Desserts / France

Classic Madeleines

Shell-shaped, honey-golden sponge cakes with a distinctive hump — a fleeting warmth of browned butter and lemon zest that perfumes the kitchen for only a few minutes after leaving the pan, best eaten while still crackling at the edges.

Time 120 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 120 g All-purpose flour
- ☐ 115 g Unsalted butter
- ☐ 100 g Caster sugar
- ☐ 100 g Eggs (large, room temperature)
- ☐ 20 g Honey (floral, mild)
- ☐ 4 g Lemon zest (finely grated)
- ☐ 5 g Vanilla extract
- ☐ 5 g Baking powder
- ☐ 2 g Fine sea salt

Let's make it.

01 Place the butter in a light-coloured saucepan over medium heat. It will melt, foam, subside, then foam a second time. At the second foam, swirl constantly and watch the milk solids on the bottom: they will turn from blonde to golden to hazelnut-brown (noisette). At the first scent of toasty hazelnuts, immediately pour the butter into a cold bowl to stop cooking. Cool to room temperature — it should be liquid but not warm.

02 In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, caster sugar, and honey. Whisk vigorously — by hand for 3 to 4 minutes, or with an electric whisk on high for 2 minutes — until the mixture has roughly doubled in volume, turned pale ivory, and falls from the whisk in a thick ribbon that holds its shape on the surface for a few seconds before dissolving.

03 Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt directly over the ribbon mixture. Add the lemon zest and vanilla extract. Using a large spatula, fold gently with wide, sweeping, under-over strokes until just combined — no dry streaks, but don't over-mix. Finally, pour the cooled browned butter around the edge of the batter and fold it in the same way until fully incorporated. The batter will be smooth, glossy, and noticeably heavier.

04 Press cling film directly onto the surface of the batter and refrigerate for at least 1 hour, or up to 24 hours. Meanwhile, butter the madeleine molds generously and dust with flour, tapping out the excess; refrigerate the prepared pan too. The cold shock when cold batter meets a hot oven creates the distinctive hump — do not skip this step.

05 Preheat the oven to 200°C (390°F) for at least 20 minutes. Fill the chilled, floured molds to three-quarters full. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes until the edges are deep golden and pulling away from the shell, the hump has risen fully and the peak is just set. Remove immediately and turn out onto a rack. Eat within 30 minutes — they are a different food after an hour.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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