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Lemon Macarons with Lemon Zest Buttercream Filling

makes 20-25 stuffed cookies

Egg Whites:

3 large egg whites, at room temperature
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/4 cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons lemon extract
5-6 drops yellow gel food coloring
1 drop of peach gel food coloring

Dry Ingredients:

1-3/4 cups powdered sugar, sifted
1 cup almond flour, finely ground and sifted
1/2 teaspoon salt

Lemon Zest Buttercream Filling:

1/2 cup unsalted butter, 1 stick, at room temperature
1 teaspoons lemon zest
1 teaspoons lemon extract
1-1/2 cups powdered sugar
1 tablespoon heavy cream

Cookie Directions:

1. Carefully separate the egg whites from the yolks. Ensure that no yolk or shell remains in the whites. Make sure that the egg whites are room temperature before beating. Place the egg whites in a very clean mixing bowl that contains no greasy residue (grease or fat doesn't allow the egg whites to form stiff peaks).

2. Using a stand mixer with a whisk attachment, beat the egg whites until soft peaks form. Add the cream tartar and continue beating until stiff peaks form. Stiff peaks should be very erect and not wilting.

3. Once the stiff peaks form, slowly add the sugar one tablespoon at a time, beating in between adding. Once all of the sugar is incorporated, add the lemon extract and food coloring and beat again until the peaks are once again very stiff.

4. Prepare the dry ingredients. To create a smooth cookie, pulse the dry ingredients together in a food processor until combined. Then, sift the dry ingredients 1 or 2 times through a sifter.

5. Add the finely sifted dry ingredients to the egg whites. Fold by hand with a spatula until the mixture is combined and is mixed into a "wet-sand" or "lava-like"

texture. The texture is correct when a ribbon of the batter can hold a figure 8 pattern. Depending on your strength, this might be anywhere between 50-75 folding strokes. Do not overmix.

6. Once the correct texture is reached, add the cookie mixture to a piping bag outfitted with a 2A round tip.

7. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Pipe 1-1/4 inch circles at least 2" apart on the baking sheet.

8. Once the cookies are piped, tap the pan on the counter several times. This tapping will release any air bubbles and ensure a smooth surface and a good "foot."

9. Let the cookies rest for 30 minutes - 1 hour. This resting time will encourage the cookies to rise correctly. The cookies are ready to bake when they have formed a thin skin on their surface.

10. Bake at 300 degrees F for 10-12 minutes.

11. Let the cookies cool on the pan for a few minutes, then let them cool further on a cooling rack.

12. While the cookies are baking, prepare the filling (see filling directions below).

13. Pipe the filling into the center of the cookie, then top with another cookie to make a sandwich.

14. Let the cookies set to allow the flavors to blend for at least 24 hours before enjoying.

Lemon Buttercream Filling Directions:

1. In a stand mixer, beat the butter, lemon zest, and lemon extract until well combined.

2. Add the powdered sugar (cover) and beat on low until it is fully mixed. Scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl, and continue mixing until the frosting appears somewhat dry.

3. Add 1/2 tablespoon of cream at a time until the correct, thick frosting consistency is achieved.

4. Add frosting to a piping bag outfitted with a 2A round tip, and fill the macarons.