**The Best Coconut Macaroons**

*Makes about 12 cookies*

**Ingredients**
2 cups sweetened, shredded coconut
2 large egg whites
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla or almond extract
1/8 teaspoon salt

**Instructions**

1. **Preheat the oven to 350°F:**Place an oven rack in the bottom third of the oven and preheat to 350°F. Gather all your ingredients and equipment.
2. **Toast the coconut (optional):**For deeper coconut flavor and extra-crispy macaroons, spread the coconut on the baking sheet and toast for about 5 minutes, or until *just barely* starting to show some color. Let cool slightly before using.
3. **Whisk the egg whites, sugar, vanilla, and salt:** Combine the egg whites, sugar, vanilla, and salt in a mixing bowl. Whisk until the whites and sugar are completely combined and the mixture is frothy.
4. **Combine the coconut and egg white mixture:** Pour the coconut over the egg white mixture and stir until the coconut is evenly moistened.
5. **Shape the macaroons:**Line the baking sheet with parchment. With wet hands to prevent sticking, shape the coconut mixture into small balls about 1 1/2-inches in diameter. Space them an inch or so apart on the baking sheet.
6. **Bake the macaroons for 15 to 20 minutes:** Bake the macaroons until golden, 15 to 20 minutes.
7. **Cool the macaroons:** Let the macaroons cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes, and then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Macaroons can be kept in an airtight container for up to a week.

**Recipe Notes**

* **For meringue-like macaroons,**whisk the egg whites in a standing mixer until they hold soft peaks; gradually add the sugar until it holds stiff peaks. Whisk in the vanilla and salt, and then fold in the shredded coconut by hand.
* **Coconut macaroon variations:**Dip or drizzle the baked macaroons with melted chocolate, wrap the coconut mixture around a whole almond (or a whole almond and a piece of chocolate!), fold up to 1 cup chopped dried fruit into the coconut mixture.
* **Want some extra fruit?**: Try pouring coconut/egg white mixture over a delicate fresh berry such as raspberries or strawberries and mix until combined, making sure to break up a couple here and there for added element.