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Lavender Honey Almond SHORTBREAD

NATURALLY DELICIOUS RECIPES • Janice Feuer-Haugen

Stop and smell the lavender!

Perhaps you've seen photos of the beautiful, deep purple lavender fields in the South of France. Each field a quilt of perfectly rounded mounds of flowering lavender as far as the eye can see. For years my bucket list included walking a field of blooming lavender flowers enfolded in their soothing, aromatic fragrance. Last July, right here in Montana, I did just that. On a hillside overlooking Flathead Lake at the Purple Mountain Lavender Farm, I walked among hundreds of sweet-smelling lavender plants in hues of purple, pink and white. Heavenly.

RELAX WITH LAVENDER

One of our most powerful senses, the sense of smell, impacts both our mood and well-being. A recent study from London's King's College confirmed lavender's ability to relieve anxiety. The lead researcher wrote that lavender worked so well that it would make for "on-the-spot anxiety reduction in dentists' waiting rooms." In addition to reducing anxiety and stress, lavender also:

- ♥ Improves mood
- ♥ Promotes restful sleep
- ♥ Lessens skin irritation
- ♥ Accelerates wound healing
- ♥ Reduces inflammation
- ♥ Decreases frequency and severity of headaches
- ♥ Eases indigestion

3 EASY WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS, SOOTHE THE BODY & CALM THE MIND

- 1) Grind a few lavender leaves and flowers between your fingers; then rub them onto your temples.
- 2) Add lavender bouquets to your bathwater.
- 3) Brew a cup of lavender tea by steeping two teaspoons of dried lavender blossoms in eight-ounces of boiling water for seven to ten minutes. Add a teaspoon of honey and enjoy.



CULINARY LAVENDER—FRAGRANT, REFRESHING & VERSATILE

As a close cousin of mint, lavender also has many culinary uses. Lavender flowers, whether fresh or dried, are edible with a unique fragrance and mildly sweet taste. Experiment with culinary lavender. Add lavender flowers (either fresh or dried) to salad dressings, jams, ice cream and sorbets, cookies and beverages as well as to sauces and marinades. Note that if you use too much lavender, you may notice a slightly bitter aftertaste.

There are approximately 40 different species and 400 varieties of lavender! Between them exist both subtle and dramatic differences in color, hue, fragrance, blooming time, strength and taste.

We grow an English Munstead lavender in our garden—the only variety I've found sold in our Southwest Montana garden centers. Many people consider Munstead lavender one of the most flavorful varieties, a true culinary lavender with pleasant fragrance and medium color.

The Purple Mountain Farm has successfully grown more than 25 varieties of lavender including some very fragrant and deep, deep purple varieties, such as this culinary lavender shown above, on the left. The lavender on the right is Munstead lavender from last year's garden, which, I've since learned, will have deeper color when harvested before the buds open.

Lavender Honey Almond SHORTBREAD

Inspired by my visit to the lavender farm, I experimented with my basic shortbread recipe. Adding a rounded spoonful of lavender flowers makes this shortbread distinctly flavorful. A light local honey gives it a bit of sweetness. And finely ground almonds and oat and rice flours makes it gluten-free.

They're rich, fragrant, flavorful, delicate, tender, crisp and crumbly good. Bake *Lavender Honey Almond Shortbread* on a parchment-paper-lined, insulated cookie sheet or a double-sheet pan to keep the bottoms from browning too quickly. To create a double-pan, use two half-sheet pans with rimmed edges. This way the pans sit on top of one another with a layer of air between them. Enjoy! ♥

Note: When choosing lavender for culinary use, purchase organic lavender to avoid the pesticides commonly used on decorative plants and flowers.

Makes: 14 two-inch cookies

Active Time: 15 minutes

Total Time: 1 ¼ hours, with resting and baking

INGREDIENTS

- ½ cup blanched, slivered almonds
- 4 ounces chilled butter
OR ½ cup chilled coconut oil
- 3 tablespoons light, local honey
- ¾ teaspoon pure vanilla
- ½ cup brown rice flour
- ½ cup oat flour
- Large pinch sea salt
- 1–1½ tablespoons dried lavender blossoms,
depending upon the strength of your lavender

PREPARATION

- 1) Heat the oven to 300°. Toast the almonds for about 10 minutes or until golden. Set them aside to cool. Turn the oven off. When the almonds are cool, chop them very finely in a food processor. Set aside.
- 2) Use either a food processor or an electric mixer to cream together the butter or coconut oil, honey and vanilla until light and fluffy. Be sure to scrape the bottom and sides of the work bowl to incorporate the honey.



- 3) Add the rice flour, oat flour, very finely chopped almonds and salt. When almost incorporated add the lavender. When the lavender is mixed throughout, transfer the dough to the refrigerator for 15–20 minutes to make it easier to handle.

- 4) Use either a #40 portion scoop or 1½ tablespoons of dough to form round cookies. Place them on a parchment paper lined pan. Refrigerate them for 15 minutes.

- 5) Heat the oven to 350°.

- 6) Transfer the shortbread to a parchment paper lined, rimmed double baking

pan, spacing the

cookies a couple of inches apart. Use the heel of your hand to flatten each cookie to about ⅓ inch thick.

- 7) Bake the shortbread for 12 minutes. Turn the pan 180° and bake another 5 minutes.

- 8) Let the *Lavender Honey Almond Shortbread* cool on a wire rack before removing them from the pan.

- 9) Alternatively, freeze the uncooked balls of dough. Then bake as many or as few as you would like. Let them soften enough to be able to flatten each cookie (Step 6) before baking them.

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