

Name _____

Date _____

All About Almonds

Ag in 10 Minutes a Day!

Do you like to snack on things that are crunchy? How about sweet, salty, or savory? If you are looking for a perfect snack that tastes good, and is good for you, almonds are the answer!



Image from [U.S. Almond and Walnut Growers Face Surplus, Uncertainty During Pandemic | Food & Wine \(foodandwine.com\)](https://www.foodandwine.com/news/almonds-walnuts-surplus-uncertainty-pandemic)



Image from [Entirely from heart: Almonds: A Wonderful nut to get beautiful flawless skin](https://www.entirelyfromheart.com/almonds-a-wonderful-nut-to-get-beautiful-flawless-skin/)

What are Almonds?

Most people think of almonds as nuts. Almonds are actually a **stone fruit**, or **drupe**. They grow on a tree, and are covered in a soft, fuzzy flesh, much like a peach! Inside the flesh is a hard shell, and the almond that we eat is the seed inside that shell.

Almonds are native to Iran and the area around the Mediterranean Sea. They were one of the first **cultivated** foods and were enjoyed by the ancients in the Middle East. In the 1700s, Franciscan Padres from Spain carried almond trees to California, where the climate is similar to the Mediterranean with long, warm summers and cool wet winters. California is now the largest almond producer, growing 80% of the world's supply.

How are Almonds Grown?

Almond trees are planted in an orchard in rows, with a space between rows for harvesting. An interesting fact is that once the trees are put into the ground, a farmworker comes through the rows and tilts the trees at an angle of up to 14 degrees into the **prevailing winds**. This way, as the tree grows, the winds will blow the trees upright, the trunk will be more stable, and the root system will be stronger. Once almond trees are planted, it takes a few years before they begin to produce fruit. Once the trees are mature, they will continue to be productive for about 30 years.



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Name _____

Date _____

Once the almond trees start to flower, the farmer will need to contract a beekeeper to provide bees to **pollinate** them. A beekeeper will bring in hives to place between the rows, and the bees will spend the next few weeks flying from tree to tree to do the job before they move on to the next orchard.

After the trees have been pollinated, the fruits grow, and once the drupes split open, the almonds are ready to harvest. A shaking machine comes through the orchard and shakes each tree to make the almonds fall to the ground, where they will sit for several days to dry out. Next, a sweeping machine moves the nuts into neat rows, and a harvesting machine comes in to pick them up and take them to be processed and distributed.



Images from [Almond Harvesting: Shaking, Sweeping, Harvesting & Stock Piling - The Produce Nerd](#)

How Many Ways are Almonds Used?

Almonds are delicious on their own and are good for you. They are a good source of protein, fiber, and healthy fats. But there are many other ways that almonds can be used. You have probably heard of almond milk and almond butter, frequently used by people who are not able to have dairy or peanuts. Almonds are also made into flour and oil for cooking. Almond extract is a popular flavoring for baked goods, and it tastes and smells amazing!

There are plenty of non-food uses for almonds as well. Old almond trees are ground up into mulch to help the new trees grow. Shells and hulls are used for both garden bedding and animal bedding. Small, broken almond pieces that are not able to be sold can be mixed into animal feed. Some farmers break up the shells and use them to feed fly larvae. Once the flies are grown, they can be added to the diets of chickens and fish. Since almonds are so good for your skin, they are frequently used to produce moisturizers and cosmetic products. Byproducts of almonds are also being used to create plastic-like substances and even absorbent materials that can be used in diapers!

No matter how you slice them, or roast them, or drink them or put them on your skin, almonds are a pretty perfect little nut!

Name _____

Date _____

All About Almonds – Reading Passage

Directions: Read each question and fill in the best answer.

1. What part of the almond do we eat?

- A. The flower
- B. The leaves
- C. The seed
- D. The shell

2 a. Where do most of the almonds in the world grow?

- A. Middle East
- B. Spain
- C. Mediterranean Sea
- D. California

2 b. How do you know your answer to 2 a is correct?

- A. Paragraph 3, sentence 1
- B. Paragraph 4, sentence 2
- C. Paragraph 3, sentence 4
- D. Paragraph 5, sentence 1

3. Why do the farmers tilt the trees when they plant them?

- A. So they grow straight
- B. Because the Earth tilts
- C. Because they look good
- D. To make them easy to shake

Name _____

Date _____

4. When do the shaking machines shake the almonds?

- A. After they have dried on the ground
- B. When the drupes split open
- C. When the flowers are blooming
- D. When the trees die

5. How are almond by-products used? Select **ALL** that apply.

- A. Cosmetics
- B. Animal feed
- C. Seeds
- D. Bedding

Extended Response: Use details from your own experience and information from the article in your response.

Do you think you would like to be an almond farmer? Why or why not?

Almond Facts

- Almond flour is gluten free, and a good alternative for people who cannot consume gluten products.
- The honey produced by bees that pollinate almond trees tastes bitter and must be mixed with other honey to make it sweeter.
- The world record for the largest almond cake is 342 pounds in Hong Kong.
- About half of the bees in the United States are brought to California every year by beekeepers to pollinate almond trees

A FUN RECIPE TO TRY AT HOME – ALMOND JOY BALLS (MAKES 20)

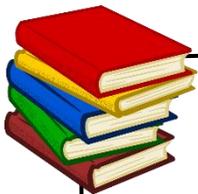
(WITH ADULT HELP!)

Ingredients:

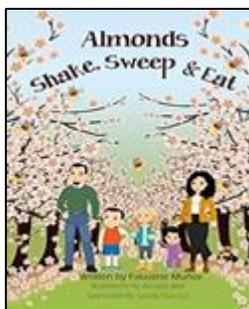
- 2 cups plus 20 raw almonds
- 1 cup unsweetened coconut
- 1 cup pitted dates
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 4-5 Tablespoons water

Directions:

1. Place half of the cocout in a food processor and process until powdery. Pour onto a plate and set aside.
2. Place the 2 cups of almonds in food processor and grind into crumbs.
3. Add the other half of the coconut, the dates, cocoa, and vanilla and process until no lumps remain.
4. Add the water, a little at a time, until the mixture is sticky and not crumbly.
5. Form the mixture into 20 balls. Roll each ball in the powdered coconut and top with a whole almond.
6. Refrigerate before serving.



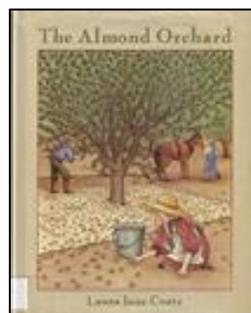
CHECK OUT THESE BOOKS



ALMONDS: SHAKE, SWEEP AND EAT

BY FALASTINE MUNOZ

This book tells the story of how almonds are grown and harvested.



THE ALMOND ORCHARD

BY MARY JAME COATS

A woman's memories of helping in the almond orchard, and how technology has changed the process of harvesting.