

WHITE CHOCOLATE PEPPERMINT MACARONS *(inspired by several sources)*

for the shells:

150g almond flour (I used fine ground from Bob Mill's)
150g powdered sugar
110g egg whites, divided (55g + 55g)
red food gel color (I used Americolor)
pinch of salt
150g granulated sugar
40 mL water (a little over 2 +1/2 tablespoons)

for the filling:

200g white chocolate (I used Lindt)
68g heavy whipping cream
1 to 2 tsp peppermint crunch (to taste)

for decoration:

green and white sprinkles (I used nonpareils)

Prepare white chocolate ganache filling. Place chocolate cut in small pieces in a large Pyrex measuring cup. Heat the cream to almost boiling and pour over the chocolate. Let it sit for a couple of minutes, then gently stir. When totally dissolved, add the peppermint crunch, tasting as you go. Reserve, cooling at room temperature for a couple of hours or sticking in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Make the shells. Heat the oven to 300 F. Line two baking sheets with Silpat or parchment paper, and prepare a pastry bag with a plain tip with 1/2 inch opening, or slightly smaller.

Grind together the powdered sugar and almond powder, using a food processor, to obtain a fine powder. Sift through a sieve into large bowl. Mix the first portion (55g) egg whites with red food color, then add it to the sieved mixture of almond and sugar. It will form a paste, a bit thick. Try to incorporate the color homogeneously, keep in mind it will be lighter when you add the meringue to it, so make sure you have a very nice red tone.

Make the Italian meringue. Take a deep breath first so you are relaxed (very important). Place the other 55g egg whites and pinch of salt into the bowl of a Kitchen Aid type mixer. Set aside while you prepare the sugar syrup. In a small saucepan combine granulated sugar with water and place on medium heat. Using a candy thermometer measure syrup temperature. When it reaches 230 F start whipping the egg whites. When the syrup reaches 244 F pour it over the whipped egg whites while mixing continuously. Continue beating until the bowl has cooled slightly, and glossy peaks have formed.

Add the whipped whites over the almonds mixture and using a rubber or silicone spatula gently fold in until combined and smooth. Make sure to “paint” the mixture on the walls of the bowl so that you get a smooth, lava-like consistency. Transfer the mixture to the piping bag fitted with a 1/2 inch (1 cm) plain tip. Pipe the batter to make macarons the size you like. Rap the baking sheet a few times firmly on the counter top to flatten the macarons and to remove air bubbles. Add sprinkles on top, if using. Let them sit at room temperature until a skin forms, about 30 minutes.

Bake for 18 to 20 minutes. They are ready when the top doesn't move freely when you hold them and twist gently. Let cool slightly before removing from baking sheet. Marry two by two of similar size, add the filling and place in the fridge overnight. Serve them at room temperature next day. They freeze well too.