

# Salt and Serenity

## Almond Macarons with Blonde Chocolate Ganache Filling

The recipe and method for the macaron shells comes from Stella Parks of [www.bravetart.com](http://www.bravetart.com)

A kitchen scale and stand mixer are essential for success.

### Macarons:

115 grams almond flour (ground almonds)  
230 grams powdered sugar  
144 grams egg whites  
72 grams white sugar  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
2 grams salt

### Blonde Chocolate Ganache Filling:

2/3 cup whipping cream  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
12 ounces Valrhona Dulcey 32% Blonde Chocolate

1/4 cup Skor bits – for decorating top of macarons

1. Prepare templates for macaron cookies so that your shells will all be the exact same size:  
You can download a template from <http://barbarabakes.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/macarontemplate.pdf>, or make one yourself by simply using a small shot glass (about 1 1/2 inches in diameter) and tracing circles on a sheet of parchment paper. You should be able to fit about 35 circles (5 rows x 7 columns) on a quarter sheet pan (13 x 18 inches).
2. Lay template on baking sheet and cover with a plain piece of parchment paper.
3. Fit a large pastry bag with a plain 1/2 inch diameter tip, and place in a large drinking glass or pitcher. Fold the cuff of the pastry bag over the rim of the glass or pitcher. This will make filling the pastry bag quite easy.
4. Preheat oven to 325° F, or 300° F if you have a convection oven.
5. Sift almond flour with powdered sugar and set aside.

6. Combine egg whites, white sugar and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer, fitted with wire whisk attachment. Turn mixer on to medium speed (4 on a Kitchen Aid mixer). Whip for 3 minutes. They will not be very foamy at this point. Don't worry.
7. Increase speed to medium-high (7 on Kitchen Aid) and whip for another 3 minutes.
8. Crank up speed a bit more (8 on Kitchen Aid) and whip for 3 more minutes.
9. Turn off mixer and add vanilla extract. Turn mixer up to maximum speed and whip for one final minute. You should have a very stiff meringue at this point. When you remove the whisk, there will be a big clump of meringue in the center of the whisk. Just knock it on the side of the bowl to free it. If it is not this stiff, whip on high for another minute.
10. Dump in almond flour and powdered sugar mixture. Fold the dry ingredients into the meringue, using a rubber spatula. Use both a folding motion, to incorporate the dry ingredients, and a pressing motion, to deflate the meringue against the side of the bowl.
11. It may seem that the almond mixture will never get incorporated into the meringue. Have faith. After about 25 turns or folds of the spatula, the mixture will still be quite lumpy and stiff. Fold for an additional 15 strokes and then evaluate. Do not worry about being too gentle. The idea is to knock the air out of the egg whites when making macarons.
  - a. **Undermixed macaron batter:** It will be quite stiff. If you spoon some out and drop it back on top of the rest of the batter, it will just sit there and never incorporate.
  - b. **Overmixed macaron batter:** It will have a runny pancake batter-like texture. It will ooze continuously, making it impossible to pipe circles.
  - c. **Perfect macaron batter:** The batter will be thick enough that it will mound up on itself, but after about 20 seconds it will melt back down.
12. Fill pastry bag with half the batter.
13. Pipe the batter over the pre-traced circles on the baking sheet. Stop piping just shy of the borders of the circles, as the mixture will spread just a bit.

14. After piping the entire sheet, take hold of the baking sheet and hit it very hard against the counter. Rotate the pan 90 ° and rap two more times. This helps to eliminate air bubble that may cause the macarons to crack.
15. Sprinkle a few Skor bits on top of half the macarons. These will be the top half of the sandwich cookies.
16. Set pan aside for about 30 minutes so the surface of the macarons can dry out a bit.
17. Bake for about 18 minutes and then test for doneness. The easiest way is to pick up one of the macarons in the corner of the baking sheet without removing it from the parchment paper. Try to peel the parchment away. If it sticks or tears the belly out of the macaron, bake for a few more minutes and test again.
18. Cool macarons on baking sheets thoroughly before peeling them from the parchment paper.
19. While they are cooling, prepare ganache filling: Place 12 ounces of blonde chocolate in heatproof bowl. Set aside. In a small saucepan, bring cream and butter just to a boil. Remove from heat and pour over blonde chocolate pieces. Let sit for about 3 minutes. Whisk ganache until smooth. Let sit at room temperature until totally cool.
20. Fill a disposable bag with the cooled ganache. Pipe a quarter-sized mound of ganache filling on the bottom half of the macarons. Top with the Skor topped macarons.
21. Macarons can be refrigerated for up to a week. They actually get better with age! Let sit at room temperature for about an hour before serving.