



All About Parisian Macarons

What's taking pastry shops and restaurants by storm? French macaroons, *les macarons*, light-as-a-feather almond cookies, the sweet of choice among Paris' elite. The Wall Street Journal reports these enchanting pastries may even surpass the cupcake in popularity.

Unlike the chewy, dense coconut macaroon, *macarons*, are two smooth-topped almond meringues sandwiched with delectable fillings. The dome-shaped cookies, in a rainbow of colors, have a delicately-crunchy surface and a meltingly-tender interior complemented by a rich buttercream or jam filling. The standard-bearer of *macarons* is La Durée in Paris, credited with inventing the cookie as it is known today. Pastry chef Pierre Hermé, who worked at Ladurée before opening his own shops, vies for the title of Best Macaron with his innovative flavor combinations such as white truffle and hazelnut, caramel and fleur de sel or rose and pistachio. Only recently have these cookies been appearing in the United States. You'll spot them in dozen of pastry shops in every major U.S. city. Even Starbucks nationwide carried them over the holidays.



These refined cookies take some skill to master but offer many rewards. "It requires some finesse to accomplish the perfect balance between crunchy shell, the chewy interior and the creamy filling," says Chef Jacquy Pfeiffer, co-founder of the French Pastry School. Chef Pfeiffer has shared with us some of the techniques for making *macarons* that he and his staff teach to students at the school. Chef Pfeiffer and other acknowledge that the colors and flavor possibilities of French *macaron* make them especially appealing. Mother's appreciate their elegance says Chef Pfeiffer and kids want to tray all the pretty colors. Adding to their appeal, *macarons* are gluten-free. And, at an average price of \$2.00 each, this should sweeten their appeal.

Making French-Style Macaron

Macarons are basically an almond meringue cookie. They are made from just a few ingredients: almond flour, confectioner's sugar, egg whites, flavorings and colorings if desired. To create their smooth surface, the almond flour should be finely milled. In the bakeshop, Chef Pfeiffer advises grinding the almond flour in a food processor with all of the powdered sugar in the formula. Sifting should not be needed after that although many bakers will sift the mixture through a fine sieve before using.



Sifting almond flour and powdered sugar.



Properly whipped egg whites for *macarons*.

French-style *macaron* batter is made by folding the finely ground blanched almond flour into egg whites beaten with sugar. Proper folding ensures that the *macarons* will bake with a characteristic smooth surface and a satin sheen. Chef Pfeiffer explains that proper mixing can confuse a pastry chef. "Meringues are whipped egg whites that give volume and a light texture to mousses, sponges, soufflés and all kinds of fillings," he says. In a special step called *macaronnage*, the almond flour is folded into the egg whites to a point where the mixture slightly deflates. "Most of the time you're taught that deflation is a bad thing."

This is the trickiest part for the students, say Chef Pfeiffer. "The first few times chefs make them, they will often over deflate the mixture or not do it enough." You fold the almond flour into the batter until it becomes shiny and falls from the spatula in thick ribbons. Chef Pfeiffer recommends using a spatula to drop a bit of the mixture back in the bowl. "If it settles right away, it's been over-mixed; if it doesn't budge, it hasn't been mixed enough."



Properly folded egg whites and almond flour.



Piping *macaron* batter before baking.

The batter is piped into small rounds on parchment or silicone-lined sheets. For best results, the tip mark left when piping should dissolve within one minute. If the batter has been insufficiently folded, the tip mark will remain and the surface may crack and be dull after baking. Overmixed batter will be runny. Pipe a test row of the

batter to determine if it has been properly mixed.

When properly made, *macarons* have a little foot on the bottom where the eggs whites have risen. This is caused when the top of the meringue shell firms and rises slightly. The foot should be of the same thickness around the bottom of each the *macaron* shell.



The foot appears when the *macaron* is baking.



Piping a thin even layer of filling on a *macaron* shell.

“One of the tricks to a great *macaron* is to fill the shells and then let it rest for 24-48 hours in a refrigerator before serving it,” says Chef Pfeiffer. This gives time for the filling to bond with the *macaron* shell. *Macarons* freeze quite well. Some pastry shops, says Pfeiffer, even freeze them before shipping them overnight to their

customers. By the time they arrive, they have thawed and regained their crisp exterior.

OUR TIPS FOR PREPARING AND SELLING PARISIAN-STYLE ALMOND MACARONS



- Work with ingredients at room temperature. Separate the egg whites 24 hours before using.
- Select extra-fine-milled blanched almond flour to achieve the delicate texture. Sift the powdered sugar to ensure a smooth product.
- Letting the piped batter sit 15 to 30 minutes before baking produces a *macaron* with the characteristic smooth, shiny surface.
- Bake at a low temperature so that the *macarons* do not brown. Double panning ensures evenly baked cookies.
- Cool the *macarons* before removing them from the silicone mat or parchment paper. Or pour a few drops of water under the silicone mat or baking paper when the *macarons* are removed from the oven to help release them.
- Select a filling that complements the color of the batter. Buttercream, preserves or citrus curd work well. Whether traditional or offbeat, the filling’s flavor should be intense enough to balance the sweetness of the cookie.
- Begin your *macaron* program slowly, offering 4 or 5 flavors in an array of colors. As your customers’ interest expands, add more flavors.
- Keep *macarons* in a cool, dry place as they become soggy with humidity. Refrigerate any *macarons* to hold them for the next day. They may also be filled then frozen for longer keeping but should always be enjoyed at room temperature.

FRENCH-STYLE ALMOND MACARONS (Gerbet Macaron)

This macaron formula uses a common French meringue. Other formulas may use a Swiss or Italian meringue.

Yield: 90 Cookies, approximately 1 in. each

Blanched almond flour, room temperature	1 lb. 2 oz.	540 g
Powdered sugar	1 lb. 7 oz.	690 g
Egg whites, room temperature	14 oz. (14 whites)	420 g
Granulated sugar	7 oz.	210 g
Cream of tartar	pinch	pinch
Dried egg whites	0.30 oz. (2 tsp.)	9 g
Liquid or powdered food coloring	as needed	as needed
Buttercream, ganache, jam, lemon curd or other filling	as needed	as needed

- 1 In a food processor fitted with the metal blade, mix the almond flour and powdered sugar until evenly blended. Set aside.
- 2 In a mixer fitted with a whip attachment whip the egg whites until foamy. Stir together the granulated sugar, cream of tartar and dried egg whites, then add the mixture to the foamed egg whites in a steady stream.
- 3 Whip the egg whites on medium speed until the mixture is very stiff. Add the food coloring (if using). Remove the mixture from the machine.
- 4 Whisk the egg whites by hand using a balloon whisk to restore a uniform smooth appearance to the mixture. Using a spatula, fold in one-quarter of the almond and powdered sugar mixture. Add the remaining dry ingredients and fold the batter until it becomes shiny and falls from the spatula in thick ribbons. If the mixture looks dull, continue to fold until the batter develops a shine.
- 5 Using a pastry bag fitted with a medium plain tip, pipe the batter onto silicone baking mats or paper-lined sheet pans. Each *macaron* should measure 1 inch wide and ¼ inch tall. If the mark left by the piping tip does not dissolve within 1 minute, stir the batter a little more. Then continue piping.
- 6 Let the piped batter rest for 15 minutes.
- 7 Bake at 325°F until the *macarons* can almost be removed from the silicone or parchment paper, approximately 18 to 22 minutes.
- 8 Allow the cookies to cool, then remove them from the silicone mats or sheet pans.
- 9 Spread a thin layer of buttercream, lemon curd, jam or ganache on the bottom (pan side) of one cookie and gently press another cookie onto the filling top side out.

To Sample Parisian Macarons in New York

We've put together a Google map of bakeries that specialize in macarons in New York. Click here for more information: [Macaronathon™](#)

About The Company

From around the corner to around the world, American Almond Products Company understands bakeries. It's where we started over 87 years ago and we've learned a lot along the way. Providing ingredients that inspire bakers and pastry chefs to create new cakes, cookies, chocolates, frozen desserts and pastries is what we do.



Founded in 1924, American Almond Products Company is America's premier producer of almond paste, marzipan and other nut products for the baking and confectionery industries. Relying on small batches to ensure consistent quality, American Almond™ is the secret ingredient of bakers and confectioners nationwide.

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