

SPRINGTIME FLOWER PIPED LEMON MACARONS

(from the Bewitching Kitchen)

For the shells:

200g powdered sugar

115 g almond flour

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

1/8 tsp of cream of tartar (optional)

100 g granulated sugar

¼ tsp vanilla paste or extract

pink, purple and green food gel color (I used Sugarflair and Americolor)

For filling:

60 g unsalted butter softened

160 g powdered sugar

zest of 1 lemon

2 tsp lemon juice

1/8 tsp lemon oil

pinch of salt

heavy cream if needed to adjust consistency

Line 3 heavy baking sheets with parchment/baking paper or Silpat mats. Layer the powdered sugar and ground almonds/almond 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 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. Add all the sugar at once and keep whisking until the meringue is soft and shiny. Add vanilla and food colors.

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 ground almond/almond meal mixture in two increments. Start incorporating, but before you do the macaronage, divide the mixture in

four bowls, one large, three small. Dye the small portions pink, purple, and green, then proceed with the macaronage for all four portions of the batter. Place the plain mixture in a piping bag fitted with your choice of piping tip (round, $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter or 6 – 12 mm). Place the other portions in small piping bags, with no tips. Pipe shells, and then use the colored batters to make any design you like. Leave half of the shells plain, as they can be the bottom side of your macarons.

Gently bang each sheet four to six times on the counter/worktop. Be careful not to disturb the designs. 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. If desired, do the outline and details with a black food pen.

For the filling, use a hand-held electric mixer and whisk the butter until creamy. Add the other ingredients except the heavy cream, and whisk until creamy and smooth. If needed, add a bit of heavy cream to loosen the mixture.

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.