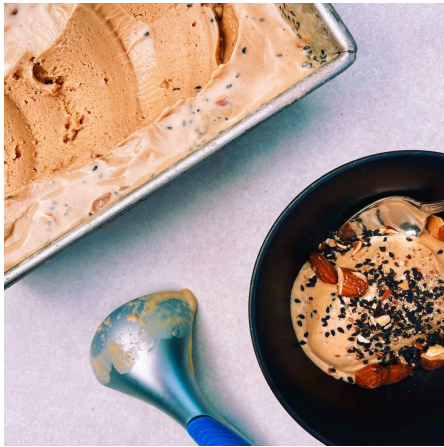


Almond Butter Gelato with 3 Swirl-In Variations



Gelato is denser than ice cream because it's slow-churned, a process that introduces less air. It also has a lower fat content, which means it's already halfway to being a brain-friendly treat. Less fat means it freezes more solidly than ice cream, too. One of the perks of making homemade gelato is that it doesn't have food additives like stabilizers and gums. See Tips, below, for getting the perfect scoopable texture. Plain, swirled, or drowned in espresso as an "affogato", this creamy gelato will definitely hit the spot if it's hot where you are.

Makes 3 cups

Ingredients:

1½ cups (16 ounces) unsweetened smooth almond butter

2 cups unsweetened almond milk

½ cup pure maple syrup

½ teaspoon almond extract (or pure vanilla extract)

½ teaspoon kosher salt

Instructions:

Freeze the ice cream machine container until solid for at least 4 hours or overnight.

Combine the almond butter, milk, maple syrup, almond extract, and salt in a blender. Blend until completely smooth, about 1 minute. (Tip: be sure not to overblend, which may warm the mixture. You want it to be as cold as possible when you start churning.) Pour into the container of the ice cream maker and churn until the mixture is the consistency of soft-serve. (This takes about 20 minutes in my machine.)

Serve right away, or transfer to a standard sized loaf pan to add a swirl (see below). To serve, allow the gelato to soften at room temperature until glossy and easy to scoop, at least 10 minutes.

To store, transfer the gelato to a freezer-proof pan (a standard sized metal loaf pan works well) and press a piece of parchment or waxed paper against the surface. Cover and freeze for up to 2 weeks. Let sit at room temperature until it is soft enough to scoop.

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Add a Swirl

To add swirls to your gelato, have your mix-ins ready before the gelato is at the soft-serve stage. Scrape half the gelato into a loaf pan. Dollop the mix-ins on the surface and use the back of a spoon to spread in an even layer. (If using Almond Sesame Crunch, set a few tablespoons aside to use as a topping.) Cover with the other half of the gelato followed by the remaining half of the mix-in. Press a piece of parchment or waxed paper against the surface, cover, and freeze.

Coffee Date Swirl

½ cup freshly brewed hot coffee

½ cup (lightly packed) soft Medjool dates, pitted

Combine the coffee and dates in a blender and blend on high until mostly smooth, about 1 minute. Scrape into an airtight container and chill in the fridge until ready to layer onto the gelato.

Chocolate Olive Oil Swirl

6 ounces dark chocolate (more than 65% cacao), coarsely chopped, or ½ cup dark chocolate chips

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Pinch of kosher or flaky sea salt

Place a medium heatproof bowl over a small pot of boiling water, making sure that the bottom of the bowl doesn't touch the water. Add the chocolate to the bowl until it is mostly melted. Remove from the heat and stir in the oil and salt. Let the mixture come to room temperature before layering onto gelato.

Almond Sesame Crunch Swirl

½ cup raw, unsalted almonds

2 tablespoons sesame seeds, black, white, or a mix

Preheat your oven to 300°F with a rack set in the center position. Place the almonds and sesame seeds on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake until the nuts and white sesame seeds are a shade darker and have a toasted nut aroma, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and coarsely chop the nuts. Cool completely before layering onto the gelato. Set a few tablespoons aside for sprinkling on top, if you like.

Tips:

- You'll need an ice cream machine to make this recipe. Other gelato recipes can be made with the "no-churn" method (like the Salted Chocolate and Olive Oil Gelato in my book), but I find it tricky to achieve a smooth result when using nut butters. My Krups ice cream maker cost \$30 and has lasted for about that many years.

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- Instead of almond butter, you could use cashew, peanut, or another nut or seed butter.
- If you are adding a swirl, make the mix-ins while the gelato churns and have them ready to go when it's at the soft-serve stage.
- Start with cold ingredients and don't blend for more than a minute. You want the gelato base to be very cold when it goes into the machine. You can also make the base ahead of time and chill in the refrigerator until you are ready to churn.
- If it's warm in your kitchen, it's helpful to put the loaf pan in the freezer while the gelato churns. This keeps it from melting too quickly while you add a swirl layer.
- This gelato is best right from the machine in the soft-serve stage. Leftovers freeze well, but it requires some patience to let it thaw enough to be soft and scoopable. Take it out of the freezer at least 10 minutes before you want to scoop.