



Bird's Nest Cookies

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2 squares (2 oz) unsweetened baking chocolate
2 egg whites, room temperature
1/3 cup hazelnuts, toasted and chopped*
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon real vanilla extract
1/2 cup powdered sugar
1/2 cup sweetened condensed milk
1 (14 oz) bag sweetened shredded coconut
16 to 18 white chocolate Lindt Lindor balls (2 bags), or other egg-shaped candies

Move the oven racks to the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat to 275 degrees. Cover two cookie sheets with parchment paper.

Melt baking chocolate in a small bowl in the microwave on high 30 seconds at a time. Stir after each stop until melted; set aside. With a hand mixer or stand mixer, beat the egg whites on high until stiff and glossy. Add the salt, vanilla extract, powdered sugar, sweetened condensed milk, and chocolate. Beat until mixed. Stir in the coconut and hazelnuts. Scoop into mounds with a small (size 24) ice-cream scoop or a 1/4th cup dry measuring cup. Place on cookie sheets and make an indent in the middle with your thumb.

Place both cookie sheets in the oven and bake for 20 minutes. Switch the cookies to the opposite shelf halfway through baking. This will prevent over-browning. Meanwhile, unwrap the candy.

Move cookies to a cooling rack and allow to sit for five minutes, or until they are barely warm to the touch. If you place the truffles on top while they are more than barely warm, they will melt

into goo. If you are using candies with a shell, wait until the cookies are cool to place them on top, or the shells will crack. For the truffles, working quickly, set the Lindt balls on top of the cookies. Let cool completely. The Lindt balls may drip a little so you may want to place a sheet of parchment underneath the cookies.

*To toast the hazelnuts, place them in a small bowl and microwave on high for 30 seconds. Stir, and microwave another 30 seconds. Immediately rub together in a paper towel to remove a little of the excess skin. Leave most of the skin on. Chop coarsely and set aside.

Makes 16 to 18 large cookies.