

#23 Amaretto Disaronno Originale



Amaretto is a sweet almond-flavored liqueur of Italian origin. It is made from a base of apricot or almond pits, or sometimes both.

The name is a diminutive of the Italian *amaro*, meaning "bitter," indicating the distinctive flavor lent by the *mandorla amara*—the bitter almond or the drupe kernel. However, the bitterness is not unpalatable, and the flavor is enhanced by sweeteners, and sometimes sweet almonds, in the final products. Therefore, the liqueur's name can be said to describe the taste as "a little bitter."

History. Sicily is mostly responsible for the introduction of almonds into general Italian cuisine. Its location has encouraged contact with a variety of ethnic groups who made their presence known in the Mediterranean. Ancient and early Medieval Sicilians traded and otherwise interacted with neighboring Eastern Mediterranean cultures to whose lands the almond was indigenous. Later, power in Sicily was taken by the Arabs or "Saracens;" their dominating presence from the 9th to the 11th centuries A.D. helped to diffuse many Arabic cultural and culinary concepts throughout the region.

Almonds became a favored component in Italian food and drink as Arab-Sicilian influence spread over the peninsular mainland, inspiring innovations. The concept reached all the way to the north of Italy, including the region of Lombardy, in which a municipality named Saronno would become famous for its almond-infused liqueur. In many regions, particularly these northernmost ones, distinct local varieties of amaretto biscotti developed. Amaretti di Sassello, unique to Liguria, are very soft and moist, like marzipan. Amaretti di Saronno, at the other end of the spectrum with a crunchy, crisp texture, became associated with the liqueur of the same town and therefore the most prominent style.

Disaronno Originale, the most popular brand, has a characteristic bittersweet almond taste and is known for its distinctive appearance. Disaronno claims its "*originale*" amaretto's "secret formula" is unchanged from the year 1525. Its production remains in Saronno, but the product is sold worldwide.

Uses in Cooking: Amaretto is added to desserts, including ice cream, which enhances the flavor of the dessert with almonds and complements chocolate. Tiramisu, a popular Italian cake, is often flavored with either real amaretto or alcohol-free amaretto aroma.

- Savory recipes which call for it usually focus on meat, such as chicken.
- A few shots of amaretto can be added to pancake batter for a richer flavor.
- Amaretto is often added to almondine sauce for fish and vegetables.
- Amaretto is often added to whipped cream.

Beverages. Amaretto may be served neat (by itself) or on the rocks (with ice). It is often added to other beverages to create several popular mixed drinks. Many cocktails which call for coffee liqueur can substitute amaretto for an interesting change of flavor. The following cocktails highlight Amaretto liqueur as a primary ingredient.

- French Connection. Ingredients: Amaretto liqueur, Cognac and ice cubes
- Godfather. Ingredients: Amaretto liqueur, Scotch and ice cubes.
- Godmother. Ingredients: Amaretto liqueur, Vodka and ice cubes.
- Toasted Almond. Ingredients: Amaretto liqueur, Kahlúa, Cream and ice cubes.

Source: Adapted from Wikipedia