



## Green Tea/White Chocolate Almonds

Although the history of chocolate in Japan goes back several hundred years, the consumption of it at today's levels is definitely a post-war phenomenon. In general, the Japanese believe that all women have a sweet tooth, while men prefer salty foods. And, until the mid 1970's the commercial market for chocolate in Japan was almost exclusively female. Then came the introduction of Valentine's Day to Japan – but with a twist: In the Japanese version, it is women who give to men. Women are expected to buy small gifts of chocolate for the “important” men in their lives – father, teacher, boss, husband (or boyfriend), often uncles and grandfathers are included, too. Because pressure is put upon women to conform to this ritual, it is called **giri chokko** or “obligatory chocolate.”

Reciprocity is an important aspect of gift giving in Japan, and has been incorporated into Japanese Valentine's Day rituals by the creation of **WHITE DAY**. Although it may sound to American ears like a sale of linens and towels, to the Japanese White Day means March 14 – the day that men give gifts of white chocolate to all those women who gave them dark chocolate on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February.

Blending white chocolate with green tea is a winning combination – one that tones down the cloying sweetness of white chocolate with the fresh, grassy bitterness of green tea. Enjoy the green tea chocolate covered nuts with strong brewed coffee or black tea, or use them to decorate a frosted cake. Crushed and sprinkled on ice cream, the nuts are also yummy!

Makes about 30 almonds.

- 3 ounces unseasoned white chocolate (preferably pre-tempered), broken into bits, or shaved
- 2 teaspoons *matcha* (pulverized ceremonial green tea)
- 2 ounces, approximately 30 whole, toasted almonds, unsalted

To melt white chocolate, use either a double boiler on the stove OR heat in the microwave.



Stove-top method:

Set a deep bowl over a small pan of extremely hot water; water that has come to a boil in a kettle and been allowed to sit for a few minutes should be just the right temperature. Before placing the chocolate in the bowl, be sure the inside is completely dry (any moisture, even a thin film of steam, can make the chocolate seize).

Stir the chocolate until it melts completely. When you lift up your spoon, the molten chocolate should flow easily, in ribbons, back into the bowl.

Microwave method:

Place the shaved or broken bits of white chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl. Set your microwave to the lowest setting possible. Place your bowl UNCOVERED in the microwave and zap for 20 seconds. Remove. The chocolate is barely warm but you should be able to stir the contents slightly. Zap again, uncovered, for another 20 seconds. Remove again and stir; this time the chocolate should be fairly warm and stirable. Zap a third time for another 20 seconds and remove the bowl. Stir well and continue to melt the chocolate by retained heat.



Sift the powdered tea over the molten white chocolate. Stir slowly and carefully to combine well.

Spread parchment paper on a flat surface such as a cookie sheet or tray. Lay the almonds out on the parchment and drizzle the green tea-white chocolate mixture over them. Set to dry, about 1 hour in a cool well-ventilated location. Each nut will have some un-coated spots. Store in a cool well-ventilated location for up to one month.

**Or...**

Stir the roasted almonds into the bowl of white molten chocolate, gently folding to evenly coat each nut. Lay the almonds out on the parchment and set to dry, for about 10 minutes. Take half the matcha powder and sift it over the nuts. After about 10 minutes, gently stir the nuts. Sift the remaining green tea powder over the nuts; toss to distribute evenly. Store in a cool well-ventilated location for up to one month.

