

**CRÈME AU BEURRE À LA MERINGUE SUISSE /SWISS MERINGUE BUTTERCREAM**

Base recipe makes approximately 4.5 cups (~ 850 g / 32 ounces, depending on flavor additions); plenty to fill/cover a two layer, 8-9" cake or garnish 2 or more dozen small cakes (depending on their size)

- 180 g / 6 large egg whites, room temperature
- 300 g / 1.5 cups granulated cane sugar
- 370 g / 3 sticks + 2 tablespoons (13 ounces) unsalted butter, cubed and at room temperature. You can increase it to 454 g / one pound per your taste.
- large pinch up to ¼ teaspoon salt to taste
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract (opt)

Some flavor suggestions follow below.

1. Fill a medium saucepan about a third full with water and warm on medium heat until simmering. This is your *bain-marie*.
2. Whisk egg whites and sugar in a stainless bowl that fits comfortably over the saucepan and continue to whisk constantly over the heat to bring the mixture to a temperature of 145-150°F.
3. Transfer the hot meringue to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk and beat on high until cool to the touch, usually at least 10 minutes. NOTE: the bottom of the bowl may continue to hold some warmth due to the heat of the mixer. Place a dab of meringue on your wrist and if it feels cool, it's safe to start adding the butter.
4. On medium-low speed add the cubes of butter 2-3 at a time, blending completely before each subsequent addition. Once all the butter is added, scrape down the bowl to be sure everything is blended in from the bottom. Blend in the salt and vanilla (if using) then whip on medium high to lighten the cream. Proceed with any flavor additions as noted below.

Trouble shooting: if you've added your butter too soon and you have a soupy mess, you can put the bowl in the fridge for 30 minutes or so to firm up then rewhip it – it should come together.

If your butter goes in too cold, the mixture will look curdled and separated. Warm your mixing bowl with a warm towel wrapped around it or even a hair dryer on low as you continue to whip and it should smooth out.

## FLAVOR SUGGESTIONS

**NOTE: add additional components bit by bit so as to slowly and smoothly incorporate them; this helps reduce the chance of the buttercream breaking.**

For all the options below follow the same steps: slowly blend in the ingredients, scrape down the bowl, then beat for several minutes to fully incorporate and lighten/fluff the buttercream.

### **White chocolate mocha:**

- 140 g-170 g / 5-6 ounces good quality white chocolate (*Guittard* and *Valrhona* are excellent), melted and cooled but still fluid
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste
- 2 tablespoons espresso powder dissolved in 2 tablespoons boiling water and cooled

### **Apple cider caramel:**

- 1 cup (or more to taste) caramel sauce to which 2 tablespoons boiled cider has been added
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste

### **Honey orange:**

- 168 g / 8 tablespoons (1/2 cup) honey
- zest of 3-4 medium oranges

### **Lemon:**

- ½ cup / 4 ounces lemon curd (make your own or purchase your favorite brand)
- zest of 3 lemons
- 1-2 tablespoons limoncello (optional)

### **Berry citrus:**

- ½ cup of reduced berry purée e.g. strawberry, raspberry or a mix of reds/blues/blacks. The French often include red currants in their berry mixes too.
- citrus zest of choice (lemon is always good to brighten flavor)
- 10 g berry powder e.g. crushed, sifted freeze dried raspberries or strawberries (available at Trader Joe's)

## *the french tarte*

the sweet taste of france

- Optional: 1-2 tablespoons fruit liqueur of choice or ½ to 1 teaspoon raspberry extract

Some of my favorite combos are strawberry-lime, raspberry lemon, mixed berry (or blackberry) orange.

To make the berry puree use about 4 cups fruit, either fresh or frozen (thawed in a strainer over a bowl). Purée the berries in a blender then strain to remove the seeds. Weigh what you have and add ~ 10% of that weight in sugar, plus a pinch of salt and a teaspoon fresh lemon juice. Cook over medium low heat and reduce it down by about a third to a half to concentrate the flavor. Stir often and check to be sure the bottom isn't burning.

This gives you plenty for a batch of buttercream and what you don't use can be frozen for another time!

I've found that using blueberry alone can give a rather unsightly greyish hue to the buttercream. Using a berry mix with a larger proportion of red fruits will help create a more pleasant purplish color. Start by adding small amounts of purée, assess the color then, to punch up the color (and flavor), add some raspberry powder. You just have to experiment.

There are so many options. Use your imagination!

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