

NUT-FREE LADY GREY MACARONS

(from the Bewitching Kitchen)

For the shells:

200g powdered sugar

115 g sunflower seed meal (or finely ground sunflower seeds)

115 g egg whites at room temperature (approx. 4 eggs)

1/8 tsp of cream of tartar (optional)

100 g caster sugar (or regular sugar made finer in a food processor)

¼ tsp vanilla paste or extract

Americolor food gel Super Black

Americolor food gel Fog

Americolor food gel Tulip Red

Royal Icing, thick consistency

for filling:

1/4 cup butter

170g powdered sugar

1/2 cup milk

1 bag Lady Grey tea

chai extract (optional, I used [Olive Nation](#))

Line 3 heavy baking sheets with parchment/baking paper or Silpat mats. Layer the powdered sugar and sunflower seed meal in a food processor. Pulse until the mixture looks like fine meal, about 12 pulses. Pass through a sieve and transfer to a small bowl or to a sheet of parchment/baking paper. Set aside.

Place the egg whites and 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 in five additions, trying to aim the stream between the whisk and the side of the bowl. Turn the speed up to high. Continue to whip the meringue until it is soft and shiny. It should look like marshmallow creme. Add the vanilla. 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 sunflower seed mixture in two increments. When the mixture is more or less homogeneous (but before you smash it to deflate it), separate a very small amount of batter into a bowl and add black food gel to it. Proceed to fully mix it (macaronage step), and place it in a small piping bag, no need to use icing tip. Reserve. Go back to the main mixture and add a few drops of fog gel color to it. 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 your choice of piping tip (round, ¼ or ½ inch in diameter or 6 – 12 mm). Pipe shells, I like to count numbers in my head and use the same count for each shell so they end up similar in size. After piping 5 or 6 shells, get the piping bag containing the black batter and make a cut. Pipe dots all over the shells.

Slam each sheet hard four to six times on the counter/worktop. 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.

While the macarons are drying, heat the oven to 300 F. Bake one sheet at a time on the middle rack. Check in 11 minutes. If the tops slide or move (independently of the ‘feet’ when you gently twist the top), then bake for 2 to 3 more minutes. Check one or two. If they move when gently touched, put them back in the oven for 1 to 2 more minutes until they don’t move when touched. Let the macarons cool for 10 minutes before removing from the pan. The macarons should release without sticking.

Make the filling: Infuse the milk with the bag of tea for 15 min. Remove the bag, squeezing it well to release all the tea flavor into the milk. Let it cool. Whisk the room temperature butter with a handheld mixer until creamy. Add the powdered sugar, 2 tablespoons of infused milk (you won’t need it all) and chai extract (if using). Whisk for a couple of minutes. Adjust consistency with more infused milk or powdered sugar, if needed.

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.

To decorate: pipe hearts with Royal icing dyed red. Use a black food pen to smooth the edges of the black dots, if needed, and a red pen to draw the edge of the heart (optional).