

Christmas pudding macarons with Italian meringue brandy buttercream

Macarons (recipe adapted from 'Secrets of Macarons' by José Maréchal)

Ingredients

200g ground almonds
200g icing sugar
1 tsp ground mixed spice
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
10g cocoa powder
½ tsp brown food colouring (powder)
200g caster sugar
75g water
2 x 80g egg whites (at room temperature)

This should make about 40 macarons (so 80 shells) that have a 2.5cm diameter.

Method

1. Briefly pulse the ground almonds and icing sugar in a food processor. Sift carefully along with the spices, cocoa and food colouring.
2. Place the caster sugar and water in a saucepan and bring to boil without stirring. At the same time as this start to gently beat 80g of egg whites to soft peaks using a mixer.
3. When the temperature of the syrup reaches 105°C increase the speed of the mixer. Once the syrup hits 115°C remove the saucepan from the heat and pour in a thin stream into the beaten egg whites. Continue beating the meringue for 10 minutes so that it cools.
4. Combined the dry ingredients you sifted at step 1 with the remaining 80g of egg whites to make a smooth almond paste.
5. Using a flexible spatula, mix about a third of the meringue into the almond paste to loosen it, then combine the remainder of the meringue. Work carefully until you have a gently flowing consistency. Do not go too far as you will get flat macarons without feet if the mix is too runny.
6. Place some baking paper on your baking trays. Fill a piping bag fitted with a wide plain nozzle (about 8mm) and pipe small circles, leaving a space between each one.
7. Lightly tap the baking sheet on your work surface and leave the macarons to stand for about half an hour. Pre-heat the oven to 150°C.
8. Bake in the oven for 14 minutes. Allow to cool for 5 minutes before peeling from the baking paper.

Italian meringue brandy buttercream

Ingredients

200g caster sugar

75g water
80g egg whites (at room temperature)
225g unsalted butter (softened)
25g brandy

Method

Initially we are creating an Italian meringue as we did for the macarons.

1. Place the caster sugar and water in a saucepan and bring to boil without stirring. At the same time as putting this on, start to gently beat 80g of egg whites to soft peaks using a mixer.
2. When the temperature of the syrup reaches 105°C increase the speed of the mixer. Once the syrup hits 115°C remove the saucepan from the heat and pour in a thin stream into the beaten egg whites. Continue beating the meringue for 10 minutes so that it cools.
3. Once you are sure the meringue is cool start adding small lumps of the butter, mixing each bit in thoroughly until adding another piece. Once it is all added increase the speed of the mixer and mix for about half a minute until the buttercream has a smooth, light but firm consistency.
4. Add the brandy and mix again on high for another half a minute of so.
5. Once the macarons are cool pipe a generous amount onto one macaron shell and sandwich with another.

Decoration

Pipe on white chocolate to make the macarons look like a Christmas Pudding and add fondant holly leaves and berries. Sprinkle with white edible glitter. Enjoy!