

BARBARA BRYANT is president of Watermark, Ltd. and the coauthor of *The Bryant Family Vineyard Cookbook*. She currently serves as a trustee of the Trinity Forum and is a board member of the African Health and Hospital Foundation. The mother of three children, her hobbies include gardening, cooking, painting, art, and antiques. She lives in St. Louis and Palm Beach.

BETSY FENTRESS is a writer and editor. She is the coauthor of *The Bryant Family Vineyard Cookbook* and a graduate of the Missouri School of Journalism. Betsy lives in St. Louis with her husband, Sam, and family. She is an avid bread baker.

LYNDA BALSLEV is an award-winning food writer and recipe developer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has studied at Le Cordon Bleu Ecole de Cuisine in Paris, and has worked in Europe and the United States as a caterer, cooking instructor, and as food editor of the Danish magazine *Sphere*. A regular contributor to NPR's *Kitchen Window*, she is the author of the blog TasteFood, and her work has appeared in many publications, including *Gourmet Live*, the *New York Times Diners Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

ROBERT HOLMES is widely acknowledged as one of the world's finest travel and food photographers. His photographs have appeared in virtually every major travel magazine. His more than thirty books include the *Heirloom Tomato Cookbook*, *Cooking with the Seasons at Rancho La Puerta*, *A Passion for Pinot*, *Sharing the Vineyard Table*, and *The Walnut Cookbook*.

Jacket designed by Jennifer Barry Design, Farifax, California
Jacket photography by Robert Holmes



"Barbara Bryant shares her knowledge and passion for almonds in such a contagious way through these mouthwatering recipes and informative essays, all inspired by cultures around the world. This book does a wonderful job of connecting us to the land and the people responsible for this amazing cornerstone of healthy eating."

—MICHAEL ANTHONY, executive chef/partner, Gramercy Tavern

"I have to stop myself from putting almonds in too many dishes on our menus. This book has tempted me to almonds even more. From velvety gazpacho to chocolate-amaretto torte, almonds have the flavor and texture to make you go nuts over an array of dishes."

—STEPHANIE IZARD, executive chef/co-owner, Girl & the Goat and Little Goat, James Beard Award winner, and author of *Girl in the Kitchen*

"Almonds are my daily pleasure at breakfast and one of the most versatile supporting ingredients to a sweet or savory preparation. This book is very comprehensive and the recipes are simple and creative and show that the almond is the star!"

—DANIEL BOULUD, chef/restaurateur

"Almonds are an ancient food. They are not only delicious, they are extremely versatile, and are a clever food full of nutrients. I embrace and love them, as the authors of this book clearly do."

—URSULA FERRIGNO, chef, teacher, and author of *The New Family Bread Book*

Cookbook



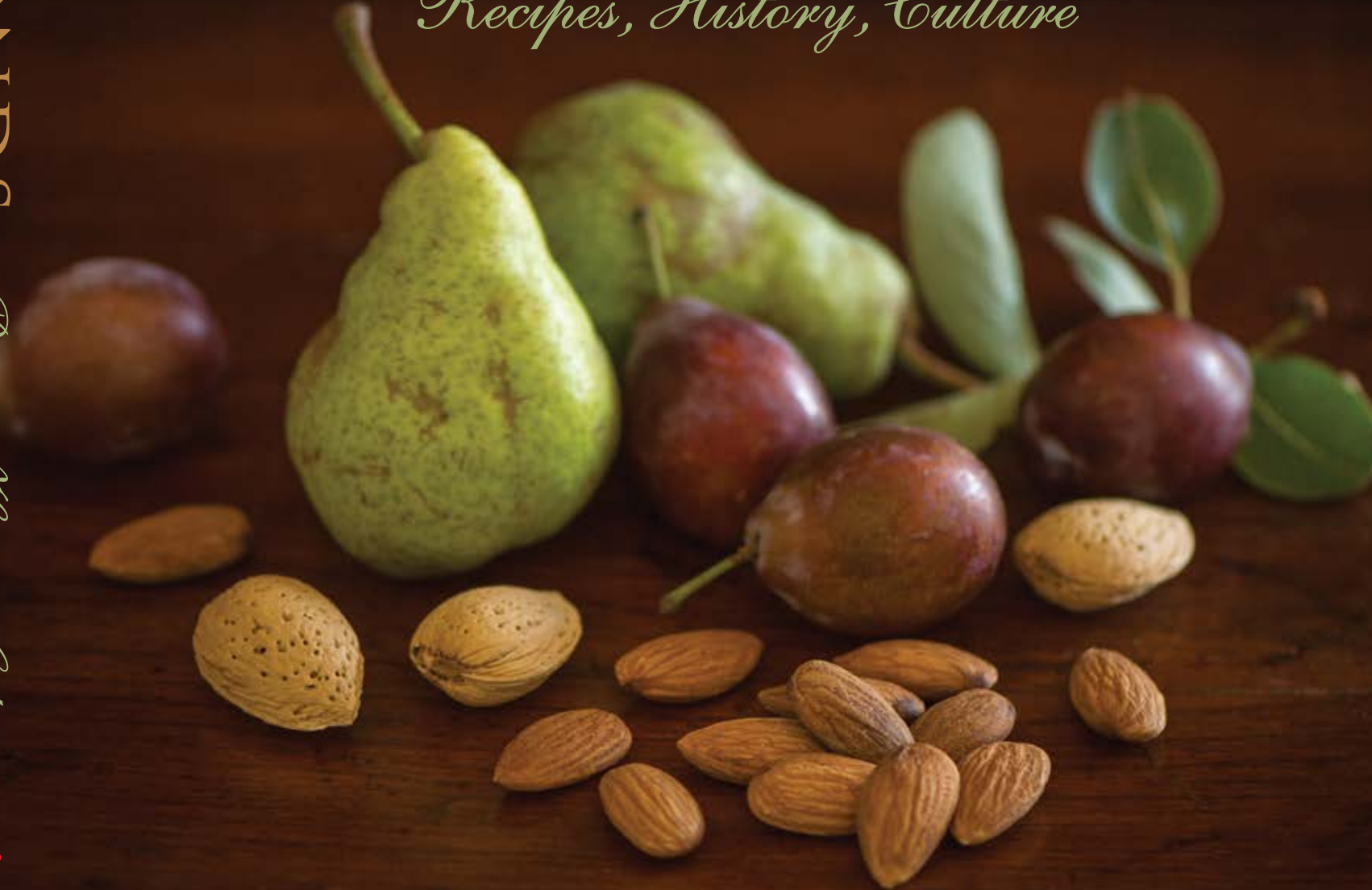
ALMONDS

Recipes, History, Culture
BRYANT • FENTRESS • BALSLEV



ALMONDS

Recipes, History, Culture



BARBARA BRYANT & BETSY FENTRESS • RECIPES BY LYNDA BALSLEV

The almond, nature's most versatile and healthful nut, has been celebrated by civilizations since antiquity. Almonds have appeared in both ancient and modern cuisines, art, literature, poetry, and sacred texts for thousands of years, both as food and as symbols of fertility, honor, beauty and love. Today, health and nutrition experts laud the many benefits of almonds, which have been elevated to the status of a "superfood."

In *Almonds: Recipes, History, Culture*, authors Barbara Bryant and Betsy Fentress detail the intriguing history of the almond, from its origins in Asia and Mesopotamia to its cultivation in Egypt, Italy, and eventually California, while food writer Lynda Balslev offers over 60 recipes featuring the cuisines of China, India, Lebanon, France, Italy, Mexico, the United States, and more. And celebrated food writers and chefs share ethnic customs and traditions and how they use almonds in their own kitchens.

You'll find almonds here in every form: green, blanched, ground, roasted, slivered, and sliced. This cookbook brings the world to your table with classic almond recipes as well as almond-inspired variations on beloved dishes. The recipes range from starters and snacks, such as Burnt Sugar Almonds and Almond Chai with Dates and Honey, to salads and vegetable sides like Asian Citrus and Almond Slaw and Almond and Saffron Rice Pilaf, to heartier entrées including Crispy Oven-Fried Chicken and Pulled Pork with Red Mole. Almonds add depth and body to classic sauces such as pesto, tapenade, and romesco, and the delicate yet aromatic flavor of almonds is put to perhaps its ultimate use in glorious desserts like Chocolate Amaretto Torte and Almond Granita with Raspberries.

Filled with over 125 color photographs and art reproductions from the world's most famous museums, *Almonds: Recipes, History, Culture* is a beautiful book that combines an illustrated history with a fabulous collection of global recipes.



ALMONDS IN PROVENCE

Almonds have long been cultivated in Provence and figure large in the pastry and sauces of the region as well as in holiday traditions. *Casse-dents*, literally “teeth-breakers,” hard biscuits similar to biscotti, are still made from scratch in traditional homes in Provence, even though the biscuits are available at nearly any village *pâtisserie*. Tasting more of nuts than sugar, *casse-dents* are served for dipping into sweet wine as an aperitif. A combination of bitter and sweet almonds flavors the *crème pâtisserie* that fills sweet pastries. Ground almonds are used to thicken sauces and tapenades, while toasted slivered almonds are sprinkled over the classic dish *truite aux amandes*.

Almonds are also an essential ingredient in the traditional thirteen desserts served on Christmas Eve in Provence. They are one of the *quatre mendians*, or four beggars (walnuts or hazelnuts, raisins, dried figs, and almonds, which represent the four mendicant monastic orders: Dominicans, Augustinians, Franciscans, and Carmelites) and are served mixed together on a plate or scattered on the table. *Nougat aux noix*, made with almonds and honey, is another essential component of the meal. Although the acreage of the nut in Provence is declining, the traditional uses of almonds remain embedded in the culture of the region.

—GEORGEANNE BRENNAN, author of
The Food and Flavors of Haute Provence
and *Savoring France*





Provençal Tuna Salad with Almonds, Olives, and Capers in Lettuce Cups

Classic tuna salad gets a fresh treatment in this robust chopped salad full of flavors from the south of France. Olive oil and lemon replace mayonnaise, while celery is joined by almonds, olives, and capers. Serve in lettuce cups as a healthful appetizer, or spread on crostini or bruschetta.

- 2 (6-ounce) cans oil-packed tuna, drained
- 2 ribs celery, cut into ¼-inch dice
- 1 small red bell pepper, seeded and deveined, cut into ¼-inch dice
- ½ small red onion, finely chopped, about ½ cup
- ¼ cup pitted kalamata olives, sliced
- ¼ cup (1 ounce) raw almonds, toasted (see page 41) and coarsely chopped
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 tablespoon capers, drained and rinsed

- 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Dash of Tabasco sauce
- ½ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, chopped
- 12 Boston lettuce leaves or large Little Gem leaves

Combine all of the ingredients except the parsley and lettuce in a large bowl. Toss to thoroughly combine. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Fold in the parsley.

Divide the lettuce leaves among individual salad plates or arrange together on a large serving platter. Divide the tuna mixture among the lettuce leaves. Drizzle with a little olive oil and serve.

Variation: Omit the lettuce leaves and spread the tuna salad on crostini or bruschetta.

MAKES 12 LETTUCE CUPS: SERVES 4 TO 6 AS A FIRST COURSE



Les Tres Riches Heures, Janvier, Limbourg Brothers, c. 1414



Soba Noodles with Spicy Almond Butter Sauce

Soba, Japanese noodles made of buckwheat flour, are typically served in cold noodle salads or warm broth. Their hearty, satisfying flavor stands up well to spices and aromatics such as chile and garlic. Almonds replace peanuts in this popular preparation. Sriracha, a Thai hot sauce, can be found in most supermarkets.

ALMOND BUTTER SAUCE

- ¼ cup almond butter (see page 54)
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons hot sauce, such as Sriracha
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 1 small clove garlic, minced

NOODLES

- 8 ounces soba noodles
- 4 green onions, white and green parts, thinly sliced
- 1 large carrot, peeled and cut into matchsticks
- 1 red jalapeño or serrano chile, seeded and minced

- ½ English cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into matchsticks
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- ¼ cup (1 ounce) slivered almonds
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds, toasted (see page 68)

To make the sauce, whisk all the ingredients together in a small bowl; set aside.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil over high heat. Add the noodles and cook, stirring occasionally, until al dente, about 5 minutes. Drain and rinse in cold water. Drain again and place in a large serving bowl.

Pour the sauce over the noodles. Add the green onions, carrot, chile, cucumber, cilantro, and almonds. Toss until all of the ingredients are coated. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and serve at room temperature.

SERVES 4



Toasted Almond and Orange Biscotti with Golden Raisins

The Italian word biscotti translates to “twice” (bis) “cooked” (cotto), and describes the method for baking these dry and crisp Roman cookies, which are perfect for dunking in coffee or dessert wine. Biscotti usually include almonds, but many variations with chocolate and dried fruit abound. This version uses golden raisins and orange zest, resulting in a sweet and festive cookie.



A Dessert, Raphaelle Peale, 1814

- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 large egg
- 1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2¼ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup (3 ounces) raw almonds, toasted (see page 41) and chopped
- ½ cup golden raisins

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Cream the sugar and butter together on medium-high speed in a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Add the egg, zest, vanilla, and cinnamon and mix to combine on medium speed. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a medium bowl. Stir with a whisk to combine. Add to the egg mixture and mix on medium-low speed until combined. Stir in the almonds and raisins.

Divide the dough in half. Form each into a log and flatten to a width of 2 inches. Arrange each log on the prepared baking sheet. Bake until light golden and set, about 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool for 20 minutes.

Using a serrated knife, cut into ¾-inch slices. Arrange the slices, cut side down, on the same baking sheet. Return to the oven and bake until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Remove and let cool completely on the racks. Biscotti may be stored in an airtight container for up to 4 days.

MAKES 24 BISCOTTI



ALMONDS AND BEES

It's no small feat to pollinate more than 800,000 acres of almonds. But that is what needs to happen every year to sustain 80 percent of the world's almond production in California. The vast number of almond orchards between Red Bluff and Bakersfield that need pollinating over a twenty-two-day period is too big of a job for local bees. The importation of more than half of all the honeybees in the United States is necessary to get the job done.

That's where the bee brokers come in. Each year beginning in mid-January, they start brokering bee rentals between almond growers and beekeepers for the February pollination season. Nearly 1.5 million hives—or 40 billion bees, most of them driven cross-country on the backs of semi-trucks—are required for the job. When brokers first started in 1973, hives were rented to almond growers at about \$10 a hive. Today, prices are as high as \$200 per colony.

Twenty thousand other species of bees pollinate plants, at do moths, wasps, butterflies, birds, and bats. But honeybees are one of the few pollinators that live socially, making them portable companions for humans.

The mechanics of pollination have remained the same throughout the years. Though almond growers use sophisticated agricultural technology, the harvest still relies on a simple visit from the bees. Ironically, the honey that the bees make from almond blossoms is amazingly bitter.

In recent years, colony collapse disorder has made the business of growing almonds even more precarious. It has destroyed colonies at a rate of about 30 percent a year, and before that losses were about 15 percent a year from pests and diseases. In recent years, the Almond Board of California has invested \$1.4 million into bee health research and looked into alternatives to reduce the growers' reliance on the volatile honeybee population.

One of its alternatives is the so-called "self-compatible" almond tree, which is able to set nuts using pollen transferred among its own flowers and so requires fewer bees. Research teams are also looking into a solitary species of bees called blue orchard, which could supplement the honeybee workforce. The trade group is also recommending growers to plant forage that will help sustain the bees before and after pollination. Conservationists would like to see flowers planted in and around the almond groves, perhaps as hedgerows, to attract a bee population during other parts of the year. Increasing the diversity of crops would also enhance the bee population.

While the expansion of California nut acreage and production continues to set records, it looks like the honeybees have their work cut out for them for years to come.

—ELIAS HALANAN, *Journalist*

ALMOND PRODUCTS FOR THE PANTRY

- **SHIELLED WHOLE ALMONDS** can be used for just about anything. Buy whole almonds raw, skin intact, so you can blanch, roast, slice, dice, chop, or grind them. Most raw almonds (with skins) are heat-treated (pasteurized).
- **BLANCHED ALMONDS** have been skinned. To blanch, immerse whole raw almonds in boiling water for 30 seconds, remove one, and test to see if the skin can be easily pinched off. If not, continue blanching for another 30 seconds or more, repeating the test. Drain and dry the nuts before using.
- **SLIVERED ALMONDS** are slender pieces of blanched almonds. In a stir-fry or grain dish, slivered almonds contribute crunch and flavor.
- **SLICED OR FLAKED ALMONDS**, with or without their sticky tannic skins, add eye appeal and a contrasting crunchiness to classic dishes such as green beans amandine or trout amandine. Use them in salads and as a topping for pastries and quick breads, such as muffins.
- **DICED OR CHOPPED ALMONDS** are sold with or without skins and are used as a topping or an ingredient in baked goods, stuffings, and coatings for fish, chicken, or veal.
- **ALMOND FLOUR** is gluten-free and has more protein than wheat flour. Its texture is smooth and its flavor slightly sweet and buttery. It contains protein and fiber, plus antioxidants and calcium, and can be made at home by grinding *finest* or *old* blanched almonds in a food processor (nuts at room temperature will turn into almond butter when ground). Store in a sealed container in the refrigerator or freezer for up to several months.



• **ALMOND MEAL** is coarser than almond flour and may contain the skins, so before substituting almond meal for almond flour, consider their differences. Almond meal can be used in a wide array of baked goods. It can replace up to one-half the volume of flour called for in a baking recipe, and can be used for breading meat, seafood, and vegetables.

• **ALMOND PASTE AND MARZIPAN**, both made from ground almonds and sugar, can be bought in cans or rolls to use in baked goods. Almond paste contains almonds, sugar, and a liquid. Marzipan is made by adding sugar and sometimes egg whites to almond paste, and is more pliable than paste. It is often tinted with colors and molded into whimsical shapes.

• **ALMOND OIL** is a light cooking oil with a high smoke point. A great alternative to butter, it is cholesterol-free and carries the flavor of the nut. Refined almond oil is mild tasting and suitable for frying, while cold-pressed almond oil adds a pleasantly strong flavor to a vinaigrette.

• **ALMOND BUTTER** is widely available and sold salted or unsalted, raw or roasted. Almond butter can also be prepared at home (see recipe, page 54).

• **ALMOND MILK** is made from ground almonds and water and is one of the most nutritious alternatives to cow's milk. Some of the brands available commercially contain vanilla or chocolate. Almond milk can also be prepared at home and has a light, subtle almond flavor (see recipe, page 56).

• **ALMOND EXTRACTS** are labeled "pure," "natural," or "imitation": all rely on some form of benzaldehyde for their flavor. Pure extract has benzaldehyde derived from bitter almonds; natural extract uses benzaldehyde derived from *cassia* bark, and imitation flavoring contains synthetic benzaldehyde.