



Chocolate Macarons with Chocolate Chilli Ganache



DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM



PREPARATION TIME: 30 MINUTES + 1 DAY FOR DRYING OUT ALMOND MEAL



COOKING TIME: 25 MINUTES



SERVES: MAKES 40 FILLED MACARONS

Ingredients

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups (200 g) almond meal
 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups (200 g) pure icing sugar, sieved
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (25 g) good quality cocoa powder, sieved
 175 g (about 5-6) sieved egg whites* at room temperature
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cream of tartar
 1 cup (220 g) caster sugar
 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp (50mL) water
 Chocolate chilli ganache filling
 300g dark chocolate
 pinch chilli powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 ml) thickened cream

*Extra large egg whites weigh approximately 35g, so allow 5-6 egg whites for this recipe.

Method

Preheat oven to 150°C CircoTherm®.

Place almond meal, icing sugar and cocoa in a food processor and pulse to get a finer consistency. Sieve through a fine mesh into a large mixing bowl.

Divide egg whites in two batches. Place one batch of egg whites in an electric mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, add cream of tartar and set aside.

Mix the remaining egg whites into almond mix to make a thick paste, then set aside.

Make sugar syrup with caster sugar and water in a small pot over medium heat. When thermometer reaches 110°C, start whisking egg whites on low speed. Gradually increase speed until the egg whites are thick. (If the sugar syrup is getting too hot before the egg whites are ready, add 3 tsp cold water to syrup to reduce the temperature).

When sugar syrup reaches 118°C, slowly pour down the side of the mixer as you continue to whisk the egg whites on medium speed. Continue to mix for about 10 minutes until the meringue cools (the bowl should still feel slightly warm).

Using a pastry scraper, start mixing the meringue into the almond meal paste. You don't have to be gentle. Continue to mix until the paste is supple and shiny (it is quite important to have the correct consistency. The mixture should be oozy and lava-like. When you fold the mixture over itself, it will spread slowly).

Use a pastry bag fitted with a 1cm plain nozzle and pipe onto lined heavy baking tray. Rap the baking tray on the bench firmly a couple of times to get rid of any large air bubbles, settle the shape of the macaron and help make the pied or 'foot'.

Bake for about 25 minutes. Check that the macarons are dry by testing whether the top and the pied are firm (if they are soft and the sides are moist, leave them a few more minutes).

Remove from oven and allow to cool on baking trays, then remove and place on wire racks to cool completely.

To make the chocolate chilli ganache, bring a medium pot of water to boil. Remove from heat. Place chocolate, chilli and cream in a heatproof bowl over the pot until melted (make sure that the bowl doesn't come into contact with the hot water). Stir well, then set aside and allow the ganache to thicken.

Place ganache in piping bag and pipe onto one macaron, then sandwich with the other macaron. Repeat with remaining macarons and filling. Place on a tray and refrigerate or freeze overnight before serving.

Can be successfully frozen.

Notes

- Good quality equipment is essential; digital scales, digital thermometer, good quality baking trays, silicon baking mat, flexible plastic pastry scraper, piping bag and nozzles
- Use a double tray (two equal sized trays stacked) when baking macarons – this helps even heat distribution
- Use a silicon baking mat for perfectly shaped round macarons
- For a batch of even sized macarons, use a black texta to trace circles around a 4cm round pastry cutter onto baking paper. Leave room for the macarons to spread. Then place the silicon mat over the top and use the circles as a guide when piping.
- Uses bake stable food colouring. Powders, gels and pastes are used for more intense colours. These are found at specialty cake decorating and food stores. Liquid food colouring will give paler colours and is available from supermarkets.
- As you sandwich the macarons together, twist to 'screw' down as this helps evenly distribute the filling