



French Almond Macaroons

Based on Martha Stewart's recipe from "Baking Handbook"

Makes about 30 sandwich cookies

INGREDIENTS

3 large eggs (separate while cold, bring egg whites completely to room temperature before building recipe)

1-3/4 cup confectioner's sugar (flavor variations: remove 1 to 2 tablespoons of flour and substitute with dutch-process cocoa powder, matcha powder, etc.)

A few drops of food color, optional

1-1/2 cups (4 ounces) almond flour (almond flour is available at most supermarkets but especially easy to find at Nob Hill or Whole Foods)

Pinch of salt

1/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract or other flavoring extract; try super-strong instant coffee dissolved in ¼ tsp water, incredibly strong tea, or reduced liqueur (simmer on stove until reduced by half)

Parchment paper highly recommended

2 cups Swiss Meringue Buttercream (increase vanilla to 2-1/2 teaspoons) or other **filling** - standard buttercream, especially Laurie's Favorite Buttercream, Favorite Chocolate Buttercream or Silky Smooth Icing (all at www.sweetcelebrations.us), chocolate ganache, buttercream mixed with preserves, Nutella, fruit preserves, peanut butter, etc.

DIRECTIONS

French Almond Macaroons

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Sift confectioners' sugar into a bowl. Whisk in ground almonds; set aside. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper. Baking sheets do not need to be insulated type.

In the grease-free bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment beat egg whites on medium speed until foamy; add salt. Gradually add granulated sugar 1 teaspoon at a time, until the whites reach medium-soft peaks. Add color if desired. Transfer to a large grease-free bowl.

Sprinkle half of the sugar-almond mixture over the egg-white mixture. Using a large rubber scraper fold in until just incorporated. Add 1/4 teaspoon vanilla and remaining sugar-almond mixture, folding until just incorporated.



Lightly spoon mixture into a large (16") grease-free pastry bag fitted with a 1/2-inch plain tip (such as an Ateco #806)- a smaller tip may be used, but 1/2" circles are needed. Pipe 1" apart on room-temp baking sheets covered with parchment paper.

Bake, rotating sheets halfway through, until macaroons feel slightly firm to the touch and can be gently lifted off the parchment (the bottoms will be dry), 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool on the baking sheets for 5 minutes, then transfer parchment and macaroons to a wire rack to cool completely. Using a small offset spatula, carefully remove macaroons from parchment. Spread 1 to 2 teaspoons buttercream on the flat side on half of macaroons; sandwich with the other halves. Refrigerate until firm, about 20 minutes. Filled cookies can be kept in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 days. Cookies are best when enjoyed at room temperature.

General baking tips

- These elegant cookies have a light, crisp exterior and a slight chewy center.
- When baked in the lower third of the oven, cookies tend to darken too much on the bottoms. If you are baking many batches at once and must use the lower third, insulate the bottoms from the heat by baking the cookies on two stacked baking sheets.
- Recipe does not double well as it cannot rest in a bowl while other cookie trays bake