

Beginner's Guide To Making Macarons



My beginner's guide to making macarons will walk you through everything you need to know about this special dessert. I take away all the guesswork and give extreme detail so you know will turn out perfectly, even if you've never made them before! From ingredients to tricks and fillings, you'll be a macaron master in no time.

Take a look at my post on [macaron flavors](#) for some fun and delicious recipe combinations, or check out my [macaron troubleshooting guide](#) if you need more help.

I held off on making macarons for a long time because I was intimidated. I've always heard how difficult they are to make, but now I realize that that just isn't true.

I put together this in-depth guide to help any beginners out there who might be unsure about how to get started in the world of macarons. I'll cover everything and share with you all of the tips that I've learned along the way.

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French vs Italian vs Swiss Macarons



You really won't be able to tell a difference between French, Italian, and Swiss macarons. In fact, the biggest difference is how you choose to prepare the **meringue**. Some people insist there is a difference in the density of the shells, but it would be hard to notice without comparing them side by side.

French Macarons

The French method of making macarons is the most common, as it is the easiest method for preparing meringue since it doesn't require heating anything on the stovetop.

French macarons use common meringue made by whipping egg whites and sugar until stiff peaks are formed. This meringue is more delicate to use, but the process itself is easier, and I recommend it to any beginner. *(Plus, it is my preferred method).*

Italian Macarons

Italian macarons use a saucepan to heat up sugar and water to create a syrup before adding it to the eggs while beating until stiff peaks are formed. This process requires a candy thermometer and a lot of babysitting, but it will create a sturdier meringue (*and more consistent results*).

Swiss Macarons

The Swiss method is the least commonly used, because it has a trickier meringue (*but is sturdier and less delicate*). However, many people insist that it is **well worth the extra effort**.

For this method, the sugar and egg whites are both combined and heated using a double boiler before being whisked into meringue.

It can be difficult to get right without practice, as you don't want to cook the egg whites, and you can't overheat the sugar syrup.

I've included instructions for all of these versions below!

Equipment



Honestly, you don't need anything super special to be able to make macarons. Here are some key items that you'll want before getting started:

- Kitchen Scale - I highly recommend weighing your ingredients (**see more on that below*).
- Glass or Metal Mixing Bowls - Plastic bowls are porous and may still have remnants of fat or grease that will cause your meringue to be unable to whip up. To avoid this, use glass or metal bowls that you have quickly wiped down with vinegar or lemon juice.
- Electric Mixer - You can use an electric hand mixer or stand mixer with a whisk attachment to beat your meringue. Trust me, you won't want to do that by hand.
- Baking Sheet - You'll need some baking sheets to bake your shells.
- Piping Bag & Tips - This isn't a must-have, but I do think it makes the piping process easier. You can use a storage bag with the tip cut off if

you don't have a piping bag or piping tips. I recommend using a large round tip to pipe your shells, such as a Wilton #12.

- Silicone Spatula - You'll use a silicone spatula to fold your batter during the macaronage step.
- Sieve (and/or Food Processor) - The almond flour and powdered sugar need to be sifted, so you'll need a fine-mesh sieve. I always like to pulse them in a food processor to make the mixture extra fine, but it isn't mandatory.
- Macaron Mat or Template - You can easily use some plain parchment paper to bake your shells. However, if you want them to be consistent in size, then I recommend using some type of template. You can purchase silicone baking mats that have macaron templates on them, print a template out online and place it under your parchment paper while piping, buy parchment paper with the template already on it, or trace equal-sized circles onto parchment paper.
- Thermometer* - You will only need a thermometer if making Italian macarons.



Ingredients



There are two main components in macarons: the shells and the fillings. I'll break down the basics for both.

Macaron Shells

- Almond Flour - Almond flour is the only variety of flour that can be used to make macarons, so you can't substitute. I don't even recommend using homemade almond flour, because it is easy to accidentally make almond butter instead. Keep in mind that almond flour is not the same thing as almond meal.
- Powdered Sugar - Powdered sugar (*or confectioner's sugar*) is the second dry ingredient that makes up the base of your shells. It adds sweetness and creates the perfect texture.
- Egg Whites - You will use egg whites to make your meringue. I don't recommend using egg whites from a carton- you should only use fresh eggs. You'll also want to give them some time to come up to room temperature (**see note below on aging egg whites*).
- Granulated Sugar - Many recipes call for caster sugar (*which is very fine*) or regular granulated sugar. I have made macarons using regular

granulated sugar for the meringue and had good results, so I don't find it necessary. Of course, you can pulse your granulated sugar in a food processor to make it ultra-fine before using it for the meringue.

- Cream of Tartar - Some recipes don't include cream of tartar, but I always use it as it helps to create a sturdier meringue.

*Extra Ingredients: The above list is for standard macaron shells. However, some recipes may vary slightly depending on whether you flavor the shells.

You can add a small amount of extract for flavor (*such as vanilla, almond, or lemon*). If you are making chocolate or red velvet shells, they will include Dutch-processed cocoa powder.

Pistachio shells might have crushed pistachios, and cookies and cream macarons will include crushed cookies. These additions are all depending on your desired flavor, so make sure to follow your recipe.

*Food Coloring: If you want to color your macarons, make sure you are using a gel food dye and not a liquid one. The excess liquid can cause your macarons to not bake properly.

Aging Egg Whites



Many recipes call for 'aged' egg whites. This is when you crack your egg whites into a bowl and weigh out the amount you need.

Then, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and prick a few holes in it. Store it in the fridge for 24 hours, then let the egg whites come to room temperature before using them.

The purpose of aging your egg whites is that, during this time, the excess moisture will evaporate from the eggs. This gives the protein time to relax.

As a result, you should have a sturdier meringue, which means your shells will be less likely to be hollow.

I have honestly made macarons without giving my egg whites time to age, and they have turned out perfectly.

Filling

The filling you choose to use in your macarons can vary a ton. In fact, this is where the cookie gets most of its flavor!

You can use various types of [frosting](#), ganache, fruit fillings (like [lemon curd](#) or [jam](#)), caramel, chocolate sauce, or anything else you can come up with!

Pro Tip! If you are using a runny filling, I recommend piping a ring of buttercream around the outside of the shell to act as a barrier. Then, you can add your filling to the center without having to worry about it running out.

Weighing Your Ingredients



You can get away with using measuring cups and spoons for many recipes. However, macarons are an incredibly technical dessert that relies heavily on having precise measurements.

Weighing your ingredients with a kitchen scale is the best way to ensure that your macarons will turn out well.

Every time you scoop a cup of almond flour, you could be getting different amounts depending on how much is packed into the cup. Now, imagine how inconsistent eggs are with their weight!

Using a scale is the best way to remove any guesswork.

How To Make Macarons: Step-By-Step

Here are some step-by-step instructions for making macarons, in complete detail. Make sure you are following your recipe for any variations or differences!

Blending & Sifting Dry Ingredients

After weighing out all of your ingredients, it is time to get started.

For standard macaron shells, this step will only involve your almond flour and powdered sugar. However, for some recipes, this may include cocoa powdered, crushed nuts, or crushed cookies.

<https://bakeitwithlove.com/beginners-guide-to-making-macarons/>

1. Pulse flour and sugar (*optional*). I always like to pulse my almond flour and powdered sugar together in a food processor to make sure the mixture is as fine as possible. This step isn't required, but I do recommend it because sifting almond flour can sometimes be a pain.
2. Sift flour and sugar. Whether or not you choose to pulse your flour and powdered sugar, the mixture does need to be sifted into a large mixing bowl using a fine-mesh sieve. Use a spoon to break up any clumps.
3. Dump excess flour. You will have a small amount of almond flour left in the sieve that was too large to pass through, so go ahead and dump this out (*but make sure it is as small an amount as possible!*) There should only be about 1 tablespoon left.

**Note that if making Italian macarons, your egg whites will most likely be portioned. One portion will be mixed in to the dry ingredients above. Then, cover the bowl with plastic wrap while you prepare the meringue.*

Creating Your Meringue



I personally like making French meringue for macarons because I feel like the process is easier, but you can choose whichever one you like. You don't need to do both of these, only one.

French Meringue

1. Beat egg whites and cream of tartar. Place your egg whites into a metal mixing bowl with your cream of tartar (*and any extracts you might be using*), and use either a hand mixer or a stand mixer to begin beating them on medium speed. The eggs will quickly become frothy before they begin to tighten up.
2. Stop when soft peaks form. You'll want to stop mixing once your eggs have soft peaks. This is typically when you can start seeing the whisk leaving track marks in the meringue.
3. Add sugar gradually. At this point, add $\frac{1}{3}$ of your granulated (*or caster*) sugar and begin beating again on medium-high speed. After a few seconds, add another $\frac{1}{3}$ of your sugar while continuing to beat.

4. Add remaining sugar and food coloring, if using. Finally, a few seconds later, add the remaining sugar. **If you are adding gel food coloring, you will add it now.*
5. Whip to stiff peaks. Now, you'll want to continue whipping the meringue at medium-high speed until stiff peaks form. You'll know you've reached stiff peaks when the meringue is shiny and smooth.
6. When you lift the whisk out of the bowl, the meringue should have a stiff peak that does not droop down. In fact, you should be able to flip the entire bowl upside down, and nothing will fall out.

**Note: If it is still drooping, you need to beat it for a little longer. Go slowly during this process because you do not want to over or under-mix your meringue.*



Italian Meringue

1. Prep. Get started by placing your remaining egg whites and cream of tartar into your mixing bowl with the whisk attachment.
2. Boil sugar and water, then mix. Add your sugar and water to a saucepan over medium heat and bring it to a boil. Once it begins to bubble, you can turn your mixer on to medium speed.
3. Reduce to low speed. When the egg whites have soft peaks (*you can see the whisk leaving track marks in the eggs*), reduce the speed all the way down to low.
4. Check the temperature. When your sugar mixture reaches 238°F (114°C), you can add any desired food coloring.
5. Beat sugar syrup into the meringue. Then, continue letting it heat until it reaches 244° (117°C). Once there, immediately pour the sugar syrup into the meringue while beating it on medium speed. Try to avoid the whisk.

6. Increase speed. You can now add any extracts if desired. Then, increase the speed to medium-high and beat until it reaches stiff peaks (*glossy peaks that don't droop down when the whisk is removed*).



Swiss Meringue

1. Prep. Add some water to a pan and bring it to a low simmer. Then, place a heat-safe bowl on top (*it should not be touching the water*).
2. Whisk. Add both your egg whites and sugar to the bowl and begin whisking constantly until the sugar has melted completely. There should be no sugar granules remaining (*if you rub the mixture between your fingers, you shouldn't feel any*).
3. Transfer. As soon as the sugar is completely melted (*you don't want to overheat it*), pour the mixture into the bowl of your stand mixer.
4. Beat. Using the whisk attachment, mix on low speed for about 30 seconds. Then, increase the speed to medium for 1-2 minutes.
5. Continue. Increase the speed to medium/medium-high and continue to beat until stiff peaks form (*this could take anywhere from 10-15 minutes total*).

Macaronage

The term 'macaronage' simply refers to this next step in the process which requires folding together your meringue and dry ingredients.

1. Gently fold the meringue with the flour and sugar. Start off by adding $\frac{1}{3}$ of your meringue to the bowl with your sifted almond flour and powdered sugar. Use a silicone spatula to gently fold this in.
2. Repeat. Once combined, repeat this process two more times, only adding $\frac{1}{3}$ portions each time, until combined.
3. Fold and turn. Now, this is where many people have problems: by either over or under-mixing your macaronage. You'll want to continue to

fold your batter by using your silicone spatula to make a J shape, turn the bowl 90 degrees, and do it again.

4. Keep an eye on consistency. Continue this folding method (*it will take a while, trust me*), stopping to check the consistency occasionally. When you first begin, the batter will be very thick and stiff. The folding process eliminates air and causes the batter to become thinner and runnier.

**The ideal consistency that you're looking for is when the batter is shiny and flows like lava. You should lift your spatula out of the batter, which will fall off in ribbons.*

5. Use the ribbons to form a figure 8. It should then take only about 10 seconds for the figure 8 to sink mostly back into the batter.

If your batter is still falling off the spatula in chunks or it is taking longer than 10 seconds to sink back into itself, keep folding for a little longer. If the batter is very runny and quickly sinks back into itself, you have overmixed the batter (*which cannot be fixed*).

Do this folding macaronage process very slowly, checking the consistency often to avoid accidentally over-mixing it.

Piping Your Macarons



You can use a piping bag with a large round tip or a food storage bag with the tip cut off.

6. Pipe the batter. To pipe your macarons, hold your piping bag in the center of a circle on your template at a 90-degree angle, about ¼-inch above the baking sheet. Without moving your hand, pipe the batter by firmly squeezing the bag until it fills the inner circle of your template.
7. Stop squeezing and make a C shape with the tip of the piping bag to cut off the batter. Then, move on to the next circle.

** When you first pipe the macarons, they will have little tips but will quickly smooth out on their own.*

Removing Air Bubbles

Your macaron batter will be filled with air bubbles. However, air bubbles will create cracks or hollow shells on your macarons.

1. Bang the baking sheet. After you have piped all of your macaron shells, lift the baking sheet above the counter by about 5 inches and firmly bang it onto the counter 5 times. You will see air bubbles rise to the surface and pop.
2. Pop the bubbles. Typically, there will still be a few air bubbles hanging around (*some even just under the surface*). Spend a couple of minutes using a toothpick or pin to pop any bubbles that you still see.

Resting



After your macarons have been piped and the air bubbles have been popped, it is time to let the unbaked shells rest so that they can dry and form a skin.

1. Rest. You don't want to skip this step, as it allows the macarons to form a light skin around the outer shell, which causes the air to escape them from the bottom while baking (*thus forming their 'feet'*). This helps to prevent them from cracking when baking.

*This could take anywhere from 30 minutes to over an hour, depending on factors such as humidity.

You'll know that they are ready to bake when they are no longer glossy and are not sticky to the touch.

Can You Let Macarons Dry Too Long?

Yes! While this resting period is crucial to proper macarons, you don't want to do it for too long or too little. Once they are dry to the touch, you should pop them into the oven.

If you let your macarons rest for too long, they can bake lopsided or develop feet that stick to the mat and break off when you remove them.

Baking

You'll find that most macaron recipes have the oven temperature set somewhere between 300°F (150°C/Gas Mark 2) and 325°F (160°C/Gas Mark 3). Always follow your recipe.

**If you're having issues with baking your macarons, you might want to get an oven thermometer to make sure the temperature is accurate.*

1. Bake. Depending on temperature, your macarons could take anywhere from 10-17 minutes to bake. You'll know that they are done when you can gently tap on them and they don't move.

Cooling

2. Cool. Once done, remove your baking sheet from the oven and let the macarons cool on the sheet for 5-10 minutes. They should easily come off of the mat or parchment paper.
3. Transfer. Transfer them to a wire cooling rack to come to room temperature while you prepare your filling of choice.

Assemble



When piping frosting, I just used the same Wilton #12 tip that I used for piping the macaron shells.

1. Pipe the frosting and add the fillings. Assembling your macarons can be as easy as piping some buttercream onto the flat side of a shell and then gently pressing them together to form the finished cookie.

**Note: You might also have multiple fillings where you pipe a ring of buttercream around the outer edge and then add a separate filling to the middle.*

Chill (optional)

This step is completely optional. If you serve your macarons right away, they will still be delicious and everyone will love them.

1. Chill the macarons. Any professional baker will tell you that your macarons should be placed into an airtight container and stored in the refrigerator for 24 hours before serving them. This time allows the flavors to bloom and creates their wonderfully chewy texture.

I tried macarons as soon as they were finished and tried the same ones after chilling for 24 hours. I'll just say that they definitely do taste better the next day (*but they were still super delicious right after being assembled, too*).

If you're planning on serving these for a special occasion, it makes them the perfect make-ahead treat!

Decorating Macarons



If you're feeling extra creative or fancy, you can add some fun decorations to your macarons. This could be a drizzle of melted chocolate with some cookie crumbs sprinkled on top.

Or, after piping your macarons and popping the air bubbles, you can add some sprinkles on top and then let them rest before baking.

You can draw on them with edible markers or paint them with edible paint. The possibilities are truly endless with how creative you can be!

Top Tips For Perfect Macarons

To sum it up, here are my most important tips that you should always do in order to guarantee successful macarons.

- Get the right consistency. Pay attention to proper macaronage (*as explained above*).

- Have the best meringue. Make sure your meringue reaches stiff peaks before adding it to the dry ingredients.
- Avoid humidity. If it is an extra humid day, your macarons will have trouble drying.
- Weigh everything. Give yourself the best chance of success by weighing your ingredients rather than using measuring cups.
- Avoid substitutions. Macarons aren't the treat to experiment with baking swaps. Follow the recipe exactly.

