

Macarons (the original French macaroons)



For 20 macarons (the original french macaroons)s , you will need:

- 1 egg white
- 75 g icing sugar
- 40 g ground almonds
- 1 tablespoon caster sugar
- lemon juice
- 5 drops food colouring (optional)
- 35 g jam sugar
- 50 g Fruit coulis (fruit purée)
- 1 pinch salt

Ready in: 4 min.

- Sieve 40 g ground almonds into a bowl, and discard any bits of almonds or skin which remain in the sieve. You can use "white" ground almonds (without skin) or "grey" (with skin), it's a question of taste and appearance of the finished macarons. In my opinion, "grey" almond macarons have more flavour, but less clear colour (natural, green, yellow, pink, etc...).

- Sieve 75 g icing sugar into the same bowl. These siftings (and that which follows) are to obtain a fine mixture of ground almonds and icing sugar, without any small lumps.

- Then mix almonds and icing sugar with a whisk, to avoid lumps reforming.

- Put 1 egg white, a few drops of lemon juice and a pinch of salt in a mixer bowl. Note: If you have several egg-whites in a bowl, and don't know how many, remember that one white egg is about 35 g. Beat on high speed until stiff adding the tablespoon of sugar halfway through.

- Add the 6 drops of colouring, and beat a few seconds more to mix thoroughly.

- We do this, instead of adding colouring before beating, to keep the colour stronger.

- Sieve the icing sugar and almonds mixture onto the egg-whites.

- Tip the bowl slightly and, with a maryse or a spatula (a maryse is much better), mix gently, turning over from top to bottom rather than round.

- This is the first tricky stage: you should work the mixture, the aim is not to obtain a light mixture (as for a mousse for example)...

- ...but something slightly runny and shiny. This process is called "macaroner" in French (to macaron, perhaps?).

- With a forcing bag (or a teaspoon, but it's much more difficult), form small heaps of mixture on cooking parchment or silicon paper on a baking sheet about the size of a 2 euro coin (1"). Leave a reasonable space between heaps, because they will spread out a little.

- Tap the baking sheet gently on the work surface to spread out the heaps, and to round them (to remove the small point left by raising the forcing bag).

- See the photos for what happens after tapping the baking sheet.

- Leave at room temperature for 30 minutes to one hour, for the heaps to "form a crust". This is the 2nd tricky stage: this time of "forming crust" is important for macarons which are well rounded, and do not split during cooking.

- To test if your macarons are sufficiently "crusted", touch a top lightly with your finger: if the dough does not stick to your finger, the macarons are ready.

- Then preheat the oven to 160°C or 320°F, and cook for 12 to 15 minutes. For some mysterious reason I have found that macarons rise best if they are on two baking sheets (one on top of the other) instead of a single one. Turn the baking sheets (front to back) after 6 minutes for even cooking.

- Leave to cool completely before removing the macarons, and place on a wire rack to await filling. This is the 3rd tricky stage: You should not overcook the macarons, which should stay moist in the middle. Watch the coloration: if you have used food colouring, they should stay that colour and not become brown.

- Pair-up the macarons, i.e. by putting together a "top" and a "bottom" of about the same diameter. Then place "top" and "bottom" beside each other.

- The filling Example: Raspberry macarons Mix 35 g jam sugar with 50 g Fruit coulis (fruit purée) in a small pan.

- Bring to the boil on high heat, and boil for 3 minutes, stirring continuously.

- Leave to cool, and begin the assembly when the filling starts to thicken.

- Spread a teaspoonful of filling on "bottoms".

- Then place a "top" on each one, and press together lightly so that filling is squeezed just a little beyond the edge.

- The macarons are ready. Keep in the refrigerator.