

LEMON BUTTERCREAM MACARONS

(from the Bewitching Kitchen, adapted from Crafsy)

for the shells:

198 g powdered sugar

115 g almond meal

113 g egg whites (aged for three days)

a pinch of cream of tartar

100 g granulated sugar

Green and Yellow Gel colors from AmeriColor

2 drops vanilla extract

for the filling:

3 eggs

1 cup (200 grams) sugar

grated zest from 2 large lemons

juice of 2 large lemons

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (230 g) chilled butter, cut in pieces

Line 3 heavy baking sheets with parchment paper or Silpat mats. Layer the powdered sugar, almond meal and lavender in a food processor or mini processor. Pulse until the mixture looks like fine meal, about 15 seconds. Pass through a sieve and transfer to a small bowl. Set aside.

Place the egg whites and pinch of cream of tartar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Make sure that the bowl and the whisk are impeccably clean. Starting on medium speed, whip the whites with the cream of tartar until they look like light foam. The whites should not appear liquid. The foam will be light and should not have any structure.

Slowly rain in the granulated sugar, trying to aim the stream between the whisk and the side of the bowl. Turn the speed up to medium-high. Continue to whip the meringue until it is soft and shiny. It should look like marshmallow creme. Add the gel colors and the vanilla. Staying at medium-high speed, whip the egg whites until the mixture begins to dull and the lines of the whisk are visible on the

surface of the meringue. Check the peak. It should be firm. Transfer the whites to a medium bowl.

Fold in the almond meal mixture in three increments. Paint the mixture halfway up the side of the bowl, using the flat side of a spatula. Scrape the mixture down to the center of the bowl. Repeat two or three times, then check to see if the mixture slides slowly down the side of the bowl. Put the mixture in a piping bag fitted with a Wilton #8 tip or another kind of your preference. Pipe rounds of the batter.

Slam each sheet hard four to six times on the counter. Then fist bump each end of the sheet's underside twice. Let the unbaked macarons dry until they look dull but not overly dry. Drying time depends on humidity. In a dry climate, the macarons can dry in 15 to 20 minutes; in a humid climate, it can take 35 to 40 minutes.

While the macarons are drying, heat the oven to 330 F (170 C/gas mark 3). Bake one sheet at a time on the middle rack. Check in 11 minutes. If the tops slide, then bake for 2 to 3 more minutes. The macarons should release without sticking. Check one or two. If they stick, put them back in the oven for 1 to 2 more minutes. Let the macarons cool for 10 minutes before removing from the pan.

Make the filling: Beat together the eggs and the sugar with a Kitchen Aid type mixer on high speed. Try to get the butter to double in volume by beating. Transfer to a saucepan and add the lemon zest and juice. Stir until it thickens slightly and all liquid is incorporated. Pour the mixture into a bowl, cover with plastic wrap and cool in the fridge.

Once the lemon mixture is cold, put back into the bowl of the mixer, and beat with the wire whisk for a couple of minutes. Start adding the pieces of chilled butter, whipping until incorporated. The mixture is now ready to be used to fill the shells.

Assemble the macarons: find two macarons similar in size and add a good amount of filling to the bottom of one of them. Place the other on top and squeeze gently to take the filling all the way to the edge. Ideally, store in the fridge for 24 hours before savoring them.

