

COFFEE MACARONS

(adapted from a basic recipe from Craftsby)

Yield: About 72 shells; 36 assembled macarons

for the shells:

198 g powdered sugar

113 g almond meal

1/2 teaspoon instant coffee

113 g egg whites (I aged mine for three days)

1 g or a pinch of cream of tartar

100 g granulated sugar

Brown Gel color from AmeriColor

2 drops vanilla extract

for the filling:

100g dark chocolate (70% cocoa)

2 egg yolks

50g dark brown sugar

3 tablespoons water

1 1/2 teaspoons fine instant espresso powder

150g unsalted butter, softened

to decorate:

gold sprinkles (optional)

Line 2 or 3 heavy baking sheets with parchment paper or Silpat mats. Layer the powdered sugar, almond meal and instant coffee in a food processor or mini processor. Pulse until the mixture looks like fine meal, about 15 seconds. Pass through a sieve and transfer to a small bowl. Set aside.

Place the egg whites and pinch of cream of tartar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Make sure that the bowl and the whisk are impeccably clean. Starting on medium speed, whip the whites with the cream of tartar until they look like light foam. The whites should not appear liquid. The foam will be light and should not have any structure.

Slowly rain in the granulated sugar, trying to aim the stream between the whisk and the side of the bowl. Turn the speed up to medium-high. Continue to whip the meringue until it is soft and shiny. It should look like marshmallow creme. Add the gel color and the vanilla. Staying at medium-high speed, whip the egg whites until the mixture begins to dull and the lines of the whisk are visible on the surface of the meringue. Check the peak. It should be firm. Transfer the whites to a medium bowl.

Fold in the almond meal mixture in three increments. Paint the mixture halfway up the side of the bowl, using the flat side of a spatula. Scrape the mixture down to the center of the bowl. Repeat two or three times, then check to see if the

mixture slides slowly down the side of the bowl. Put the mixture in a piping bag fitted with one of the tips listed above. Pipe on the prepared baking sheets.

Slam each sheet hard four to six times on the counter. Then fist bump each end of the sheet's underside twice. Let the unbaked macarons dry until they look dull but not overly dry. Drying time depends on humidity. In a dry climate, the macarons can dry in 15 to 20 minutes; in a humid climate, it can take 35 to 40 minutes. When the skin forms, top with gold sprinkles, if you so desire.

While the macarons are drying, heat the oven to 330 F (170 C/gas mark 3). Bake one sheet at a time on the middle rack. Check in 11 minutes. If the tops slide, then bake for 2 to 3 more minutes. The macarons should release without sticking. Check one or two. If they stick, put them back in the oven for 1 to 2 more minutes. Let the macarons cool for 10 minutes before removing from the pan.

Make the filling: Melt the chocolate in the microwave and leave to cool. Place the egg yolks in a heatproof bowl, and set aside. Put the sugar, water and espresso powder in a small pan, and heat gently until the sugar dissolves. Add the mixture to the egg yolks, whisking constantly. Set the mixture over a pan of simmering water and continue to whisk gently until the mixture thickens. That should happen in less than 5 minutes, make sure the water is just at a gentle boil. Take the mixture off the heat and continue to whisk. Gradually add the butter, and keep whisking. Fold in the melted chocolate then set the mixture aside to firm up. Do not refrigerate, just keep it at room temperature until it is firm enough to pipe.

Assemble the macarons: find two macarons similar in size and add a good amount of filling to the bottom of one of them. Place the other on top and squeeze gently to take the filling all the way to the edge. Store in the fridge for 24 hours for perfect texture.