

CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER MACARONS

(adapted from [this post](#))

For the shells:

200g Icing/powdered sugar

115 g ground almonds/almond meal

7g fat-free cocoa powder

115 g egg whites at room temperature (approx. 4 eggs)

1/8 tsp of cream of tartar (optional)

100 g granulated sugar

¼ tsp vanilla paste or extract

1 drop brown food gel

1 drop red food gel

Line 3 heavy baking sheets with parchment/baking paper or Silpat mats. Layer the powdered/icing sugar, ground almonds/almond meal, and cocoa powder 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. Add the drops of food color and continue whisking. 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. Put the mixture in a piping bag fitted with your choice of piping tip (round, ¼ or ½ inch in diameter or 6 – 12 mm). If you don't have a macaron mat, draw circles on baking/parchment paper about 2 inches/5cm in diameter & turn the paper over before placing on the baking sheets. Pipe shells, I like to count numbers in my head and use the same count for each shell so they end up similar in size.

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

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

PEANUT BUTTER BUTTERCREAM

65g smooth peanut butter (Jiffy is fine)
50g cream cheese, room temperature
30g butter, room temperature
250g powdered sugar
milk or heavy cream to adjust consistency, if needed

Place the peanut butter, cream cheese, and butter in the bowl of an electric mixer. Cream until light, about 2 minutes. Add the powdered sugar and whisk on low-speed. Once the powdered sugar is incorporated, increase the speed to medium-high and whisk until very creamy. Adjust the consistency if needed with powdered sugar or milk. Place in a piping bag fitted with your choice of tip, and use to fill macaron shells.

Optional decoration: drizzle of Chocolate Royal icing or melted chocolate plus sprinkles of your choice.