

CD with templates
included

GOURMET FRENCH

Macarons



Unique
Flavors

OVER

75

Festive
Shapes

Mindy Cone



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Love at First Bite



REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I HAD A MACARON. Who could forget? I was curious about this unique sandwich cookie I had heard so much about and seen in every beautifully styled dessert display. As an entertainment and party blogger, I am always fascinated by party trends. So when I stumbled across them while on vacation, I just had to try one ... or five ... in the interest of research, of course.

It was *love* at first bite.

If you've never had a macaron, you're in for a surprise! It's quite the experience! There is a crisp thin outer shell, which gives way easily to a moist, chewy almond meringue cookie, followed by a silky center of flavorful filling. It is chewy yet soft, delicate yet flavorful, small yet satisfying! No wonder I became obsessed!

I returned home determined to locate every bakery within 100 miles that sold these wonderful cookies! With a luscious treat like this there were surely to be bakeries filled with them, right? Well, not quite. I could surely order them online then, right? Well, not for that price. Why were

these amazingly mouthwatering sandwich cookies so hard to find and at such a high price?

So I made a decision. I would make them.

Macarons have a reputation for being a bit tricky. Don't let the number of ingredients fool you—those four ingredients are high maintenance! It has been quite a journey to perfecting the art of the French macaron—many recipes, types of equipment, flavors, and baking temperatures and times have been tried and tested to finalize my own method. Most important, I discovered that making these is less about the recipe and more about the technique and lessons that you learn along the way. But don't worry—I'll dish all my tricks and tips to you! This book will not only guide you through the process of making a perfect macaron—in taste, texture, and appearance—but it will also open your eyes to a world of creative dessert opportunities! Who says a macaron has to be a circle? Who says you can't use sprinkles and candy melts to make them as adorable as they are tasty? Once you learn the basics for making consistently perfect, traditional macarons, the possibilities are endless in flavor and design! Using the templates provided in the accompanying CD ([click here for downloadable version](#)), you are no longer confined to the conventional circular shape. You can make apples, pumpkins, ghosts, trees, flowers, animals, cupcakes, and many other shapes to fit each season, holiday, or celebration.

This beautiful, delicate, gooey, colorful sandwich cookie has captivated my attention from the first bite, and I haven't turned back—so get

ready ... you will probably be the same!

History

of a French Macaron

Is a French macaron the same thing as a macaroon?



THE WORD MACARON encompasses a variety of cookies that are coconut and meringue based. So while it is not incorrect, it is not clear to what you are referring. To help distinguish between several different desserts, most have adopted the French one “o” spelling for the popular Parisian meringue-based sandwich cookie, thus leaving the double “o” term—*macaroon*—for the gooey, shredded coconut dollop dipped in chocolate.

Macaron cookies are thought to originate from Italy but were brought to France by Catherine de’ Medici in 1533, when she was married to the king of France, Henry II. The word *macaron* comes from the Italian *maccarone*, meaning “fine dough.” These first macarons were simple: almond powder, sugar, and egg made into a flat, plain biscuit. Lots of tales surround those early macarons, including an interesting one involving nuns in the city of Nancy who made these flat almond cookies and sold them to make a living. They became known as *les Soeurs Macarons*—the macaron sisters—and their recipe is still found in shops of Nancy to this day!

By the mid-seventeenth century, cities across France began to adapt the basic ingredients through small variations, and recipes began to emerge in French cookbooks. It was not until the 1900s that Pierre Desfontaines (second cousin of Louis Ernest Ladurée of the renowned Parisian tea salon founded in 1862—Ladurée) had the idea of adding ganache to a shell and topping it with another to create the sandwich double-decker shape we see popular today. With this concept, Ladurée has become an icon and standard for macarons with their mouth-watering flavors and consistent, perfect, simple beauty.



SHELL

FOOT

FILLING

Anatomy

of a French Macaron

The Parisian macaron has several important features:

THE SHELL should be smooth, shiny, and flat with no peaks. It should be crisp and thin such that it gives way easily with pressure. This shell comes only through proper rest time between piping and baking—an average of 30 minutes, depending on the humidity of your kitchen.

THE FOOT (*piéd*) should have a ruffled or frilled appearance that is an even and consistent size all around the macaron. This occurs during baking as the air escapes out the bottom of the cookie and lifts it up. The foot therefore is a sign of proper baking and ensures that the macaron will have the right texture—light, soft, and slightly chewy.

THE FILLING should be contained within the edge of the shells without spilling over but should be enough to be seen and separate the two shells. This is the main source of flavor for the macaron and a great opportunity to introduce additional texture as well.



Tools

GRAM SCALE

It may seem daunting to use, but this tool is *very* easy to use and *very* important! You can find a gram scale anywhere that sells baking tools—I found mine at my grocery store for only fifteen dollars. It is very important to be accurate when making macarons.

HAND MIXER OR STAND MIXER WITH WHISK ATTACHMENT

Both will work—it comes down to individual preference. I used my hand mixer for a long time . . . and I have the arm muscles to prove it!

SIFTER OR BOWL SIEVE

There are several reasons for sifting the dry ingredients. First, sifting will aerate the mixture and ensure the ingredients are evenly mixed. Second, sifting will remove larger almond pieces that will be discarded to ensure a smooth shell texture. I recommend sifting your dry shell ingredients two or three times. This is a particularly important step when making chocolate shells to incorporate the cocoa powder evenly.

BAKING SHEETS

Heavy aluminum baking sheets are best, but anything will do. If your sheets are particularly thin, doubling up will help protect the bottom of the macaron from browning.

PARCHMENT PAPER AND/OR SILICONE MAT

In my experience, I prefer name-brand, good-quality parchment paper. However, when I create a uniquely shaped macaron with delicate extremities or triangular points (ears, tails, and so on), I prefer a silicone mat. This way I can ensure that the details will rise evenly with the rest of the macaron during baking. Often parchment paper will stick to these smaller details and produce a footless or lopsided macaron, or worse—cause them to crack. Some chefs I have talked with recommend using both, by layering the parchment on top of a silicone mat. The reason for this is to shield the bottom of the macaron from browning—particularly if you have thin baking sheets. Whatever you decide, *do not* use aluminum foil! You will never get your macarons off them in one piece!

SPATULA

I am snobby when it comes to my spatulas! One of the most important steps of making a macaron is incorporating the dry ingredients into the meringue—this is called *macaronnage*. I look for a spatula that is flat with broad and fairly flexible (I prefer silicone) wings on both sides. But again ... I am very picky! If you plan on making more than one color or flavored shell, use a separate spatula for each. Washing risks the

possibility of introducing water or soap to the meringue, which will inhibit it.

CLEAN BOWLS

At minimum, you will need one large bowl for whisking meringues and one small bowl for dry ingredients. Avoid using a plastic bowl for whipping egg whites because they can harbor traces of grease or fat. Water, grease, and soap residue are enemies of meringues and prevent them from properly forming. So be sure your bowl is clean and dry!

PASTRY BAG AND PIPING TIPS

Unlike most cookies, macarons are piped onto a baking sheet. This requires a pastry bag and a few different tips. I use Wilton-brand featherweight or disposable pastry bags. For one recipe, I recommend a 16-inch bag, and for the half recipe, I recommend a 12-inch bag. You will need the Wilton 12 tip ($\frac{3}{4}$ cm.) or 10 tip (or a comparable product) for all of your basic circular macarons as well as most of the unique shapes. Depending on the design, you may also need a smaller tip. Wilton 3, 4, or 5 will work great. Piping your macarons is an important step to ensure they bake correctly! See the section on piping tips and techniques ([page 23](#)) for more details.

OVEN THERMOMETER

This tool will ensure that your temperature reading is accurate. Temperature accuracy is particularly important when making macarons

of different shapes and sizes because the oven time and temperature vary.

MAGNETS

A few small magnets will help to keep your parchment paper in place. If you are not careful when piping, the parchment paper can lift and adhere to the side of the macaron. As the cookie bakes, it rises upward off the parchment. The slightest adhesion can cause the delicate cookie to rise unevenly or crack. Using magnets to secure the parchment will minimize this issue. Leave the magnets as the shells rest, but remove them right before baking.

TOOTHPICKS

So many times I am reaching for a new toothpick! I use them when coloring my meringues, to pop air bubbles in shells, and to maneuver batter into delicate shapes. Be sure to have some of these handy!

FOOD PROCESSOR

If you prefer to make your own almond flour or if you need to grind nuts for the variation recipes, this will be a necessary tool. Grind the nuts as fine as possible to achieve a smooth shell texture. Additionally, this tool is often recommended as a way to combine your dry ingredients. When I first started making macarons, I followed this suggestion for every batch. One day I got lazy and decided to skip it. I could not tell the difference and have not used it since! Simply sifting 2 or 3 times produces the same result.



Ingredients



HERE ARE ONLY 4 ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS to making a French macaron shell. Here are some tips and tricks to make sure you are giving your cookies the best possible chance for success!

ALMOND FLOUR

This key ingredient is what gives the macaron shell its moist, chewy texture and nutty flavor. You can make your own or buy it from most grocery stores. If you make your own, try to get almonds that are blanched and skinless. I prefer to buy pre-ground almond flour. It may seem expensive at approximately 10 dollars per pound, but if you do the math it's not bad at all! A 1-pound bag will make about 4½ batches (about 100 sandwiched, 1½-inch macarons) which works out to less than 10 cents per cookie—quite the far cry from the bakery price tag of macarons!

POWDERED (ICING/CONFECTIONER'S) SUGAR

Nothing tricky here—any brand of powdered sugar will do.

EGG WHITES

- ✦ **FOR BEST RESULTS**, use aged room-temperature egg whites.
- ✦ **TO SEPARATE YOUR EGGS**, crack the egg and hold over a small bowl. Carefully separate the two shell halves, allowing the whites to fall into the bowl as you transfer the yolk from one half to the other. If *any* yolk gets into the whites, then you need to start over with a clean bowl and new egg whites because fats in the yolk will interfere with the formation of a meringue.
- ✦ **TO AGE YOUR EGGS**, I recommend letting them sit at least 24 hours at room temperature covered by a cheesecloth or paper towel. This will allow the eggs to slightly dehydrate and produce a much stronger meringue. A full recipe calls for 100g of aged egg whites. If you are using large eggs, this is approximately 4 egg whites for a single batch and 7 egg whites for a double batch. Be sure you are measuring the 100g after you have aged them.

SUPERFINE SUGAR

This is regular granulated sugar that has been ground down into smaller crystals. It is also known as caster sugar or baker's sugar. The finer crystals dissolve faster and result in a lighter texture. While it is readily available at most grocery stores, you can make your own by grinding granulated sugar in your food processor for a minute or two.

CREAM OF TARTAR

Not all macaron recipes call for this, but I prefer it as an insurance policy for my meringue! The mild acid helps the meringue to form and stay stable.

FOOD COLORING

One of the most beautiful things about macarons are their colors! From soft pastels to the bright and bold, it is important to understand how to color your macarons without hindering the final product. There are three main coloring systems: liquid, gel, and powder. As you read earlier, excess water will inhibit a meringue from forming or maintaining shape. Liquid and gel dye contain water. Thus, the best food coloring system is powdered dye. Since this is a dry ingredient, it is sifted in with the powdered sugar and almond flour. However, powdered dyes are less common and slightly more difficult to track down. The next best option is gel dye since it will have lower water content than liquid dye. Both of these are added to the meringue toward the end of whipping. If you are attempting a bold color, you will end up using quite a bit of dye. Start to incorporate your dye when the egg whites have soft peaks—this will help you avoid over-whisking the meringue if you need to add more color. If you find that you have used quite a bit of water-based dye, increase your drying time and baking time to compensate. Be aware that the color will fade slightly through whisking, mixing, resting, and baking. One trick I have learned is to use neon color dyes! You get bright results using much less dye.



Basic
MACARONS

Recipes, Tips & Photo Tutorials

NOW YOU ARE READY TO MAKE YOUR FIRST BATCH OF

• *Basic Macarons* •



THE RECIPE BELOW is for basic almond-flavored macarons that can be colored to match any flavor profile filling! While the ingredients change a bit with the variation recipes, the technique and tips are still applicable. For the macarons in the photos, I added a bit of brown food dye to add definition and to make features at certain steps more visible; however, the shells produced with this recipe will be off-white.

200g powdered sugar
110g almond flour
100g egg whites aged at room temperature
pinch cream of tartar
35g superfine sugar

1. **MEASURE** out all ingredients and set aside.



Measure all ingredients with a digital scale to ensure consistency.



2. **PREPARE** the baking sheets by lining them with a silicone mat, parchment paper, or both (see tool description on [page 7](#) to help decide what is best for you). Slide your printed template sheet underneath the parchment paper and set aside. Prepare piping bag to be filled and set aside.



If your parchment paper is rolling, use small magnets in the corners to keep the edges flat. Remove right before placing in the oven.



3. **SIFT** powdered sugar and almond flour 2 or 3 times through a sieve and set aside. Discard large almond pieces that remain in sieve.



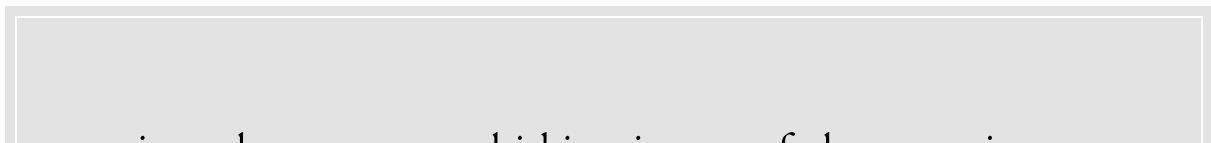
This mixture is called tant pour tant—meaning half almond flour and half powdered sugar.

4. **PLACE** the egg whites in a large bowl or in a stand mixer with wire whisk attachment. Whisk on low speed until egg whites become foamy. Add the pinch of cream of tartar. Continue to whisk on medium-low until soft peaks form. Slowly add in the superfine sugar. Once all of the sugar is incorporated, scrape down the sides with a spatula.



The whipped egg whites are called meringue.

5. **TURN** your mixer on medium-high and continue to whip until peaks begin to form. Slow down your speed and check your egg whites periodically until you reach a stiff meringue. If adding liquid or gel food dye, do so toward the end of whisking.



knowing when to stop whisking is one of the most important decisions when making a macaron. It is *not* possible to rescue a



K macaron that has been under-whisked. It is possible to salvage a macaron batter that has been over-whisked. When in doubt, whisk it a little more.



To check your meringue, remove your whisk attachment, give the whisk a good swipe around the entire bowl, and lift up to observe the peak. The peak created in the meringue should fold over itself just at the tip. The meringue will begin to lose its gloss and have a dull sheen when it is ready. If the meringue falls too quickly or has a highly glossy appearance, whisk for another minute and check again.



Coloring your batter: Be sure to review the food coloring section on [page 12](#) to determine what type of dye to use and when to incorporate it.



6. **SIFT** $\frac{1}{3}$ of the almond flour and powdered sugar mixture through the sieve into the meringue. Fold the dry mixture into the meringue. Repeat with the remaining mixture. Once all of the dry ingredients are incorporated, the batter will be thick and have a dull appearance. Continue to fold, pressing out air bubbles along the bottom or sides of the bowl after each turn. As you do so, the batter will loosen. Stop folding when the batter has a glossy sheen, has a lava-like consistency, and falls in ribbons off the spatula.



The process of folding the tant pour tant into the meringue is called macaronnage.

Tip



When to stop folding—this is the other *very* important decision in making a great macaron. Too many folds and your batter will be runny and produce cracked or hollow macarons. However, too few folds will produce a thick batter with peaks or high domes, it will cook unevenly, and it will crack.

Your batter will be ready when it falls off your spatula in a thick lava-like stream. It will collect on top of itself in the bowl, making ribbon lines that should disappear after 30 seconds. When you place the batter into the piping bag, it should only slightly ooze out of the tip.

Many recipes will give you a specific number of folds for the perfect batter. I hesitate to do this because, quite simply, everyone folds differently. It is more important to recognize

when the batter has the correct consistency than to count the number of folds.

7. **TRANSFER** the batter into a large pastry bag fitted with a round tip and pipe 1½-inch rounds on the parchment paper, following the templates underneath.



Be sure to read the section on piping techniques and how to use the templates ([page 23](#)).

8. **WHEN** all of the rounds are piped on the parchment, rap the sheet pans evenly on the work surface a few times to release any trapped air and encourage the batter to spread evenly. Remove templates from below your parchment paper carefully. Let the batter rest at room temperature for 20–40 minutes.



The wait time for macarons may vary based on the temperature and humidity in your kitchen. Macarons will be ready to bake when a dull skin forms over the top and they no longer stick to your finger when lightly pressed.

8. **PREHEAT** oven to 350 degrees. Reduce temperature to 300 degrees and bake one sheet at a time for 10 minutes, rotating the pan halfway through.



Check your macarons before removing them from the oven. If you gently press down and the top wiggles, then cook for another minute and recheck. They will be ready when they are firm with little side-to-side movement.

Macarons should *not* brown. All ovens are different. I suggest getting an oven thermometer to be sure your oven is accurate. Baking times will also vary depending on humidity. When in doubt, overbake your macarons instead of underbaking them. A longer maturation process in the refrigerator with a filling can

Compensate for an overcooked macaron.

Rotating halfway through will help the macarons cook evenly and reduce browning along the foot of the macaron. These baking temperatures and times are based off a conventional oven. Convection ovens will use a lower temperature and shorter baking time.



9. REMOVE sheet from oven and allow to cool for 5 minutes before removing from the parchment.

10. MATCH UP similar-sized shells into pairs and sandwich with filling (pages 205–247) of your choice.



For quick assembly, line up the pairs with one shell facing up and the other facing down. Pipe the filling onto the shells with the flat side up. Then place the matching shell on top and gently press them together so the filling just hits the edge of the shells.



Shells can be filled immediately after they are cooled, or they can be stored unfilled in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

MAKES: One recipe makes about 4 dozen 1–1½-inch shells, which means 2 dozen sandwiched macaron cookies.

TIME:

10 minutes—Prep ingredients and materials

30 minutes—Make and pipe macaron shells

30 minutes—Rest time

10 minutes—Baking time

5 minutes—Cool

5 minutes—Fill and sandwich (with a prepared filling)

STORAGE: Filled macarons can be stored in an airtight container for up to a week. They are *best* after about 12 hours in the fridge and then warmed to room temperature ... if you can wait that long! They can be frozen for up to a month in an airtight container.

Variation

MACARON SHELL RECIPES



WHILE THE BULK OF THE FLAVOR PROFILE of a macaron will be in the filling, the shell can provide an opportunity to complement or echo the filling beautifully and add a delicate complexity and depth of flavor. These shell variations follow the same technique as the basic macaron. Liquid extracts and flavorings should be added to the meringues toward the end of the whipping process (at the same time you add the coloring). Powdered flavorings and flour should be added to the *tant pour tant* in the food processor or as you sift the dry ingredients.

• VANILLA BEAN •

200g powdered sugar

110g almond flour

100g egg whites at room temperature

pinch cream of tartar

35g superfine sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. vanilla bean extract

(or 1 tsp. vanilla extract or seeds from a vanilla bean)

• CHOCOLATE •

200g powdered sugar
110g almond flour
10g cocoa powder
100g egg whites at room temperature
pinch cream of tartar
35g superfine sugar

* Add two minutes baking time for these.

• CINNAMON •

200g powdered sugar
110g of almond flour
1½ tsp. cinnamon
100g egg whites at room temperature
pinch cream of tartar
35g superfine sugar

• PISTACHIO •

200g powdered sugar

70g almond flour
40g pistachio flour
(ground pistachio with the shell and skin removed)
100g egg whites at room temperature
pinch cream of tartar
35g superfine sugar

• HAZELNUT •

200g powdered sugar
70g almond flour
40g hazelnut flour
100g egg whites at room temperature
pinch cream of tartar
35g superfine sugar



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