

4th OF JULY MACARONS WITH CHOCOLATE COCONUT FILLING

(from the Bewitching Kitchen)

For the shells:

200g powdered sugar
115 g almond flour
115 g egg whites at room temperature (approx. 4 eggs)
1/8 tsp of cream of tartar
100 g granulated sugar
¼ tsp vanilla paste or extract
red, blue, purple and black food gel dye

for the chocolate-coconut ganache:

180g cream of coconut
1/8 tsp salt
200g chocolate, cut in small pieces (II used 70% Lindt)

to decorate:

white non-pareils

Make the shells:

Line 3 heavy baking sheets with parchment/baking paper or Silpat mats. Layer the powdered sugar, and ground almonds in a food processor. Pulse until the mixture looks like fine meal, about 12 pulses. Pass through a sieve and transfer to a small bowl or to a sheet of parchment/baking paper. Set aside.

Place the egg whites and 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 in five additions, trying to aim the stream between the whisk and the side of the bowl. Turn the speed up to high. Continue to whip the meringue until it is soft and shiny. It should look like marshmallow creme (marshmallow fluff). Add the vanilla. 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 ground almond/almond meal mixture in two 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. Divide the batter in three parts, dye 1/3 red, dye 1/3 blue (using a mixture of blue, purple and black to get the tone of blue you like). Leave the final third white. Pour the three batters side by side over plastic wrap, enclose them wrapping the plastic around like a sausage. Drop the bag with the three colors inside a piping bag fitted with a round piping tip. If you want to make a set of solid color, divide the batter to get a bigger amount of that color and place some of it in a separate piping bag.

Pipe rounds over Silpat or parchment paper in a half-sheet pan and then slam each sheet hard four to six times on the counter. Add sprinkles, if like. 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 (150 C/130C Fan oven/Gas Mark 2). Bake one sheet at a time on the middle rack. Check in 11 minutes. If the tops slide or move (independently of the 'feet' when you gently twist the top), then bake for 2 to 3 more minutes. Check one or two. If they move when gently touched, put them back in the oven for 1 to 2 more minutes until they don't move when

touched. Let the macaroons cool for 10 minutes before removing from the pan. The macarons should release without sticking.

Make the ganache. Bring the coconut puree and salt to the boil in a small pan. Remove from the heat and pour over the chocolate in a bowl. Stir well with a whisk until combined. Cover the ganache with plastic wrap touching the surface and leave at room temperature for at least 1 hour. Do not place in the fridge. Whip with a handheld blender for a minute or so to get a slightly thicker consistency for piping.

Match shells and add the filling (I used a piping bag cut open, no piping tip). Decorations for the small macarons were made with Candy Melts (white) and star-shaped sprinkles. Place the macarons in the fridge overnight to mature before enjoying or freezing them for later.