

PURPLE STAR MACARONS

(adapted from Colette Christian's Craftsy version)

for the shells:

198 g powdered sugar
113 g almond meal
113 g egg whites at room temperature
a pinch of cream of tartar
100 g granulated sugar
purple food gel from Chefmaster
1/8 tsp vanilla extract

for the filling:

3 tablespoons (40gr) unsalted butter, softened
3/4 cup (100gr) powdered sugar
2 teaspoons heavy cream
2 tablespoon strawberry jam (I used this recipe)
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon salt

to decorate:

white candy melts dyed purple
silver pearl dust
vodka or lemon extract

Line 2 or 3 heavy baking sheets with parchment paper or Silpat mats. Layer the powdered sugar and almond meal in a food 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 color 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.

Switch to paddle attachment. Add half the almond meal mixture, turn the mixer on low and mix for about 3 seconds. Stop and add the rest of the almond mixture, turn the mixer on low, and process for about 5 more seconds. It should still be reasonably thick, but the grains of almond should be more or less disappearing in the batter. Remove the bowl from the mixer, and finish the macaronage by hand. Put the mixture in a piping bag fitted with one of the tips listed above. Pipe on the prepared baking sheets.

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 300 F. 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: Whisk the butter with the powdered sugar until creamy, slowly add the heavy cream and continue whisking until fluffy and smooth. I used a hand held electric beater. Add the vanilla, salt, and finally the strawberry jam. Whisk to incorporate, keep in the fridge until needed. Place it in a piping bag fitted with a star tip like Wilton 1M.

Paint each shell before assembling. In a very small bowl, mix silver pearl dust with vodka or lemon extract until it has a nice consistency to brush on the shells. Use a fan brush to get a nice effect. Assemble the macarons: find two macarons similar in size and add a good amount of buttercream filling on top of one shell, close with the other, and squeeze gently.

To make the stars, dye a small amount of melted candy purple. Spread on a piece of parchment as a thin layer. Let it set at room temperature, cut star shapes. Right before using, add a bit of silver pearl dust and shake them gently around to cover lightly. Glue one or more stars to the top of each assembled macaron using candy melts.