



Cantucci (Tuscany)

Cantucci are small, almond-flavoured Italian cookies, traditionally made without yeast or fat and baked twice for a satisfyingly crisp bite.

Outside Italy, these cookies are often called “*biscotti*”, but in Italian, *biscotti* simply means “cookies”. In Italy, this particular kind is known as *cantucci*, or *cantuccini*— the diminutive form, meaning “little cantucci”. The two terms are often used interchangeably— *cantucci* usually refers to the traditional almond version, while *cantuccini* can also describe smaller or more modern varieties made with chocolate, pistachios, or dried fruit.

Cantucci have ancient origins— early versions were enjoyed in Roman times, but the recipe we know today was perfected in the Renaissance city of Prato, in Tuscany. Local bakers rediscovered the double-baking technique that made the cookies wonderfully dry and long-lasting, ideal for keeping through the winter months. Over time, *Cantucci di Prato* became a Tuscan delicacy, celebrated for their simplicity and their perfect pairing with *Vin Santo*, a sweet dessert wine.

Even today, in villages across Tuscany, families serve a plate of cantucci at the end of a meal. The ritual is simple but meaningful: dip the cookie in *Vin Santo*, wait a moment for it to soften, and enjoy a bite that tastes like warmth, tradition, and home.

Recipe— Cantucci

About 30 cookies

Ingredients

300 g / 10 oz / 1¼ cup

180 g / 6 oz / ½ cup

2 large

180 g / 6 oz / ½ cup

1 tsp

1 pinch

zest of 1 small lemon or

½ tsp almond extract (optional)

all-purpose flour

granulated sugar

eggs +1 yolk for brushing

whole almonds (unpeeled, lightly toasted)

baking powder

salt

Method

- [1] **Preheat oven**— to 180°C / 350°F & line a large baking tray with parchment paper.
- [2] **Toast the almonds**— spread almonds on a baking tray and toast in the oven for about 8 minutes, until fragrant. Let cool slightly.
- [3] **Prepare the dough**— In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, & salt. Add the toasted almonds and mix well. Make a well in the center, add the eggs (and lemon zest or extract if using), and stir until a dough forms. The dough should be firm but slightly sticky— knead briefly by hand if needed.
- [4] **Shape the logs**— divide the dough in half. On a floured surface, roll each portion into a log about 4 cm / 1.5 in wide and 25 cm / 10 in long. Place both logs on the tray, leaving space between them.
- [5] **Brush & bake**— lightly brush the tops with the beaten egg yolk for a golden finish. Bake for 25–30 minutes, until lightly golden and firm to the touch.
- [6] **Slice**— remove from the oven and let rest for 10 minutes: just until cool enough to handle. Using a serrated knife, slice diagonally into cookies about 1–1.5 cm / ¾–5⁄8 in thick.
- [7] **Second bake for crunch**— bake for another 10 minutes per side at 170°C / 340°F until dry and crisp but not dark.
- [8] **Cool & store**— transfer to a rack to cool completely. Store in an airtight tin— they'll keep beautifully for several weeks.

Recipe— Cantucci, cont.

Tips & Variations

- Traditionally enjoyed with [Vin Santo](#), Tuscany's amber-hued dessert wine, *cantucci* are meant to be dipped— the brief soak softens the cookie slightly and releases the almond aroma.
- They also pair beautifully with espresso, cappuccino, or a cup of thick, Italian hot chocolate.