

**Peppermint Christmas Tree Meringue Kisses**

Ingredients:

You will need

A piece of lemon, for degreasing your equipment

2 egg whites

140g caster sugar

Dark green food colouring paste

2-3 drops peppermint extract

Gold lustre spray

50g white chocolate

Silver ball decorations

Pearlised golden decorations

Mini gingerbread men sprinkles

Mini white chocolate star sprinkles

Method:

Preheat the oven to 110oc/100oc fan and cut a piece of baking parchment to fit a large baking tray. Prepare your equipment by rubbing your mixing bowl and beaters with the lemon, cut side down. This will remove any lingering grease and ensure your meringue will whip properly. Wipe clean with a piece of kitchen towel then add the egg whites to the bowl. Using a stand mixer or handheld mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, slowly whip the egg whites on a low to medium speed for around three to five minutes until fluffy and white like shaving cream and can hold a soft peak.

Increase the speed of the mixer to medium high and add the sugar a tablespoon at a time. Once all the sugar has been added, whip the meringue until it is glossy and holds a stiff peak. Add around 1/8 tsp of food colouring paste and the peppermint extract, then whip until the mix is the desired colour. Taking care not to over whip the meringue too much, add more colouring and peppermint extract until you’re happy with the colour and taste.

Fit a disposable piping bag with an open star shaped nozzle and snip the end off the bag. Fold the edges of the bag over and fill with the meringue mixture, then turn the edges out the right way and carefully smooth the mixture down towards the nozzle to get rid of any air bubbles. Twist the top of your bag and pipe four small dots of meringue onto the baking sheet and use it to stick down the parchment to ensure it doesn’t move to as you pipe.

To make the christmas tree meringue shapes, hold the piping bag vertically and pipe a small circle around 3cm in diameter spiralling outwards, then begin to spiral the meringue back into the circle and upwards, finishing by releasing the pressure to create a tall point for the tree. Repeat a further 24 times until the meringue mix is used up. Carefully place the baking sheet in the oven and bake the meringues for 30 to 40 minutes until they can be easily peeled from the paper. Remove the tray from the oven and leave the meringues to cool completely - this will ensure they will be marshmallowy inside. If you prefer chewier meringues, turn off the oven and leave the meringues to cool slightly for a further 20 minutes before removing from the oven.

To decorate, melt the white chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pan of barely simmering water, taking care not to let the bowl touch the water. Once melted, pour the chocolate into a disposable piping bag fitted with a narrow round nozzle and snip the end off the bag, setting aside to cool for a few moments. Place your sprinkles in small bowls then pipe around seven or eight dots around each meringue with one on the point of the tree. Place a chocolate star on top of the meringue then decorate the base with gold and silver balls and miniature gingerbread men sprinkles. Repeat with all of the meringues then serve on a cake stand. Meringues will keep for a week in an airtight container but do not pile the meringues on top of each other otherwise they may break.

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