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GINGERBREAD BISCOTTI

- 1 cup blanched whole almonds
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 lb. (1 stick) butter
- 1/2 cup dark molasses
- 3 eggs
- 3 cups flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tbsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1 1/2 tsp. powdered ginger
- 1/2 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. ground allspice
- 1/2 lb. white chocolate coating (the coating disks melt more easily than regular white chocolate chips; just be sure to buy disks that are high quality, with no wax)

Place almonds in an 8- or 9-inch-square pan. Bake at 350 degrees until golden, 10 to 15 minutes. Cool, chop coarse and set aside.

In a large bowl of an electric mixer, beat sugar, butter and molasses until smooth. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition.

In another bowl, stir together flour, baking powder, spices and almonds. Add to egg mixture, stirring to blend.

On 2 greased, 12-by-15-inch baking sheets, use well-floured hands to pat dough into 4 flat loaves, spacing them evenly on the sheets. Each loaf should be about 1/2-inch thick, 2 inches wide and the length of the baking sheet.

Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes, or until browned at the edges and springy to the touch (rotate position of pans halfway through baking). Cool on baking sheets for 3 to 4 minutes only, then cut into 1/2-inch slices on the diagonal.

Arrange biscotti on baking sheets, close together with a cut side down. Return to oven and bake at 350 degrees for 15 to 18 minutes, until cookies are brown, switching position of pans halfway through. Transfer cookies to racks and cool completely.

Melt coating in a saucepan. Dip half of each cookie in the chocolate coating. Dry on racks, then store in an airtight container. Cookies may be stored at room temperature up to 1 month, or frozen. Makes about 4 1/2 dozen biscotti.