

 Cecile Cannone



macarons

Authentic French Cookie Recipes from the **MACARON**
CAFE



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Ulysses Press

To my mom and sisters, with whom I always had fun in the kitchen





INTRODUCTION

Back in 1995, on a sunny afternoon in Central Park, my husband, Arnaud, and I were trying to figure out how to make our dream come true: We wanted to live in this amazing melting pot of Manhattan.

At that time our home was in Paris, where I had grown up. But in 2007, we returned to America from France with this oh-so-subtly-delicious recipe for a little almond delight called the *macaron*. We established our first MacarOn Café in New York's Fashion District, and French macarons—sometimes spelled “macaroons” (but pronounced ma-ka-RHON), not to be confused with the coconut cookies of the same name—quickly became the hot new treat in the neighborhood. We will never forget the fantastic welcome we received—the warmth and enthusiasm of the New Yorkers who flocked to our shop. Thanks to them, we even went beyond our original dream and opened a second location on Madison Avenue in the summer of 2010.

But the macaron phenomenon has exploded in popularity far beyond New York City.

Widely heralded as “the new cupcake,” the macaron has been featured in media all over the country and the craze shows no sign of slowing down. And with the increasing market of consumers looking for gluten-free foods, macarons have become *the* trendy choice. They are made with almond flour, not wheat flour; sugar and egg whites are the other main ingredients.





Macarons come in innumerable flavors and hues but are brilliant in their simplicity: two delicate, crispy, soft shells, ready to be filled with jam, chocolate ganache, or buttercream. It is thought that they originated in Italy and were brought to France by Catherine de Medici in the sixteenth century. Their almond flavor and dome shape seduced the French court, and since then macarons have been served at the finest tables all over the world. Now it is your turn to make them and serve them at your own table!

With a little practice, and the guidance provided in the following pages, anyone can create these little delicacies at home. Offer them to your family, give them as gifts, or impress the guests at your

next party. I will show you how you can personalize your macarons with sugar flowers or other decorations, and even how you can make macaron lollipops—perfect for children’s birthday parties or baby showers. A tower of macarons makes a dazzling centerpiece for your table, and has even been used as an alternative to a wedding cake. So use your imagination, and have fun.



A bientôt!

Cecile Cannone

Owner and chef, MacarOn Café





INGREDIENTS

Macaron shells call for only a short list of ingredients. For filling ingredients, see the recipe beginning on page 49.

Almond flour or almond meal

Check the date of packaging—you want the freshest almond flour possible. Store it in an airtight container in the bottom of your refrigerator. A day or two before baking, scoop up a handful of the almond flour and squeeze it between your fingers; if it sticks together, it will need to be dried out a bit. Spread it on a rimmed baking sheet and dry it in a 120°F oven for 10 minutes. If your oven temperature does not go that low, just use the lowest temperature available. Remove and let cool in a dry place. You can also grind your own almond flour using high-quality almonds.

Egg whites

Only the whites of the eggs are used for the macaron shells. Reserve the yolks for another recipe, such as Crème Brûlée (page 119). Separate whites from yolks 2 or 3 days before baking; store loosely covered in the refrigerator. Two hours before you start making your macarons, take the egg whites out of the refrigerator, uncover them, and let them come to room temperature.

Powdered egg whites

If you bake during especially humid weather, adding a small amount of powdered egg whites will help stabilize your macaron batter. You can buy powdered egg whites in many supermarkets, in specialty baking stores, or online.

Powdered sugar

Also called confectioners' or icing sugar, this has cornstarch added (usually about 3%) to prevent

clumping; if you have a choice, the powdered sugar with the lowest percentage of cornstarch is best.

Granulated sugar

Choose superfine sugar (sometimes called ultrafine or baker's sugar) for your macaron shells—it's easily incorporated, producing a smooth batter and light texture.

Food coloring

You can color your macaron shells however you want—without coloring, they'll be pale brown. Gel paste food coloring is recommended over the liquid kind, since any excess moisture can cause the shells to crack.







EQUIPMENT

A convection oven (with a fan) is ideal for baking macarons—the heat circulates evenly throughout the oven, producing wonderful macarons with high “feet.” A conventional electric oven can also be used; a gas oven is less successful for macarons. Every oven bakes differently, so be sure to use the correct temperature for the type of oven you have. The first time you bake macarons, carefully follow the timing and temperatures indicated in the recipe. Watch your macarons closely and adjust the baking time or temperature as necessary. For example, if your first batch starts to brown, bake the next tray for 1 minute less.

You’ll need a precise scale, or dry measuring cups—quantities in this book are given in both volume (cups) and weight (ounces and grams); measuring your dry ingredients by weight will give you the most precise results.



- liquid measuring cup
- measuring spoons
- electric mixer
- food processor
- strainer (medium size)
- mixing bowls
- rubber spatula
- saucepan
- candy thermometer (for Italian meringue macarons)
- baking sheets
- pastry bag
- number-8 tip
- parchment paper
- timer
- cooling racks

CHAPTER 1

The Shells

Macarons are made from two basic recipes for meringue:

French style and Italian style. The ingredients are the same for both, but the amounts are a little different.

The French version is especially sensitive to humidity, but the resulting cookie seems to melt in your mouth—exactly what we expect of a macaron. This is the recipe we use at the MacarOn Café.

The Italian macaron is more stable but has less of a “melting” quality. It’s also a little more difficult to make, as you have to pour hot sugar syrup into your egg whites while beating them and you must be very precise with temperatures.

Since these little meringues are so sensitive to humidity, it’s best to avoid baking when the weather is especially damp or humid (more than 60% relative humidity).

Before you bake

To make a template for piping your macaron shells, draw 2½-inch circles on a large sheet of paper using a compass or tracing around a cookie cutter or a small glass. Space the circles 1 inch apart. Position this pattern on your baking sheet, then place parchment paper on top of it. After piping your shells, carefully pull out the pattern to use on the next baking sheet.



French meringue macarons

Makes 50 to 60 shells, for 25 to 30 filled macarons

2¾ cups (8.8 ounces/250 grams) almond flour
2¾ cups (12.4 ounces/350 grams) powdered sugar
1 cup egg whites (from 7 or 8 eggs), at room temperature
pinch of salt
2 teaspoons powdered egg whites, *if weather is humid*
¾ cup (5.3 ounces/150 grams) superfine granulated sugar
5 to 7 drops gel paste food coloring (optional)

STEP 1: Line your baking sheets with parchment paper.

STEP 2: Blend the almond flour with the powdered sugar in the food processor to make a fine powder (or sift together, discarding any large crumbs and adding a bit more almond flour and powdered sugar as needed to compensate). Then sift the mixture through a strainer until it's as fine as you can get. This keeps crumbs from forming on the macaron tops as they bake.



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