

### Crispy and Practically Sugar Free Meringue

**\*\*It is important if sugar consumption is critical for you, that you make your own determination of what amount is good for you. I am not an expert on diabetes or blood sugar levels. \*\***

- *Serves:* 6-8
- *Hands-on Time:* 10 min
- *Cooking:* Approx. 45 min



#### Ingredients:

- 4 large egg whites (or 12 tbsp. egg white from a carton), at room temperature
- ½ tsp. cream of tartar
- ⅛ tsp. salt
- 8 tsp. granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp. pure almond extract

#### Meringue Steps:

1. Preheat the oven to 225F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. If you are making nests, draw eight 3" circles, about 2" apart, on the parchment and then turn it over so the pencil marks won't transfer to your meringue. If you are making a base for a Pavlova, draw an 8" or 9" circle on the parchment and turn over.
2. With an electric hand mixer or a balloon whisk, beat the egg whites until they are frothy - like the foam on a latte. Sprinkle the cream of tartar and salt onto the whites and continue to beat until you have soft peaks (another minute or two). Gradually start to beat in the sugar, about a teaspoon at a time and continue to beat until you have stiff peaks and you can no longer feel any graininess or grit when you rub a little of the mixture between your fingers. It should feel completely smooth. This indicates that the sugar has totally dissolved into the egg whites.
3. Add the vanilla and almond extracts and beat for another three minutes.
4. At this point you have several options:
  - a. **Meringue Nests** – spoon the meringue onto the circles you drew and then spread them out from the centre with the back of the spoon, building up the edges to form a nest.
    - i. Another way to make a meringue nest is to place the meringue in a large piping bag fitted with a large open star tip. Then pipe the meringue onto the circles, starting at the centre and piping out in concentric circles until you reach the edge. Then you can build up the sides by piping around the outside ring, one layer on top of another until you have three layers forming the sides.
  - b. **Pavlova** – mound the meringue in the centre of the circle and then use a spatula to work the meringue out from the centre, make sure that there is an indentation in the centre when you are done. Smooth out the meringue on the sides as if you were icing a

cake and then make deep diagonal grooves from bottom to top at intervals, all around the circle of meringue.

- c. **Kisses** – Pipe the meringue into kisses using the large open tip star (you can also do this with extra meringue if you have some left after piping your nests).
  - d. **Eton Mess** – Spread the meringue flat on the sheet in a single layer.
5. Once you have formed your meringues, place them in the oven and bake them for 35 to 45 minutes. The meringues will still feel soft and kind of leathery, but not sticky, when touched gently. If they still feel sticky and show your fingerprints, bake for about 10 minutes longer. Turn off the oven and leave the meringues in it to cool for about an hour. After that, remove the meringues from the oven and cool completely. Nests will take about three hours to crisp up, Pavlovas, up to three days. Drying meringues out with so little sugar just takes patience.
6. Depending on whether you wish to make a nest, Pavlova, or Eton Mess, do the following:
- a. **Nest** – You can treat the nests as mini Pavlovas or use other fillings such as lemon curd, a mousse (fruit or chocolate flavoured), ice cream and sauce, or sherbet. Add any other sprinkles or decorations.
  - b. **Pavlova** – Place the meringue base on a serving plate. Fill the centre of the meringue with either crème diplomat or a layer of crème pâtissière, followed by a layer of stabilized whipped cream (see below). Decorate with the fruit of your choice. I used strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries. Just have lots of fruit.
  - c. **Eton Mess (or Eat-in-a Mess)** – In a blender or food processor, purée most of a pint of strawberries, keeping a few back to chop roughly by hand. Fold the puree and chopped strawberries into stabilized whipped cream to combine. Break the sheet of meringue into pieces that range in size up to 5 cm. Fold the smaller pieces into the whipped cream/strawberry mix. You will not use all the meringue - maybe about half of the sheet for about 6 servings. Store leftover meringue in an airtight container for up to two weeks. Fill a fluted or other glass with the mixture and stick a few larger shards of meringue into the top to decorate. Serve chilled.

### Crème Pâtissière

- Serves: 6-8
- Hands-on Time: 20 min

#### Ingredients

- 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  c milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c whipping cream
- 1 tbsp. granulated sugar
- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 large egg
- 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp. cornstarch
- Pinch of salt
- 1 tbsp. vanilla bean paste or vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. pure orange extract
- Grated zest of 1 orange
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter, softened



#### Steps:

1. Place milk and cream in a saucepan and bring to a boil over a medium heat.
2. While the milk is heating, combine sugar, egg yolks, large egg, cornstarch, salt, and vanilla in a bowl and whisk them together until thick and smooth. Set aside.
3. As soon as milk starts to boil, remove it from the heat. Slowly pour about half of the hot milk in a thin stream into the yolk mixture, whisking constantly, so that the yolks become tempered before being added to the remaining milk. Add the now-tempered yolks to the remaining hot milk still in the saucepan.
4. Heat the custard base over medium heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture begins to thicken, about 2 to 3 minutes.
5. While continuing to stir constantly, let the mixture come to a boil. You will see bubbles begin to rise to the surface. Cook a further 1 to 2 minutes after the custard begins to boil. Remove from heat and add orange extract and zest. Stir to combine. Whisk in the butter thoroughly.
6. Pour the custard into a bowl and cover with plastic wrap. The wrap should be placed directly on the surface of the custard to prevent it from forming a skin.
7. Let the custard cool to room temperature, then refrigerate it for a few hours or overnight to chill completely.
8. Use the crème pâtissière as desired.

**Tip:** You can make the custard dairy free by using any neutral-flavoured milk substitute of your choice.

Alternatives:

- **Stabilized Whipped Cream** – Soften ½ tsp. of gelatin in 1 tbsp. of cold water to soften the gelatin. Then gently warm the mixture on the stove top until the gelatin melts into the water and you have a clear liquid. Begin to whip the cream and once it thickens somewhat, add any sugar and flavourings (if using), then pour the gelatin into the cream in a thin stream while beating continuously. Continue to beat until quite thick, being careful not to overbeat.
- **Crème Diplomat** – Fold about half of the chilled crème pâtissière into the stabilized whipped cream. Use as desired.