine the oil, eggs, and vanilla and almond extracts, then stir the liquid mixture into the flour mixture until it forms a thick, doughlike batter. Alternatively, this can be done in a food processor or stand mixer with dough attachment. With wet hands, form the dough into two logs about 11½" long, then flatten and shape them so they are about 2" wide and about ½" high.

Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until tops are light golden. Remove cookie sheet from oven, cut each log into approximately ¼" to ½" slices, then place the slices flat-side down on cookie sheet. Reduce oven temperature to 300°F, return mandel bread to oven and bake for about 20 minutes, or until dry and golden.

Makes about 40 mandels.

NOTE: I like to toast my almonds before grinding them. If you have extra ground almonds, you can roll the logs in them or use them to coat the bottom of the pan. I have successfully added mini chocolate chips, chocolate-covered cherries, poppy seeds, and cinnamon chips to the batter. Sometimes, after slicing the logs, I sprinkle the individual slices with cinnamon sugar.