



Master the
MACARON

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| www.PastryPal.com

A

hh, the macaron. So beautiful, and fragile, like a Faberge Egg. And so elusive, it is.

Or is it?

The day I learned how to make them, the chef gave me a demonstration, and then I made them on my own. They came out well. No drama. And since they were on our daily petit fours plate, I had to make them every day. Sometimes it was pouring rain outside, and the kitchen was swamp-humid. Sometimes it was the thick of summer, and the temperatures rivaled Death Valley. But still, I made them. Once in a while they didn't work, but most of the time they did. And on those few occasions they didn't behave, I wasn't phased. I just made them again.

For me, the trick to it all was that no one told me how impossible they were, how one false breath could mean failure — one extra stroke of the spatula, and you might as well pack it in. To me, it was just another recipe, and I didn't have any baggage about it before I even broke out the almond flour. No one psyched me out.

Now, as I read all the talk around the blogosphere, I think that's exactly what's happening. The macaron fear has spread far and wide. And there's no reason for it. Especially when the base recipe has just 4 ingredients. You sift the dry stuff, whip a few egg whites, fold it all together, and pipe it on a sheet tray.

I really, really want everyone to master the macaron, to be swimming in as many as you want. Once you understand the basic recipe, you can modify it to any flavor you can think of. All it takes is a batch or two of practice, and then it's locked in forever. Like riding a bicycle. And thus, a tutorial is born.



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Almond Macarons

with Vanilla Bean Buttercream



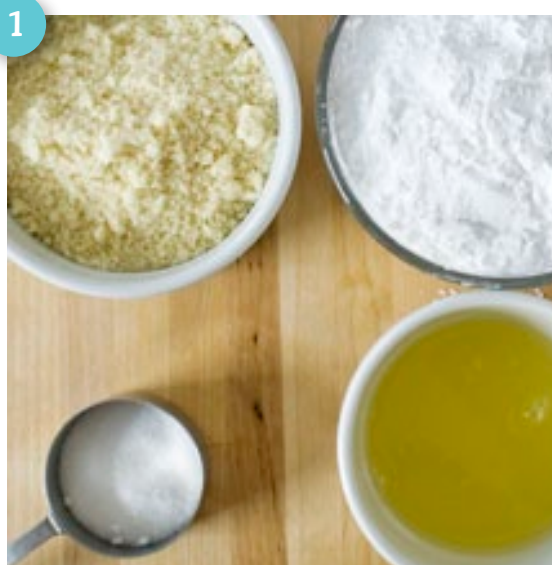
Almond Macarons Master Recipe

This is the basic recipe that all other macaron flavors are based on. Once you understand the ins and outs of this one, you can make any flavor. I recommend starting with this core recipe to get the method down pat.

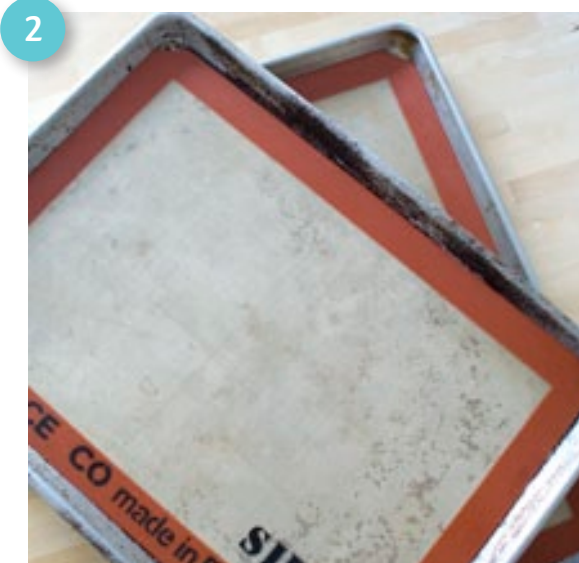
The unfilled shells can be frozen without incident. Once filled, they may need to be refrigerated (they can be stored up to a week). Some people prefer to eat them after refrigeration, saying the flavors meld, but I think they get too soft. I prefer the faint crunch of fresh. Try both ways and choose your fave.

**MAKES ABOUT 50 MACARONS
(100 HALVES)**

1 cup (100 g) almond flour
1 1/2 cups (175 g) powdered sugar
3 large (1/3 cup, 100 g) egg whites
2 T (30 g) granulated sugar

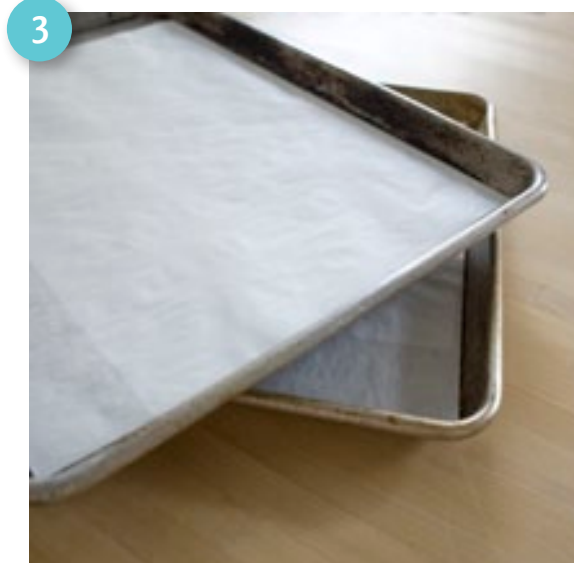


The bare-bones ingredients needed for a classic version. You can either purchase almond flour, or [make your own, as shown in this post](#).



Prepare 2 sheet pans by lining with either Silpats...

[Click here for tool resources.](#)



...or parchment paper.

Basic Almond Macarons *(continued)*

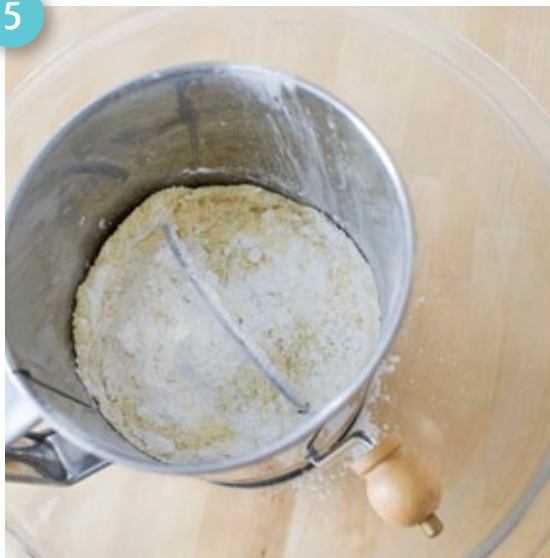
4



Prepare a pastry bag with a plain tip (I like Ateco #12, but most small-sized plain tips will work.)

[Click here for tool resources.](#)

5



First, sift the dry ingredients — in this case, the powdered sugar and the almond flour.

6



Sift into a large bowl. Refining the dry stuff this way will ensure that the macarons don't end up with coarse looking shells. If you have a teaspoon or so of large pieces left in the sifter, just discard.

7



In a separate bowl, whisk the whites. You can also do it with a hand mixer or a standing mixer if you prefer. I like a hand whisk, because there's less chance of overbeating.

Basic Almond Macarons *(continued)*

8



Here are the whites just beginning to get foamy.

9



Once they start to froth up and get meringue-like, sprinkle in the sugar. This little bit of granulated sugar helps stabilize the whites, so there is less risk of overwhipping.

10



Continue to whisk. Here, the whites are still quite loose and soft, barely holding any peak. The mix starts to take on a smooth, glossy appearance, thanks to the addition of sugar.

11



A little more whisking results in firm peaks. You **MUST** whisk until the peaks are firm, or the finished macarons will suffer, with a too-liquid batter.

Basic Almond Macarons *(continued)*

12



Once the whites are whipped, incorporate the dry, slowly, so the egg whites don't deflate. Sprinkle half the dry stuff over the egg whites.

13



Start folding the dry in carefully. The whites will start to look broken and curdled and that's ok. It's not necessary to get every last speck folded in at this point. Once it's mostly mixed in...

14



...dump the egg whites back into the bowl with the rest of the dry stuff. Now fold everything together.

15



The dry ingredients tend to collect at the bottom of the bowl. Fold by scraping from the bottom, and turning the mixture over on itself. This process does deflate the eggs somewhat, and that's ok. You WANT to deflate them a little.

Basic Almond Macarons *(continued)*

16



At first it may seem like there is too much dry stuff to be absorbed by the egg whites, but after a few strokes it comes together. Here it is almost there.

17



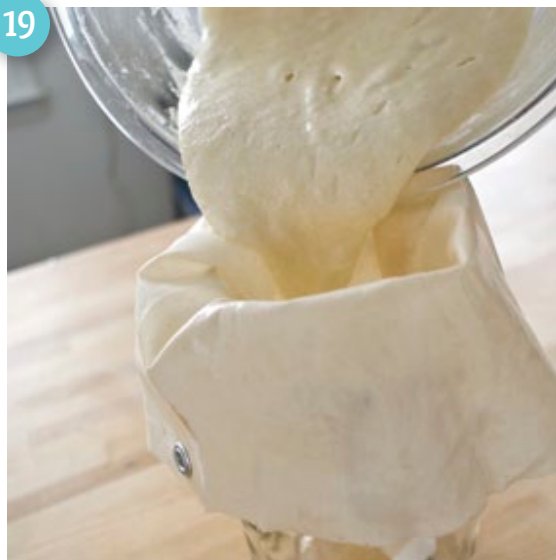
And here is the final batter. There are no dry specks showing, and the batter still has thickness and body. It holds its shape. You can see it's not so liquid that it fills out the bowl.

18



The easiest way to fill a pastry bag is to place it in a tall jar or glass with the top of the bag folded over.

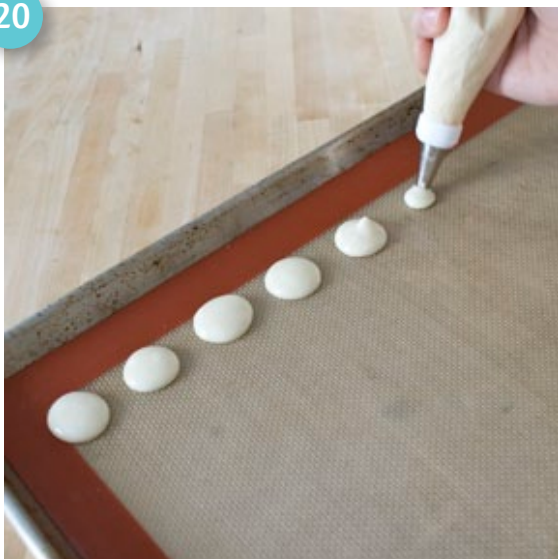
19



Pour the batter into the bag. I like to scrape everything in with a rubber spatula.

Basic Almond Macarons *(continued)*

20



Pipe nickel-sized dots. They will continue to spread on the sheet pan for up to five minutes, so it's best to space them about half an inch apart. As much as I try to keep them the same size, I tend to end up with slight variations, and that's ok.

21



As you begin to reach the bottom of the pastry bag, the batter will spread more as you pipe, because you've been handling and deflating the contents. Again, no problem — just something to be aware of. Now they have to rest at room temperature.

22



A skin needs to form, and it can take 30-90 minutes, depending on the weather. If you touch them lightly and some batter sticks to your finger, they are not ready to bake. If you feel the top has dried, and nothing sticks to your finger, they're ready.

23



Bake at 280 degrees F for about 17 minutes.

Basic Almond Macarons *(continued)*

24



Here they are baked. They should be smooth on top, and of course, have the coveted “feet”. Let them cool completely before proceeding. They may rip right off the sheet pan if pulled up too early.

25



Once cooled, flip them all over...

26



...and pipe your chosen filling on half of the rounds. I am using Vanilla Buttercream from page 27.

27



Choose similar sized rounds to sandwich together. One classic batch of almond macs with vanilla butter cream, done!

Troubleshooting

Here are a few common snags you may run into. Everyone has a bad macaron day every once in a while, so don't let cracked shells deter you. Just try the recipe again, and more than likely, it will work this time.

Possible Problems *(continued)*

1



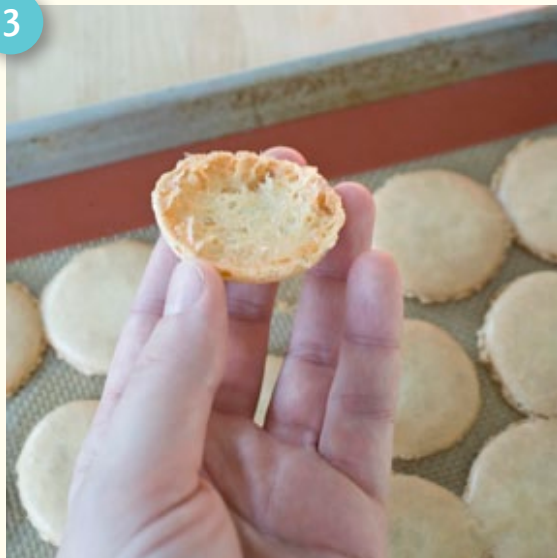
ISSUE 1: Transparent, blotchy tops.

2



This can happen from overmixing the batter which makes it very liquidy when piping. They may never bake quite right.

3



ISSUE 2: The shells are hollow when pulled off the sheet...

4



...and/or the tops pucker as they cool. Again, this usually means the batter was overmixed, and ended up a little too liquidy.

Possible Problems *(continued)*

5



ISSUE 3: The macarons tear when being pulled off the sheet pan.

6



They may simply be too warm, and may need to cool completely. If they still tear when cool, they may be slightly underbaked. Next time, add a couple of minutes to your baking time.

7



ISSUE 4: The tops crack when baked. This usually means the tops didn't dry enough before being baked. Some days, they need to dry longer than others, depending on the weather.

8



Here is the exact same batter, where the macarons were allowed to dry until a skin was formed before baking. Small detail, big difference.

Possible Problems *(continued)*

9



ISSUE 5: The piped circles end up looking like wobbly amoeba shapes. I find this happens more when piped onto parchment paper.

10



Here is the exact same batter piped onto Silpats. Somehow they spread more evenly. You can still bake and sandwich the parchment cookies. They'll just be less "perfect", but still perfectly good.

11



ISSUE 6: Overfilled and oozy.

12



Pipe filling just on the center. When the second half goes on, it squeezes the filling to the edges.

How to Make Flavor Variations

There are 3 ways to flavor a macaron:

1. by sprinkling an added component on to the piped shells
2. by adding a powder to the dry ingredients when making the batter
3. with the filling

The next few pages illustrate each way.

Coconut Macarons

with White Chocolate & Raspberry



Add Flavor by Sprinkling

The easiest way to add flavor is by sprinkling something directly onto the freshly piped shells, before the shells get a chance to dry. The chosen topping should be something light or finely chopped. It's unlikely the topping will burn in the oven, since the oven temperature is relatively low.

1



Here is the basic almond macaron batter with a sprinkling of dried coconut. Once it's baked, I can fill it with white chocolate ganache (see page 34), and raspberry preserve.

2



Here is the chocolate macaron batter (page 19) topped off with some sesame seeds.

MORE IDEAS FOR SPRINKLING

- finely chopped nuts
- colored sugar
- crushed candied flowers
- cocoa nibs
- fruit powder
- poppy seeds
- cocoa powder
- cinnamon

[Click here for specialty ingredient resources.](#)

Chocolate Macarons *with Dark Chocolate Ganache*



Chocolate Macarons with Dark Chocolate Ganache

Here, we add flavor by adding a DRY powder to the dry ingredients, right when they are about to be sifted. It MUST be a dry ingredient, because introducing additional moisture to this delicately balanced recipe can ruin the batter. I've had success with adding up to 3 tablespoons of flavoring. This particular recipe uses cocoa powder.

1



Add 3 tablespoons of cocoa powder right before sifting your dry ingredients. The rest of the recipe is the same as the master recipe.

2



Here it is sifted.

3



And here's what it looks like with the whipped egg whites folded in.

Chocolate Macarons with Dark Chocolate Ganache *(continued)*

4



All baked and cooled.

5



Flipped, and piped with dark chocolate ganache, as shown on page 32.

6



Sandwiched. Enjoy now or refrigerate.

MORE DRY IDEAS FOR FOLDING INTO BATTER

- ♦ spices, such as cinnamon, or black pepper
- ♦ ground tea, like macha, or chai
- ♦ replace half the almond flour with pistachio flour or hazelnut flour
- ♦ raspberry powder

[*Click here for specialty ingredient resources.*](#)

Coffee Macarons

with Nutella



Coffee Macarons with Nutella

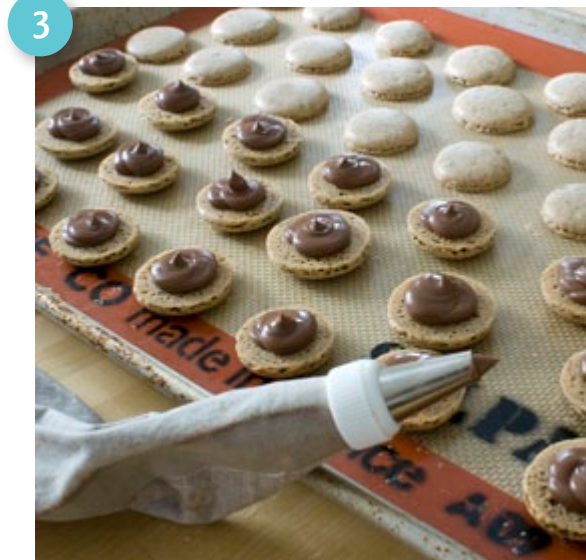
Just like with the chocolate shells, make coffee-flavored shells by adding 2 tablespoons of ground coffee to the rest of the dry ingredients right before sifting.



Here I am adding 2 tablespoons of ground coffee into the sifter. After that, I proceed with the recipe as written, for the basic almond macaron on page 4.



The coffee macarons piped, and allowed to rest.



Baked and cooled. Nutella gets piped onto the shells.

Lemon Macarons

with Lemon Curd



Lemon Macarons with Lemon Curd

Citrus zest is a great addition. Grate a teaspoon right onto the sifted, dry ingredients. Lemon, lime, orange or grapefruit all work well.

Sometimes, you may want to bump up the color of your macaron, when your flavoring doesn't add any color. In that case a few drops of gelled or powdered food coloring does the trick. Again, I avoid liquid food coloring, since the added moisture can ruin the batter.

The lemon curd recipe that I used to fill the shells can be found [here](#).



To make lemon-flavored shells, I grate the zest of 1 lemon into the dry ingredients.



When whipping the egg whites, I add a few drops of food coloring gel or 1 teaspoon of powder to tint the batter. Powdered coloring is preferable, since no extra moisture is added to the batter.



I continue to whisk the whites until they are stiff peak, and proceed with the folding as described in the master almond macaron recipe on page 4.

Lemon Macarons with Lemon Curd *(continued)*

4



Here is the batter all piped and resting, waiting to dry. This was a rainy day, so the drying took twice as long as usual. I could tell they needed extra time by touching the tops.

A few ideas for *Fillings*



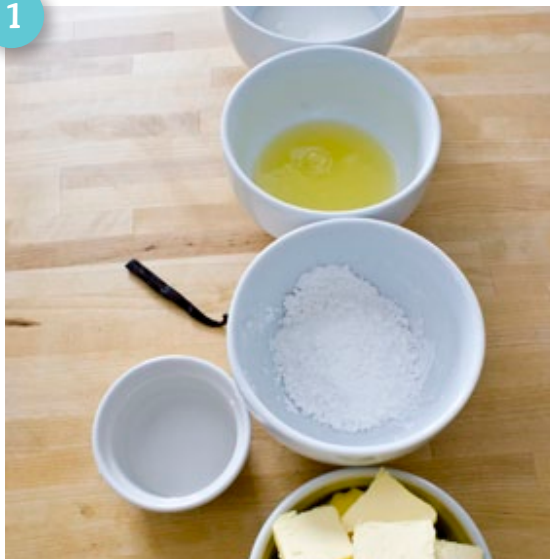
Vanilla Buttercream

Recipe can be doubled, if you'd like to use the recipe to frost a large cake. I suggest you read the whole recipe before starting, so you know what to expect. A few things have to coordinate and happen at the same time.

MAKES ABOUT 1 1/2 CUPS

1/3 cup (75 g) egg whites
1/2 cup (100 g) granulated sugar
2 tablespoons water
1/3 cup (40 g) powdered sugar
2 sticks (225 g) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1/2 vanilla bean or 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1



Ingredient line-up.

2



Have the egg whites ready to whip in the bowl of a stand mixer. You can also do this with a hand mixer.

3



The granulated sugar and water go in a small pot over medium-high heat, along with a candy thermometer. Make sure the thermometer bulb is submerged. We're aiming for 250 degrees F (or 121 C). Since there is so little sugar, it will come to temperature FAST. Keep an eye on it.

Vanilla Buttercream *(continued)*

4



While the sugar is cooking, start whipping the egg whites on medium-high speed.

5



Here's a dirty trick that we sometimes used at the restaurant. Since there is only a small amount of egg whites, the whisk may have a hard time reaching the bottom, so we'd prop up the bowl a little. See the arrow? The bowl is not holstered. If you try this, the machine may not like it, so proceed with caution. I snapped off the back clip once.

6



Once the whites get thick and creamy (in a couple of minutes), I start adding the powdered sugar.

7



Pour in the powdered sugar in 2 additions while whites are whipping.

Vanilla Buttercream *(continued)*

8



A couple of minutes later, the whites and sugar mix should be thick, and begin to get peaks. By now, the boiling sugar should be either ready or close-to-ready in temperature.

9



Once sugar reaches 250 degrees F, pour it down the side of the bowl **SLOWLY**, in a steady stream, all while whipping the whites on high speed. If you pour it too fast, the whites may deflate.

10



Once the hot sugar is in, continue to whip for a couple more minutes on high speed. It should become thick and look like marshmallow fluff.

11



If it's still totally soupy after a few minutes, it's no good. This happens if the meringue wasn't whipped enough before the hot sugar was added, or if the hot sugar was added too fast and "killed" the meringue. You'll need to start again.

Vanilla Buttercream *(continued)*

12



Continue whipping on high and seed in the butter, a few pieces at a time.

13



Once all the butter is in, the mix will take on a slightly yellow hue. Keep whipping.

14



At first, the buttercream will look like it broke, like a wet and curdled mess. That's ok, this is correct.

15



Continue to whip for about 5 more minutes, and it will all come together and whip up properly.

Vanilla Buttercream *(continued)*

16



Right at the end, scrape in the vanilla bean seeds, and whip for another minute to incorporate.

17



Ready for piping (or frosting a cake).

ADD FLAVOR WITH FILLINGS

Dark Chocolate Ganache

MAKES ABOUT 1 1/2 CUPS

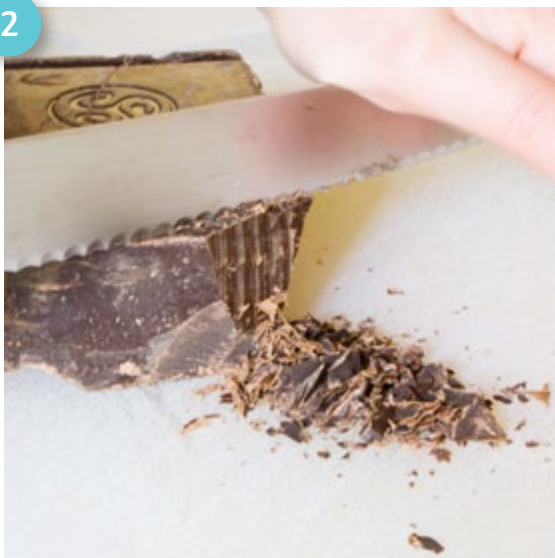
8 oz (224 g) dark chocolate
3/4 cup (168 g) heavy cream

1



Ganache ingredients.

2



Chop the chocolate very finely and place in a medium bowl.

3



Bring the cream to a boil. This small amount boils fast, so don't go far.

Dark Chocolate Ganache *(continued)*

4



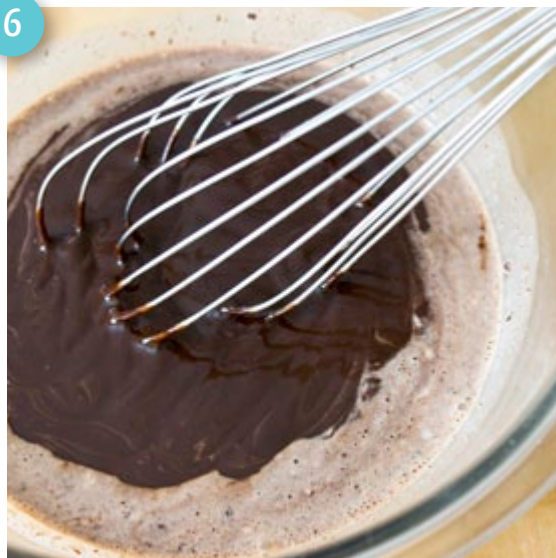
Pour the cream over the chocolate...

5



...and allow it to rest for a minute. The heat will melt the chocolate.

6



Whisk the ganache smooth, starting from the center, and whisking out, in concentric circles, pulling in more cream while whisking.

7



Here is the finished ganache. If it's too runny to pipe, you can refrigerate it for 20 minutes first, to help it thicken up.

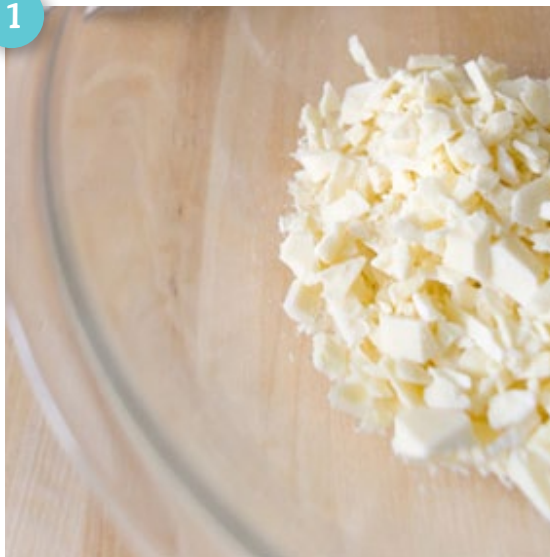
ADD FLAVOR WITH FILLINGS

White Chocolate Ganache

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

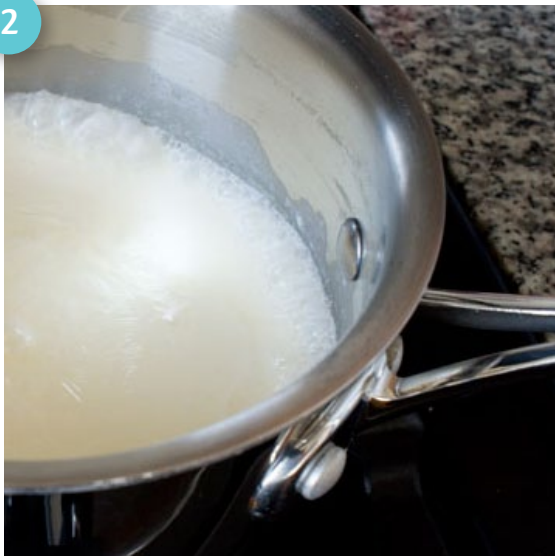
6 oz (168 g) white chocolate
1/3 cup (84 g) heavy cream

1



The same method as the dark chocolate ganache. First, finely chop the white chocolate.

2



Boil the cream.

3



Pour the cream over the white chocolate.

White Chocolate Ganache *(continued)*

4



Make sure all the white chocolate is submerged. Let it rest for one minute. The heat will melt the white chocolate.

5



Whisk it all up, and...

6



...voila. White chocolate ganache. If it's too runny to pipe, let it sit in the fridge for about 20 minutes to firm up to a pipeable consistency.

Thank you for downloading Master the Macaron!

Did you enjoy this primer? If you have a second, let me know what you think! Leave a comment on <http://www.pastrypal.com/2011/01/master-the-french-macaron/> or send an e-mail to irina@pastrypal.com.

And please tell a friend! Simply send them to www.pastrypal.com to get their own copy!

I wish you successful baking!



ABOUT ME

After working in advertising for a few years, I got the crazy idea that I wanted to start over and become a pastry chef. And for 8 years, that's exactly what I did, working in some of the best fine dining restaurants in New York City. Though I'm now semi-retired from the professional kitchen, I still love to bake (and teach) at home. I also run my blog, www.pastrypal.com, where I show how to get great results with step-by-step photos.