

BASIC ALMOND MACARON SHELLS

A Skillshare Class
by **FoodNouveau**

INGREDIENTS

*Makes 52 1.5-in [3.8-cm] macaron shells,
or 26 assembled macarons*

3 large egg whites, separated a couple days in advance, stored in the fridge. The egg whites must be room temperature to make the macarons, so take them out of the fridge at least 1 hour in advance;

210 g powdered sugar, also called icing sugar, or confectioners' sugar;

125 g ground almonds, also called almond flour, almond meal, or almond powder. You will find pre-packaged ground almonds in grocery stores, but buying it in bulk is usually less expensive;

30 g granulated sugar (regular refined sugar);

Gel food coloring, if you want to color the shells;

Filling of your choice.



METHOD

STEP 1: Process and sift ground almonds and powdered sugar together

Combine the powdered sugar and the ground almonds together in the bowl of a food processor. Process for 30 seconds to a minute, or until both ingredients are thoroughly mixed together.

Set the sieve over a mixing bowl. Transfer half of the sugar and almond mixture to the sieve and use a spoon to sift it through. By the end, you'll see bigger bits remaining; don't force them through. Just discard them.

If the quantity of coarse almond bits you're discarding seems important, you'll need to replace them with more finely ground almonds to make sure you still have the required quantity. To do so, weigh the coarse almond bits, and replace them with the same quantity of finely ground almonds.



Sieve the rest of the sugar and almond mixture, and set aside.

STEP 2: Make the meringue / add color

Pour the egg whites to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whip attachment (or in a stainless steel or glass mixing bowl, if you're using a hand mixer), and whip on medium speed until they start to get foamy. When they do, slowly pour the granulated sugar into the bowl. Keep on whipping until the egg whites are opaque white, glossy, and form stiff peaks.

If you wish to color the macaron shells, now is the time to do so. Using gel food coloring is best because the color is very concentrated so you don't need to add much to get to the shade you want. You don't need to be fussy about incorporating the food coloring. Just give it a good whip and you're done.



STEP 3: Incorporate almond/sugar mixture to the meringue (macaronnage)

Pour about half of the sugar and almond mixture over the whipped egg whites, and use a silicon spatula to fold it in. Push the spatula to the bottom of the bowl and bring it back up. No need to be too delicate about it, what you actually want to do is to deflate the egg whites a little.

When the first half of the sugar and almond mixture is incorporated, add the rest of it to the bowl and keep on folding.

Now is why you need to start paying close attention.

At first, you'll notice the mixture looks curdled, and as you fold, it will become homogenous and looser. When done, the batter should be loose enough that it drips from the spatula in a continuous ribbon.

It's essential that you learn to recognize when the batter is ready because the look of your shells depend on it. If you don't fold enough and the batter is too stiff, the shells might not form feet. If you overfold and the batter is too loose, the shells will spread unevenly when you pipe them onto the sheet pans. They might also crack during the baking process.



STEP 4: Pipe shells / resting period

Now you're ready to pipe the batter onto the prepared sheet pans. Note that sheet pans should be lined with parchment paper cut out to fit exactly inside the sheet pan so it lays perfectly flat. If the parchment paper comes up the sides, it won't be as flat and this may warp your macaron shells.

Slide two macaron templates under the parchment paper, if you want to use them.

Fit the piping tip into the bag, cutting just enough off the tip of the bag to let the tip go through. Twist the bag right above the tip; this will ensure the batter will not run out as you pour it into the bag. Set the piping bag into a measuring cup to hold it straight and steady, and fold over the top of the bag to form a cuff.

Pour the batter into the bag. Unfold the cuff, gather the top of the bag together with one hand, and twist it a turn or two. Turn the bag upside down, and keep on twisting the top of the bag so the batter pushes towards the piping tip. Hold the bag with the tip towards the ceiling when you're not piping because the batter will drip out when you invert it.



The hand controlling the flow of the batter is the one holding the top of the bag. The hand holding the tip of the bag is merely there to lead the tip from one spot to the next.

Slowly invert the piping bag, getting the tip close to the parchment paper. Slowly twist the top of the bag while turning the bag fully perpendicular to the baking sheet. Make sure to keep the tip close to the sheet. Quickly pull up and invert the bag again after forming one shell. Repeat for all shells.

This technique will require practice, you'll need to find your flow, and learn to push just enough to form perfectly sized shells. If your shells are not all exactly the same size at first, don't worry! What's important is that they are roughly the same size so they bake evenly.

Once you've piped a full sheet of macaron shells, place the sheet pan out of the way to rest the shells. Resting the shells at least 20 minutes is important because this is what will allow them to form feet. When the shells have just been piped, you'll notice that the batter is very shiny. After 20 to 30 minutes, you'll see that it has become duller.



Pipe the rest of the batter onto the second sheet and put it to rest, too.

STEP 5: Bake the shells

While the shells are resting, set an oven rack to the middle position and turn the oven on to 275°F (that's about 135°C). All ovens are different, some overheat, other underheat. It's important to figure out where your oven stands because this factor will make a big difference in the baking time. An oven thermometer is very helpful to make sure your oven is always at the right temperature.

Some people like to bake their macarons at higher temperatures; I personally prefer being conservative. I find baking at a lower heat setting allows me to keep better control over the process. Also, you don't want the shells to brown at all so the color remains bright and beautiful. Keeping the oven low will help you with that. Finally, an oven that's too warm will make the shells rise too quickly and they will probably crack open before the inside is fully done.

When the oven is ready and the first batch of shells has rested for at least 20 minutes, put them in the oven and set a timer to 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, rotate the pan and set the timer for another 5 minutes.

To figure out if the shells are done, crack open the oven door and gently touch the top of a shell. If it wobbles on its feet, cook for 3 to 5 minutes more, or until firm. The top of the shell itself might not feel completely hard, but it'll fully harden as the shells cool.



Once the shells are completely cool, use a small icing knife, or another thin and supple spatula, to carefully scrape them off the parchment paper. Parts of the bottom of the shells might be sticky so removing them could be tricky.

Here's a foolproof method to remove shells from the parchment paper without breaking them: place the entire sheet in the freezer for 10 minutes. That'll firm up the shells and make it very easy to peel them off the parchment paper. Note that you must make sure the shells are completely cooled to room temperature before placing them into the freezer.

The baked shells are very fragile so make sure to always be super careful when you manipulate them.

STEP 6: Assemble macarons / final resting period

Choose a filling: buttercream, ganache, jam, or store-bought spreads are all good choices. You can use a pastry bag equipped with a round tip to fill the macarons, or simply spread some filling onto the shells using a small icing knife.

Match shells that are exactly the same size and place them side by side, upside down, on a piece of parchment paper. Pipe some buttercream onto half the macarons shells, then assemble by gently pressing the top shell onto the buttercream so it spreads to the edge. Always remember that the shells are delicate to make sure to manipulate them very carefully.

Now comes the hardest part: the final waiting period! Store the macarons in an airtight container, separating each layer with a piece of parchment paper so they don't stick together. Place in the refrigerator for 24 hours so the moisture from the filling can slightly seep into the shells and create the perfect macaron texture.

Always bring the macarons back to room temperature before eating them.

Assembled macarons should be eaten within four days. If you're making the macarons in advance, freeze them in an airtight container right after assembling them. They will keep frozen for up to a month. To serve, simply take however many you need out of the freezer, transfer them to a plate, and let them thaw and return to room temperature for one to two hours before serving.

ENJOY!

