

BASIC MACARONS

Once you've mastered this basic recipe, you can create almost any color and flavour combination you like. You should get 40 shells – i.e. 20 filled macarons – out of all the regular-sized macaron recipes.

INGREDIENTS:

200 g icing sugar (powdered sugar, confectioners' sugar, Melis)

120 g ground almonds (flour)

120–125 g egg whites (about 4 eggs)

a pinch of salt

3 tablespoons regular sugar

Tools:

a piping bag, fitted with a 1-cm nozzle/tip

2 solid baking sheets, lined with non-stick baking parchment

PREPARATIONS:

1. Sift the icing sugar and almonds flour together (1 or 2 times) into the bowl until thoroughly combined. Set aside.
2. Pour the egg whites into a spotlessly clean and dry mixing bowl. Add the salt and, using an electric handheld whisk, beat until they will only just hold a stiff peak.
3. Continue to whisk at medium speed while adding the regular sugar a teaspoonful at a time. Mix well between each addition to ensure that the sugar is thoroughly incorporated before adding the next spoonful. The mixture should be thick, white and glossy.
4. At this point you should add any food coloring paste you are using. Dip a cocktail stick into the paste and stir into the mixture, mixing thoroughly to ensure that the color is evenly blended. Scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula.
5. Using a large spoon, fold the icing sugar and almond mixture into the egg whites.
6. The mixture should be thoroughly incorporated and smooth – this can take up to 1 minute. When it is ready, the mixture should drop from the spoon in a smooth molten mass.
7. Fill the piping bag with the mixture and pipe evenly sized rounds – about 5 cm across – onto the prepared baking sheets.
8. Tap the bottom of the baking sheets sharply, once, on the work surface to expel any large air bubbles.
9. You can scatter edible decorations, liquid food coloring etc. onto the unbaked macaron shells at this stage.
10. Leave the macarons for at least 15 minutes, and up to 1 hour, until they have “set” and formed a dry shell. They should not be sticky, tacky or wet when tested with your fingertip.
11. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Bake in temperature between 160°C and 190°C.
12. Depending on the size of your oven, you can put all 3 or 4 baking trays in the oven together. Bake the macarons for 12 minutes.
13. Briefly opening and shutting the oven door twice to let out the steam. Open the door first time after 8 minutes then a second time after 10 minutes. The tops should be crisp and the bottoms dry. Leave to cool on the baking sheet.

Tips for success:

- x Before starting, weigh all the ingredients carefully, have them at room temperature and get your equipment ready. Cover the baking sheets neatly with baking parchment. I find that dark, solid baking sheets work better than other.*
- x Fit your piping bag with the correct nozzle/tip.*
- x If you want to be sure that every macaron shell is exactly the same size, use a cookie cutter as a guide. Draw 20 circles around the cookie cutter on each sheet of baking parchment, turn it over and pipe the macaron mixture onto each circle.*
- x When you have piped the rounds and tapped the baking sheets on the work surface, leave the unbaked macarons to set on a level surface for at least 15 minutes and anything up to 1 hour to dry – this is a crucial part of macaron making! It helps them to form a glossy, smooth surface and ensures that the macarons have their trademark crinkly “feet” when they come out of the oven.*
- x No two ovens are the same, so do adjust your oven temperature by a few degrees, or turn the baking sheets around halfway through baking if your oven cooks hotter in places.*
- x Once baked, cooled and filled, cover the macarons and leave in the fridge or a cool place for 30 minutes before serving.*
- x If your macarons aren't perfect the first time, don't give up – practice makes perfect!*