

CHAI-BUTTERFLY MACARONS

(from the Bewitching Kitchen)

For the shells:

200g Icing/powdered sugar

115 g Ground Almonds/Almond Meal

1 bag of Double Spice Chai Tea (Stash)

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

orange, yellow and red food dye (adjusted to get the color of your favorite butterfly)

for the lemon buttercream:

40g unsalted butter, softened

130g powdered sugar

2 teaspoons heavy cream

1 tablespoon lemon juice

zest of 1/2 lemon

pinch of salt

for antennas (optional):

melted Candy melts

black food dye

Make the shells:

Line 3 heavy baking sheets with parchment/baking paper or Silpat mats. Layer the powdered sugar, almond flour and contents of the chai tea bag 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 cream (marshmallow fluff). Add the vanilla and food gel dye. 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 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. Put the mixture in a piping bag fitted with your choice of piping tip. Pipe shells, making two large circles touching side by side, and two smaller right below them. Use a needle or a toothpick to smooth the surface and join the circles, to get the right shape.

Slam each sheet hard four to six times on the counter/worktop. 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 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.

When they are cold, match the shells and decorate one of them using a black food pen.

For the lemon buttercream filling:

In a mixing bowl with whisk attachment, beat the butter until fluffy. Add powdered sugar, heavy cream, lemon juice, lemon zest and salt and beat until well combined. Transfer the buttercream into a pastry bag and fill the macarons. If you want to make antennas, use Candy Melts dyed black, place in a small piping bag, no need to use a piping tip, just cut a small hole. Pipe antennas (make more than you need, because they break easily). Let them set. Stick them on the head of the butterfly, in between the two shells.

Store the macs in the fridge for 24 hours for perfect texture.