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Marvelous Macarons Make a Tasty Dessert

By Susie Iventosch



Chocolate Macarons Photo Susie Iventosch

What do you serve for dessert, when you want cookies, but some of your guests are on gluten-free diets? If you've ever passed by bakeries that sell those beautiful French macarons, in a rainbow of beautiful colors, you may have just discovered the answer. They are made with almond flour, egg whites and powdered sugar, so they fill the bill when wheat is out.

The macarons at the bakeries are always so intriguing, with interesting flavors like lavender, salted caramel, lychee rose, green tea and Nutella, to name a few. But, they are rather pricey at \$2 each, and you might just want a simple flavor, like chocolate or raspberry.

I decided to make these at home to see what makes them so precious. The recipes I found called for sifting the flour and powdered sugar, sometimes two or three times, which helps the cookies to have that smooth shiny surface, but I skipped that part all together for the sake of time. They turned out

slightly less smooth, but equally delicious to the bakery-made cookies. And, while I made them with a bittersweet chocolate-Kahlua filling, you could fill them with your favorite jam or buttercream as well.

Next up in my kitchen is to make the bright colored macarons , and maybe even a daring flavor or two. I'll keep you posted.

Bittersweet Chocolate French Macarons

By Susie Iventosch

(Makes approximately 18 cookies)

Ingredients

1/2 cup almond flour (Bob's Red Mill packages this)

1 3/4 cup powdered sugar

3 Tbsp. cocoa powder

3 egg whites

1/8 tsp. salt

1 Tbsp. granulated sugar

Chocolate Filling

1/2 cup heavy cream

6 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chopped

2 Tbsp. Kahlua

2 Tbsp. cocoa powder

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with a silicon baking mat, or parchment paper. Do not grease.

You will need two mixing bowls. In the first, place the almond flour, powdered sugar and cocoa

powder. Mix well. In the second bowl, place the three egg whites and salt. Beat on the high speed of the beater until soft peaks form. Add 1 Tbsp. granulated sugar, and continue to beat just until stiff peaks form. With a rubber spatula, fold dry mixture into egg whites until incorporated. Place the batter into a pastry bag, fitted with a 1/4 plain tip. (You may need to do this in a couple of batches, depending upon the size of the pastry bag.) Squeeze batter out onto mat into approximately 1 1/2- to 2-inch circles. Allow to sit for approximately 25 minutes before baking. (This helps the cookies form a shell and to keep their shape while baking.) Then, bake for about six-to-eight minutes, rotating pan halfway through the baking time. Tops should be firm to the touch when done, but not too dry. Remove from oven and cool. With a sharp, flat spatula, carefully remove cookies from mat, or peel from parchment paper.

Filling

In a small saucepan place cream and chocolate. Heat over low to medium heat, stirring frequently, until chocolate is melted. In the meantime, stir cocoa powder into Kahlua and stir until lumps are gone and it becomes a paste. Add this mixture into the melted chocolate-cream mixture and heat and stir just until integrated. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature.

Assembly

Place half of the cookies, bottom side up, on a flat work surface. Spread the filling over the side facing up, using a frosting spreader, or another pastry bag, if you prefer, With the second half of the cookies, place another cookie on top of the filling, this time bottom side down, making a sandwich.

You can store in between sheets of waxed paper, in an airtight container for a few days.

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