



DOMINIQUE ANSEL TEACHES FRENCH PASTRY FUNDAMENTALS



MASTERCLASS

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BIOGRAPHY



James Beard Award-winning Pastry Chef Dominique Ansel has shaken up the pastry world with innovation and creativity at the heart of his work. Named the World's Best Pastry Chef in 2017 by the World's 50 Best Restaurants awards, one of *Business Insider's* "Most Innovative People Under 40" and Crain's "40 under 40," Chef Dominique has strived through his career to bring a refreshing approach to the world of desserts. In 2015, he was bestowed the prestigious l'Ordre du Mérite Agricole award for his accomplishments. *Vanity Fair* named him one of the "50 Most Influential French" and *Daily Mail UK* claimed him "the most fêted pastry chef in the world."

Perhaps what has been most widely reported on is Chef Dominique's creation of the Cronut®, his signature croissant-doughnut hybrid pastry that first launched at his eponymous Bakery in New York in May 2013, soon becoming the world's first-ever viral pastry. In its first year, the Cronut® was named one of the "25 Best Inventions of 2013" by *Time Magazine*.

Not to be defined by just one item, or in his own words, "don't let the creation kill the creativity," Chef Dominique continued to launch some of the most celebrated creations in the industry, including: the Cookie Shot, Frozen S'more, Blossoming Hot Chocolate, and many more items. For his prolific creativity, *Food & Wine* called him a "Culinary Van Gogh" while the *New York Post* coined him "the Willy Wonka of New York." Today, his eponymous bakery in New York still welcomes lines averaging 100 guests prior to opening each morning. Chef Dominique opened his second shop, Dominique Ansel Kitchen, in New York in April 2015, which also features an after-hours dessert tasting table, U.P. (short for "Unlimited Possibilities). He has bakeries in Tokyo, London, and Los Angeles as well. In 2014, Chef Dominique published his first cookbook, *Dominique Ansel: The Secret Recipes*.



CHAPTER 03

MINI MADELEINES



MASTERCLASS

MINI MADELEINES



“Time is a precious ingredient in baking.”

So much of the success of a pastry depends on proper timing. In Chef Dominique’s opinion, the perfect example of this is the madeleine, the exquisite small French cake that elicited the most often-referenced memory recall in modern literature. Marcel Proust immortalized them in his appropriately titled novel *In Search of Lost Time*—tasting one of the tiny cakes brought back a rush of memories from his childhood, virtually transporting him to his past life. For Proust, it was the taste of the warm cake—not the mere sight of it—that triggered his sense memory, and he was the first writer to capture this ethereal relationship among taste, time, and memory.

Time is an essential ingredient in Chef Dominique’s madeleines. For him, a madeleine eaten immediately after it comes out of the oven, still piping hot, is the

only way it should be appreciated. As such, he only makes them fresh to order in his bakeries (reassuring impatient customers that the time it takes the little cakes to bake is the same as the wait for a latte). When you bite into a fresh madeleine, he explains, that last puff of steam escapes and it’s as if “it’s taking its last breath.” Madeleines that are cooled have lost their magic. Thus, it is imperative to make and serve the madeleines in quick succession. Chef Dominique’s recipe makes the process seamless and easy.

First, you make the batter and allow it to rest for 12 hours, or overnight, so the baking powder in the batter has time to relax, which will in turn give the cake its characteristic light, spongy texture and not that of a dense, crumbly cake. Secondly, because the batter only takes 4 minutes to bake, you can prep the mold, pipe the batter, and bake the madeleines in the same amount of time it takes to clear the dishes at the table and ready your guests for a delightful dessert.

Baking Timeline



MINI MADELEINES



Makes: 100 mini madeleines

Time: 15 minutes one day before;
15 minutes per batch the day of

INGREDIENTS

115g (8 tbsp) unsalted butter (84% butterfat)

15g (1 tbsp) dark brown sugar

15g (2 tsp) honey

100g (½ cup) granulated sugar

1g (½ tsp) kosher salt

120g (1 cup) all-purpose flour, sifted

4g (½ tsp) baking powder

150g (3 each) large eggs,
at room temperature

½ lemon grated lemon zest

½ orange grated orange zest

As needed nonstick cooking spray

As needed confectioners' sugar (for serving)

EQUIPMENT

Spatula

Microplane (for grating zests)

Uncut piping bag

Nonstick mini madeleine pan

Small sieve

METHOD

Day 1: Make Batter

In a medium pot, melt the butter, brown sugar, and honey over low heat. Stir gently with a heatproof spatula to ensure nothing burns. Keep the mixture warm over very low heat, or reheat if necessary.

In a large bowl, combine the granulated sugar, salt, flour, and baking powder and mix well with a whisk. Form a well in the center of the dry ingredients and add the eggs one by one, whisking to incorporate each before adding the next.

Tip: Use room temperature eggs to avoid cooling down the batter. If the batter is too cold, the butter may congeal when you add it.

When the eggs are fully incorporated and the batter is smooth, slowly whisk in the butter mixture. Whisk in the lemon and orange zests. The batter will still be runny and similar in consistency to cake batter. Cover with plastic wrap pressed directly onto the surface of the batter, to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate overnight to rest.

Tip: Many recipes containing baking powder do well to rest overnight. This helps with rising, which is especially important for the madeleine—a pastry that puffs up in the center when it bakes.

MINI MADELEINES

Day 2: Pipe, Bake, and Serve

Place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C) for conventional or 350°F (175°C) for convection.

Tip: In general for baking pastries, set your oven to convection if the option is available. This allows the heat to flow more evenly. It's an ideal setting because it helps pastries bake evenly on all sides.

Using a rubber spatula, place 2 large scoops of batter in a piping bag so that it is one-third full. Push the batter down toward the tip of the bag.

Cut an opening about ½ inch (1.25 cm) straight across the tip of the bag.

Hold the nonstick cooking spray about 4 inches (10 cm) away from a nonstick mini madeleine pan and spray evenly in all the cavities.

Holding the piping bag at a 90-degree angle about ½ inch (1.25 cm) above the pan, pipe the madeleine batter into the cavities so that it fills each about three-quarters of the way to the top.

Place a rimmed sheet pan upside down on the oven rack then place the mold on top and bake the madeleines for about 2 to 2½ minutes on the center rack. When you see the batter puff up in the center, rotate the mold 180 degrees. Bake for 2 to 2½ minutes more, until the sides of the madeleines are golden blonde and the center has set.

Tip: Baking the madeleines on an upside down sheet pan lifts the mold off the oven rack, so that the more intense heat in the bars of the rack does not transfer to the cakes in an uneven fashion. This also allows the heat of the oven to circulate around the mold more evenly, thus baking the madeleines more efficiently.

Unmold immediately. Bang the corner or sides of the madeleine pan against your work surface so that the fresh madeleines drop out.

Tip: If you find that the madeleines stick to the mold, for the next batch, try spraying a bit more cooking spray. Keeping the mold clean and washing it thoroughly with a soft sponge after use will also prevent the madeleines from sticking.

Using a small sieve, sprinkle confectioners' sugar evenly over the fresh-baked madeleines. Eat immediately (do not wait for more than even a few minutes!).

Madeleines are good only when freshly baked. Do not attempt to store them. However, you can keep the batter in a closed airtight container, with plastic wrap pressed onto the surface, in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

LEARN MORE

Chef Dominique refers to the small hump that appears on top of the madeleines as the “**pearl**.” This hump is characteristic of madeleine, in much the same way a crease on the top of a loaf or poundcake is iconic. This hump is achieved through two variables. First, the baking powder in the batter gives rise to the center of the madeleine when the heat of the oven hits the pan. Second, the shape of the mini madeleine pan itself promotes doming on top of the cake, since it sits on a non-level, convex surface.

When making the batter, it is important to have all your ingredients be at **room temperature** so they will combine more easily. The most important of these ingredients are the eggs. Eggs are magical emulsifiers, or binders, that marry fat and liquid into a smooth mixture. If you’ve ever made mayo, you’ve seen how they bind the oil and lemon juice together to create a smooth sauce that won’t break. When you’re beating eggs into butter and sugar for a cake batter, this is another type of emulsion, binding the butter (fat) with the sugar (a liquid when heated). For eggs to do their best job at binding, they need to be at room temperature. Madeleine batter is made by mixing the eggs

into the dry ingredients first (as opposed to mixing them into the liquid ingredients), so eggs will have a difficult time absorbing the flour if they are too cold. Cold eggs also have the possibility of re-solidifying the butter once it’s mixed into the dough, which would break the emulsion and result in a curdled, greasy dough.

Chef Dominique speaks about his madeleines the same way Proust wrote about them—with love and a longing for the abstract bliss they bring to his mind every time he tastes one fresh from the oven. Read **Proust’s iconic description** of the experience of eating a madeleine in the excerpt on the following pages, reproduced in English and the original French.

An excerpt from

DU COTÉ DE CHEZ SWANN

A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU, TOME I

Marcel Proust

Il y avait déjà bien des années que, de Combray, tout ce qui n'était pas le théâtre et le drame de mon coucher, n'existait plus pour moi, quand un jour d'hiver, comme je rentrais à la maison, ma mère, voyant que j'avais froid, me proposa de me faire prendre, contre mon habitude, un peu de thé. Je refusai d'abord et, je ne sais pourquoi, me ravisai. Elle envoya chercher un de ces gâteaux courts et dodus appelés Petites Madeleines qui semblent avoir été moulés dans la valve rainurée d'une coquille de Saint-Jacques. Et bientôt, machinalement, accablé par la morne journée et la perspective d'un triste lendemain, je portai à mes lèvres une cuillerée du thé où j'avais laissé s'amollir un morceau de madeleine. Mais à l'instant même où la gorgée mêlée des miettes du gâteau toucha mon palais, je tressaillis, attentif à ce qui se passait d'extraordinaire en moi. Un plaisir délicieux m'avait envahi, isolé, sans la notion de sa cause. Il m'avait aussitôt rendu les vicissitudes de la vie indifférentes, ses désastres inoffensifs, sa brièveté illusoire, de la même façon qu'opère l'amour, en me remplissant d'une essence précieuse: ou plutôt cette essence n'était pas en moi, elle était moi. J'avais cessé de me sentir médiocre, contingent, mortel. D'où avait pu me venir cette puissante joie? Je sentais qu'elle était liée au goût du thé et du gâteau, mais qu'elle le dépassait infiniment, ne devait pas être de même nature. D'où venait-elle? Que signifiait-elle? Où l'appréhender? Je bois une seconde gorgée où je ne trouve rien de plus que dans la première, une troisième qui m'apporte un peu moins que la seconde. Il est temps que je m'arrête, la vertu du breuvage semble diminuer. Il est clair que la vérité que je cherche n'est pas en lui, mais en moi. Il l'y a éveillée, mais ne la connaît pas, et ne peut que répéter indéfiniment, avec de moins en moins de force, ce même témoignage que je ne sais pas interpréter et que je veux au moins pouvoir lui redemander et retrouver intact, à ma disposition, tout à l'heure, pour un éclaircissement décisif. Je pose la tasse et me tourne vers mon esprit. C'est à lui de trouver la vérité. Mais comment? Grave incertitude, toutes les fois que l'esprit se sent dépassé par lui-même; quand lui, le chercheur, est tout ensemble le pays obscur où il doit chercher et où tout son bagage ne lui sera de rien. Chercher? pas seulement: créer. Il est en face de quelque chose qui n'est pas encore et que seul il peut réaliser, puis faire entrer dans sa lumière.

Et je recommence à me demander quel pouvait être cet état inconnu, qui n'apportait aucune preuve logique, mais l'évidence de sa félicité, de sa réalité devant laquelle les autres s'évanouissaient. Je veux essayer de le faire réapparaître. Je rétrograde par

An excerpt from

SWANN'S WAY

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST, VOLUME ONE

Marcel Proust

Translated from the French by C. K. Scott Moncrieff

Many years had elapsed during which nothing of Combray, save what was comprised in the theatre and the drama of my going to bed there, had any existence for me, when one day in winter, as I came home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first, and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent out for one of those short, plump little cakes called 'petites madeleines,' which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted scallop of a pilgrim's shell. And soon, mechanically, weary after a dull day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate than a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory—this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was myself. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I was conscious that it was connected with the taste of tea and cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature as theirs. Whence did it come? What did it signify? How could I seize upon and define it?

I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic. It is plain that the object of my quest, the truth, lies not in the cup but in myself. The tea has called up in me, but does not itself understand, and can only repeat indefinitely with a gradual loss of strength, the same testimony; which I, too, cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call upon the tea for it again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment. I put down my cup and examine my own mind. It is for it to discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty whenever the mind feels that some part of it has strayed beyond its own borders; when it, the seeker, is at once the dark region through which it must go seeking, where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not so far exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day.

la pensée au moment où je pris la première cuillerée de thé. Je retrouve le même état, sans une clarté nouvelle. Je demande à mon esprit un effort de plus, de ramener encore une fois la sensation qui s'enfuit. Et pour que rien ne brise l'élan dont il va tâcher de la ressaisir, j'écarte tout obstacle, toute idée étrangère, j'abrite mes oreilles et mon attention contre les bruits de la chambre voisine. Mais sentant mon esprit qui se fatigue sans réussir, je le force au contraire à prendre cette distraction que je lui refusais, à penser à autre chose, à se refaire avant une tentative suprême. Puis une deuxième fois, je fais le vide devant lui, je remets en face de lui la saveur encore récente de cette première gorgée et je sens tressaillir en moi quelque chose qui se déplace, voudrait s'élever, quelque chose qu'on aurait désancré, à une grande profondeur; je ne sais ce que c'est, mais cela monte lentement; j'éprouve la résistance et j'entends la rumeur des distances traversées.

Certes, ce qui palpète ainsi au fond de moi, ce doit être l'image, le souvenir visuel, qui, lié à cette saveur, tente de la suivre jusqu'à moi. Mais il se débat trop loin, trop confusément; à peine si je perçois le reflet neutre où se confond l'insaisissable tourbillon des couleurs remuées; mais je ne puis distinguer la forme, lui demander comme au seul interprète possible, de me traduire le témoignage de sa contemporaine, de son inséparable compagne, la saveur, lui demander de m'apprendre de quelle circonstance particulière, de quelle époque du passé il s'agit.

Arrivera-t-il jusqu'à la surface de ma claire conscience, ce souvenir, l'instant ancien que l'attraction d'un instant identique est venue de si loin solliciter, émouvoir, soulever tout au fond de moi? Je ne sais. Maintenant je ne sens plus rien, il est arrêté, redescendu peut-être; qui sait s'il remontera jamais de sa nuit? Dix fois il me faut recommencer, me pencher vers lui. Et chaque fois la lâcheté qui nous détourne de toute tâche difficile, de toute œuvre important, m'a conseillé de laisser cela, de boire mon thé en pensant simplement à mes ennuis d'aujourd'hui, à mes désirs de demain qui se laissent remâcher sans peine.

Et tout d'un coup le souvenir m'est apparu. Ce goût c'était celui du petit morceau de madeleine que le dimanche matin à Combray (parce que ce jour-là je ne sortais pas avant l'heure de la messe), quand j'allais lui dire bonjour dans sa chambre, ma tante Léonie m'offrait après l'avoir trempé dans son infusion de thé ou de tilleul. La vue de la petite madeleine ne m'avait rien rappelé avant que je n'y eusse goûté; peut-être parce que, en ayant souvent aperçu depuis, sans en manger, sur les tablettes des pâtisseries, leur image avait quitté ces jours de Combray pour se lier à d'autres plus récents; peut-être parce que de ces souvenirs abandonnés si longtemps hors de la mémoire, rien ne survivait, tout s'était désagrégé; les formes,—et celle aussi du petit coquillage de pâtisserie, si grassement sensuel, sous son plissage sévère et dévot—s'étaient abolies, ou, ensommeillées, avaient perdu la force d'expansion qui leur eût permis de rejoindre la conscience. Mais, quand d'un passé ancien rien ne subsiste, après la mort des êtres, après la destruction des choses, seules, plus frêles mais plus

And I begin again to ask myself what it could have been, this unremembered state which brought with it no logical proof of its existence, but only the sense that it was a happy, that it was a real state in whose presence other states of consciousness melted and vanished. I decide to attempt to make it reappear. I retrace my thoughts to the moment at which I drank the first spoonful of tea. I find again the same state, illumined by no fresh light. I compel my mind to make one further effort, to follow and recapture once again the fleeting sensation. And that nothing may interrupt it in its course I shut out every obstacle, every extraneous idea, I stop my ears and inhibit all attention to the sounds which come from the next room. And then, feeling that my mind is growing fatigued without having any success to report, I compel it for a change to enjoy that distraction which I have just denied it, to think of other things, to rest and refresh itself before the supreme attempt. And then for the second time I clear an empty space in front of it. I place in position before my mind's eye the still recent taste of that first mouthful, and I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting-place and attempts to rise, something that has been embedded like an anchor at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed.

Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, has tried to follow it into my conscious mind. But its struggles are too far off, too much confused; scarcely can I perceive the colourless reflection in which are blended the uncapturable whirling medley of radiant hues, and I cannot distinguish its form, cannot invite it, as the one possible interpreter, to translate to me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable paramour, the taste of cake soaked in tea; cannot ask it to inform me what special circumstance is in question, of what period in my past life.

Will it ultimately reach the clear surface of my consciousness, this memory, this old, dead moment which the magnetism of an identical moment has travelled so far to importune, to disturb, to raise up out of the very depths of my being? I cannot tell. Now that I feel nothing, it has stopped, has perhaps gone down again into its darkness, from which who can say whether it will ever rise? Ten times over I must essay the task, must lean down over the abyss. And each time the natural laziness which deters us from every difficult enterprise, every work of importance, has urged me to leave the thing alone, to drink my tea and to think merely of the worries of to-day and of my hopes for tomorrow, which let themselves be pondered over without effort or distress of mind.

And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt

vivaces, plus immatérielles, plus persistantes, plus fidèles, l'odeur et la saveur restent encore longtemps, comme des âmes, à se rappeler, à attendre, à espérer, sur la ruine de tout le reste, à porter sans fléchir, sur leur gouttelette presque impalpable, l'édifice immense du souvenir.

Et dès que j'eus reconnu le goût du morceau de madeleine trempé dans le tilleul que me donnait ma tante (quoique je ne susse pas encore et dusse remettre à bien plus tard de découvrir pourquoi ce souvenir me rendait si heureux), aussitôt la vieille maison grise sur la rue, où était sa chambre, vint comme un décor de théâtre s'appliquer au petit pavillon, donnant sur le jardin, qu'on avait construit pour mes parents sur ses derrières (ce pan tronqué que seul j'avais revu jusque-là); et avec la maison, la ville, la Place où on m'envoyait avant déjeuner, les rues où j'allais faire des courses depuis le matin jusqu'au soir et par tous les temps, les chemins qu'on prenait si le temps était beau. Et comme dans ce jeu où les Japonais s'amuse à tremper dans un bol de porcelaine rempli d'eau, de petits morceaux de papier jusque-là indistincts qui, à peine y sont-ils plongés s'étirent, se contournent, se colorent, se différencient, deviennent des fleurs, des maisons, des personnages consistants et reconnaissables, de même maintenant toutes les fleurs de notre jardin et celles du parc de M. Swann, et les nymphéas de la Vivonne, et les bonnes gens du village et leurs petits logis et l'église et tout Combray et ses environs, tout cela que prend forme et solidité, est sorti, ville et jardins, de ma tasse de thé.

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Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the interval, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks' windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent; perhaps because of those memories, so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the forms of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds, were either obliterated or had been so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

And once I had recognized the taste of the crumb of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-flowers which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like the scenery of a theatre to attach itself to the little pavilion, opening on to the garden, which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated panel which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I was sent before luncheon, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And just as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.

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CHAPTER 04-08

FRUIT TART



MASTERCLASS

FRUIT TART



“In the bakery, I compare my pastries to a silent film, in that they must be impactful right away. As soon as you look at it, it has to look good and attractive; you must be seduced by it.”

For Chef Dominique, presentation is one of the most important elements in making pastries—but especially in fruit tarts, where you want to take advantage of the fruit’s beauty to make your tarts look spectacular. In a restaurant, you have a server to explain a dessert to you, but in a bakery like Chef Dominique’s, the tart must present itself.

In this chapter, Chef Dominique will take you through the essential components of building a traditional French fruit tart with modern sensibility and presentation. First, you will learn to make the pastry shell, the foundation of your tart. For these fruit tarts, Chef Dominique will teach you how to blind-bake a tart,

which involves baking the dough fully by itself (weighted to keep its shape) so that it can be served with unbaked fillings, like pastry cream and fruit. That pastry cream will be the filling for the tart, a creamy conduit for marrying the pastry crust, fruit, and jam, the last of which is used to add pops of intense fruit flavor. Finally, you will learn to make a clear glaze, also called a nappage, which helps seal in the moisture of your fruits on top, preventing them from drying out, oxidizing, and looking unpleasant.

This final step is presentation. For Chef Dominique, the face of a tart is a canvas for inspired artistry. From the moment you conceive of and begin to create your desserts, always keep in mind what you want the finished product to look like. It should, as Chef Dominique notes frequently, be as beautiful to behold as it is delicious to taste. By tackling each step of the recipe one at a time, you will learn the meaning behind each element, the various ways ingredients can affect the flavor of the finished tart, and how to assemble components in a way that creates a stunning pastry to show off to all your friends and family.

Baking Timeline



FRUIT TART BASE: VANILLA SABLÉ SHELL



Makes: 1 8-inch tart shell

Time: 1 hour (including baking time)

INGREDIENTS

81g (½ cup + 2 tbsp) confectioners' sugar
127g (9 tbsp) unsalted premium butter, softened
(plus more to butter your tart ring)
50g (1 each) large egg
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise,
seeds scraped
186g (1½ cups) all-purpose flour
(plus more as needed for dusting)
47g (⅓ cup + 1 tbsp) cornstarch
1g (½ tsp) kosher salt

EQUIPMENT

Stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment
Rubber spatula
Rolling pin
Sheet pan
Parchment paper
8-inch tart ring
Small paring knife

METHOD

In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, cream the confectioners' sugar and butter for 30 seconds on low speed. Add the egg, scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula, and mix on medium speed until evenly combined.

Working on a cutting board, press the vanilla bean flat, then use the tip of the paring knife to halve it lengthwise, from tip to tip. Turn the knife blade over and use the back of the blade tip to scrape the seeds from the center of each half.

In a medium bowl, combine the flour, cornstarch, and salt. With the mixer on low speed, stir in the flour mixture and vanilla bean seeds until just combined and no more dry patches are visible, about 10 seconds more. Finish mixing the dough by hand to ensure it is not over-mixed. The dough should be creamy, smooth and have the consistency of cookie dough.

Transfer the dough to a sheet of parchment paper on your work surface and sandwich it with another sheet of parchment paper, flattening it into a 1-inch-thick disk. Transfer the dough disk to a sheet pan and refrigerate until firm, 30 to 45 minutes.

FRUIT TART BASE: VANILLA SABLÉ SHELL

Liberally flour the work surface and a rolling pin. Unwrap the dough and transfer it to your work surface. Roll out the dough out into a rectangle about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3mm) thick. (Make sure to work fast so the dough doesn't get too warm.) Place on a sheet pan and loosely cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 30 minutes. (If you feel your dough is still cold and easy to work with, you can proceed directly to the next step without chilling the dough sheet.)

Tip: You can also roll out the dough between two sheets of parchment, if you find that your rolling pin is sticking to the dough. It also helps when transferring the rolled out dough onto the sheet pan before chilling in the fridge.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and slide the dough sheet to a work surface. (Peel off the layers of parchment paper, if using.) Using the tart ring as a guide, cut a circle from the center of the dough sheet that is 1 inch (2.5 cm) wider than the outside of the ring, so that the dough round will be big enough to come up the sides of the ring.

Now: the fun part. You're going to "fonçage" the tart dough, or form it into a tart shape in the tart ring. First, butter the inside of the tart ring. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper and place the tart ring at the center of the pan. Place the dough round on top of the ring. Push down gently with your fingers and press the dough along the inside of the ring, making sure to get into the inside edges. It's important here not to press too hard and to keep the tart shell an even thickness so that it doesn't bake unevenly. Use a paring knife to trim the excess dough hanging over the edge of the ring. Return to the refrigerator to chill for about 30 minutes.

Tip: If your dough starts to feel warm and lose its shape, return it to the fridge for 15 minutes. Chilling the dough allows the gluten to rest. Working with dough that's too warm or overworked will cause the finished product to shrink while baking.

While the tart shell is chilling, place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C) for conventional or 325°F (160°C) for convection.

Blind-bake the tart shell by lining it with parchment paper or a large coffee filter so the surface of the dough is completely covered. An easy trick to folding the parchment is similar to folding a snowflake, where you fold it in quarters and keep folding smaller segments to the point, cutting in a curve to form a circle. Press the parchment completely to the side of the tart dough.

Tip: Since tarts are filled with creams or mousses (which can't be baked), you'll have to bake the tart shell in advance of filling it.

Fill with enough rice or dried beans to hold down as weights. Bake the tart on the center rack for 15 to 20 minutes, until it's a light golden, sandy color and you don't see any wet spots.

Tip: This particular tart dough won't rise too much, so if you don't blind-bake the tart shell in advance, it's still going to be ok.

Tip: Some tart or pie shell recipes will tell you to "dock" (or pierce with a fork) the bottom of the dough before baking to prevent it from puffing up. You DON'T need to dock this dough as it won't rise too much, especially as it's being weighed down with pie weights during the blind-baking process.

FRUIT TART BASE: VANILLA SABLÉ SHELL

Bake the tart shell on the center rack for 8 minutes. Rotate the pan 180 degrees and bake for 8 more minutes or until the tart shell is a light golden brown. Unmold the tart shell while still warm. Let cool completely at room temperature.

Tip: Always make sure your tart shell is fully cooled before you start assembling any cream-based tarts. If the shell is still too hot or warm when you pipe in your pastry cream, you'll end up with a soggy-bottomed tart.

STORAGE

Best enjoyed fresh the day-of. Tart shells can be baked in advance, but don't fill them with your creams and fillings too far in advance. Ideally, it's filled and served right away, so the shell stays nice and crispy.

Any excess dough can be frozen, covered tightly in plastic wrap and stored in an airtight container, for 2 to 3 weeks. It can also be refrigerated, wrapped in plastic wrap and stored in an airtight container, for 2 to 3 days.

FRUIT TART FILLING: PASTRY CREAM



Makes: 1 kg (enough for an 8-inch tart or 8-inch cake with some leftover)

Time: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

533g (2¼ cups) whole milk

128g (½ cup) sugar

184g (9 each) egg yolks

48g (⅓ cup) cornstarch

108g (8 tbsp, or 1 stick) unsalted butter, softened and cubed

EQUIPMENT

Whisk

STORAGE

Cover with plastic wrap pressed up against the surface of the pastry cream to prevent a skin from forming, and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

METHOD

In a large pot over medium heat, bring the milk and half of the sugar to a boil, slowly stirring to prevent the mixture from burning on the bottom of the pot.

In a bowl, whisk together the other half of the sugar with the egg yolks. (Do this immediately to prevent the yolks from “burning” on contact with the sugar.) Stir in the cornstarch until smooth then slowly whisk in ½ cup of the warm milk and sugar mixture, stirring until evenly combined.

Tip: This process is called tempering, a cooking technique in which you gradually raise the temperature of a cold or room-temperature ingredient (in this case, eggs) by adding small amounts of a hot liquid, to prevent the cold ingredient from cooking too quickly or too much. If you add all of the hot liquid into the eggs at once, you’re going to end up with lumpy scrambled eggs in your pastry cream.

While stirring, pour the egg mixture back into the pot of milk. On low to medium heat, while stirring constantly, heat the mixture up until it noticeably thickens. It takes about 3 minutes or so to thicken and a further 2 minutes more, once thickened, to cook out the raw taste from the cornstarch. It will continue

FRUIT TART FILLING: PASTRY CREAM

to thicken as it cools, so remove it from the heat before you evaporate off too much water.

Tip: Look for the foam on the top of the custard to start disappearing. This is a sign that the custard is almost finished cooking.

Remove from heat and allow the custard to cool to room temperature, whisking occasionally. Add in the cubed butter and whisk until evenly combined. A good pastry cream is rich and smooth, with a pale yellow color and a glossy, velvety texture.

Tip: Strain through a fine mesh sieve to help remove any lumps.

Cover with plastic wrap directly pressed onto the surface and let cool in the fridge.

VARIATION

To Make a Cinnamon Pastry Cream:

Start with Chef Dominique's pastry cream recipe. In a large pot over medium heat, combine the milk, half of the sugar, and 1 cinnamon stick and bring to a boil, slowly stirring. Remove from the heat and cover tightly in plastic wrap, allowing the cinnamon stick to steep in the milk for 15 minutes.

Tip: This method is known as an infusion, where you infuse the liquid (in this case, milk) with a flavored ingredient (in this case, cinnamon). This will create a smooth and balanced cinnamon flavor to your pastry cream, rather than adding the cinnamon at the end.

Remove the cinnamon stick from the milk mixture. Continue with the rest of the recipe.

FRUIT TART FILLING: QUICK STRAWBERRY JAM



Makes: 600g total (enough for 1 tart or 1 layer of jam between 2 cake layers; if you want to make a 3-layer cake, double this recipe)

Time: 10 to 15 minutes (includes cooking time)

INGREDIENTS

200g (1 cup) sugar

24g (7¼ tsp) apple pectin (sold for making homemade jams and jelly)

700g (4½ cups) store-bought strawberry purée (you can also use blueberry, raspberry, blackberry, or huckleberry purée, or make your own using the recipe below)

30g (2 tbsp) lemon juice

20g (4 tsp) rum

EQUIPMENT

Spatula

Whisk

Spoon

Marble surface or plate

STORAGE

Best used right away to assemble your cake or tart.

METHOD

In a small bowl, combine sugar and pectin.

Pour the strawberry purée into a medium pot and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Stir in the lemon juice and rum.

While whisking, sprinkle the sugar and pectin mixture on top of the simmering purée and mix until incorporated.

Tip: Make sure to sprinkle the sugar and pectin mixture evenly over the purée, rather than dumping the whole mixture in at once as it may clump into a ball.

Continue cooking the purée for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring occasionally until the purée has reduced to a thick jam texture.

Tip: To test for when the jam is set, spoon some onto a marble surface or plate, let cool for 1 minute, then run your finger through it to see if the jam stays put and doesn't run back together. If it stays put, then it's ready!

Remove the pot from the heat and let cool to room temperature. Transfer the jam to a bowl. Chill in the fridge, covered with plastic wrap, until ready to use.

FRUIT TART FILLING: QUICK STRAWBERRY JAM

TO MAKE STRAWBERRY PURÉE:

Purée 700g (4½ cups) fresh strawberries (hulled and cut in half) in a blender or food processor until smooth. If you prefer your jam to be seedless, strain out the purée with a fine mesh strainer.

FRUIT GLAZE (NAPPAGE)

Makes: 500g (enough to glaze an 8-inch cake)

Time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

139g ($\frac{3}{4}$ cups) sugar

346g ($1\frac{1}{2}$ cups) water

15g ($1\frac{1}{4}$ tbsp) NH pectin, available online

Tip: It's important to use NH pectin for this recipe. It's a type of pectin that's thermally reversible, so it can be set, re-melted, and set again. Standard apple pectin will not work.

EQUIPMENT

Whisk

Pastry brush

STORAGE

Store in the fridge in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

METHOD

In a medium pot, bring half of the sugar and all of the water to a boil.

In a bowl, whisk the other half of the sugar with the NH pectin. Once the syrup is boiling, sprinkle the sugar-NH pectin mixture into the syrup, whisking constantly until dissolved.

Tip: It's important to combine some of the sugar with the NH pectin first, and then sprinkle it into your sugar water slowly. If you were to add just NH pectin in all at once, you'll end up with a clumpy glaze.

Continue boiling the syrup, whisking constantly, to dissolve and activate the pectin, about 3-4 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool to room temperature.

Tip: It is best to make this clear glaze ahead of time, let it cool, then re-warm it just before using.

Pour the nappage into a resealable container and refrigerate until ready to use.

When you're ready to glaze, microwave the glaze until it's hot and liquidy, so it'll easily and evenly pour on or brush onto fruit (you may add a little water to loosen it up if it's too thick). If it looks like it's slightly separated, use a hand blender to blitz it together. Make sure to tap the container a bit so that the bubbles from blending go away. Brush a thin and even layer onto your fruits that are already on your finished cake or tart.

Tip: Because your nappage is hot when brushed on, make sure whatever fruits you're brushing it onto are cold so that it doesn't wilt them. The nappage should set solid within 1 minute.

STRAWBERRY TART: PRESENTATION STYLES



Makes: 1 8-inch tart

COMPONENTS

- 1 8-inch vanilla sablé shell
- 150g cup quick strawberry jam
- 300g cup pastry cream
- 2 lbs fresh strawberries, hulled
- 50g (½ cup) cup clear glaze, rewarmed

EQUIPMENT

- Cardboard cake circle
- Paring knife
- 2 uncut piping bags
- Pastry brush

METHOD

Place the tart shell on a cake stand or cardboard cake circle.

Fill 1 plastic piping bag with the jam, then twist the open end of the bag to close. Snip the tip of the bag off and pipe the jam in a spiral pattern evenly over the bottom of the tart shell until it's mostly covered. Reserve about 20% of the jam in the bag for later use.

Fill the second plastic piping bag with the pastry cream, then twist the open end of the bag to close. Snip the tip of the bag off and pipe the pastry cream in a spiral pattern evenly over the jam.

On a cutting board, halve the strawberries lengthwise, making sure to group large halves at one end of the cutting board and group smaller halves toward the opposite end.

Starting with the larger halves, arrange them cut side up and tips pointing outward along the entire edge of the tart so their points extend about ¼ inch beyond the edge of the shell. Continue arranging halves in this fashion until they form a ring, then continue making concentric circles with the halves, working toward the smaller pieces, until they meet in the center and completely cover the pastry cream. From the top, the tart should look like a blooming flower.

Gently brush the warmed glaze over the cut side of each strawberry only, working from the base toward the tip like painting a fingernail, to make a thin, delicate layer.

LEARN MORE

As with all baking, but especially in pastry, **mise en place** is crucial to success. French for “everything in its place,” the term refers to having all your ingredients measured out and ready to go so once you start making a component, you don’t have to stop, which makes the whole process that much more relaxed.

For the tart shell, tough dough—which can come from over-mixing, gluten content, and not letting it rest—is the enemy. So you want to add all the dry ingredients at the end of mixing, even finishing mixing by hand if necessary, to ensure the dough is handled only long enough to incorporate the dry ingredients. This will produce a light and crisp pastry base for your delicate fruit tart.

When it comes to making your pastry cream, feel free to flavor it with whatever **complementary flavors** you like. For the strawberry tart, Chef Dominique sticks to traditional vanilla, but for the apple tart, he infuses the milk for the cream with a cinnamon stick to extract its flavor. As you will see once it begins to cook, a lot of foam will form on top of the pastry cream mixture. This is a result of all the whisking to combine the ingredients. Once you see it start to disappear as the pastry cream cooks, you can take it as a sign that the cream has started to thicken and will be ready shortly.

Constant and consistent whisking is imperative for making a silky smooth pastry cream, as it prevents cream from sticking to the bottom of the pot and becoming overcooked. A common misstep in making pastry cream is to add the butter to the hot cream as soon as it’s done. You want to avoid this because it will break the emulsion of the butter and result in a

grainy, greasy pastry cream. Instead, allow the pastry cream to cool to a degree that is just slightly warmer than room temperature before incorporating the butter. That way, the two mixtures blend together smoothly and your pastry cream stays velvety and light. And once the pastry cream is finished, make sure to press the plastic wrap against the surface of the cream so that it does not form a “skin” or firm layer on top, another enemy of the smooth texture you want in your pastry cream.

When making the **jam for the tart**, do not use fruit that is going bad, but rather fruit that is at its peak of ripeness to ensure the most vibrant flavor. When incorporating the pectin into the fruit, it’s essential to mix it with the sugar first and also slowly sprinkle it into the hot fruit purée while whisking constantly. Both steps ensure the jam stays smooth, avoiding any hard lumps that could ruin the texture of your tart. Other jam-like condiments, like compotes or preserves, often have large chunks of fruit in them—great on your morning toast, but not ideal for a sleek, modern tart filling—which would compete for attention with the beautiful fruit on top of the tart.

For both tarts, pick the **best looking and tasting fruits** you can get since those will be on full display with nothing to hide any imperfections. In the strawberry tart, look for berries that are uniform in size. When placing them on the top of the tart, start with larger berries at the perimeter of the tart and use smaller berries as you work your way toward the center. For the apple tart, use a mandoline to cut thin, uniform slices of apple, if your knife skills are not expert-level. To use the most you can from the apple, cut off its “cheeks” in thirds from the core of

FRUIT TART


the apple so you have three even lobes to work with. With the apples, vary the colors slightly so you can produce an ombre effect when fanning out the slices over the top of the tart.

As for the glaze, it should just “**drape the fruit,**” as Chef Dominique notes. “Like applying fingernail polish, you want to start from one end and move toward you in one clean motion.” If your glaze is too hot, it can damage the fruit. If it is too cooled and thickened, it will just sit on top like a jelly and will be unpleasant to look at it. Always make sure the glaze is no warmer than room temperature so you know it’s the proper consistency.



CHAPTER 09-12

CHOCOLATE CAKE



MASTERCLASS

CHOCOLATE CAKE



“This cake takes days of prep time and a lot of work to make, but it makes for a beautiful cake and a delicious one that will wow your friends.”

Chef Dominique’s whimsical chocolate cake is a wonder to behold—and will make a fantastic cake to use as a showstopper at your next dinner party. But like most things in life that are worth doing, it takes a lot of time to prepare. Made of thin layers of delicate spongecake and silky smooth chocolate mousse, all enrobed in a slate-black chocolate mirror glaze, this is a French-style cake, with a mousse base and thin slices of cake (as opposed to denser American-style cakes with buttercream frosting). This cake is full of different textures; it’s intricate and very delicate. It’s just the type of cake that Chef Dominique grew up with and now wants to share with you.

Biscuit (pronounced “bis-KWEE”) is the French word for “cake.” It is easier to prepare than American cakes,

as it uses fewer ingredients, and is baked in a sheet pan in one large layer, as opposed to two or three separate round pans. And because of this large canvas, the cake can then be cut into virtually any shape for building your cakes. Once the cake is cooled and unmolded, make sure to cut the cake from the inside of the ring mold, so that the cake will fit evenly inside it once you’re ready to assemble the finished dessert. (Don’t forget to save the scraps! You can toast them in the oven and crumble them over ice cream.)

The chocolate mousse—one of Chef Dominique’s favorite desserts on its own—is best made and used straight away while it is fresh and at the peak of its flavor and texture. The mirror glaze makes the cake so shiny you can actually see your reflection in it.

Once the cake is glazed and set, Chef Dominique covers it with dozens of tiny meringue drops called “Mini Me’s,” which transform the cake into a spiky, fantastical creation. It’s an optional addition, as Chef Dominique notes, but one that adds texture and dimension to an already stunning work of pastry art.

Baking Timeline



CHOCOLATE CAKE BASE: BISCUIT



Makes: 1 kg (enough for a 2-layer 8-inch round cake)

Time: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

11 whole eggs, separated into yolks (226g) and whites (319g)

176g ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup, plus 2 tbsp) granulated sugar

176g ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup, plus 2 tbsp) granulated sugar

102g ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup, plus 2 tbsp) unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted

Tip: A large egg is generally about 60 g in weight: the white is 30g, yolk is 20g, and shell is 10g. It's always helpful to remember when a recipe calls for eggs in grams.

EQUIPMENT

Stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment

Spatula

Offset spatula

2 sheet pans

Parchment or 2 silicone mats

Non-stick cooking spray

8-inch cake ring

METHOD

Preheat your oven to 400°F (205°C). Line 2 sheet pans with parchment or a silicone mat. Spray the parchment/silicone mats with a thin layer of non-stick cooking spray.

In a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, whip the egg yolks and the first measurement of the sugar (176g) on high speed until light and fluffy (the mixture should be pale and almost white), 4 to 5 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a bowl and set aside. Clean and fully dry the stand mixer bowl.

Make a French meringue: In the stand mixer, whip together the egg whites on medium-high speed until bubbles start to form. While continuing to mix, slowly stream in the second measurement of the sugar (176g) and continue mixing until the meringue is shiny and glossy with medium-stiff peaks. Once you remove the bowl from the mixer, do not let the meringues stand too long or they will clump. Slowly and steadily continue folding them with a rubber spatula to prevent this from happening.

Tip: When making meringue, make sure your bowl is clean and dried thoroughly. Any excess moisture in the bowl may prevent the egg whites from whipping into that fluffy, voluminous texture you're aiming for.

CHOCOLATE CAKE BASE: BISCUIT

Now you'll combine the two mixtures together, but first, you'll need to lighten the denser egg yolk mixture with a little of the light-and-airy meringue (this way, when you fold it all together, the meringue won't totally deflate). First, take $\frac{1}{3}$ of the meringue and fold it into the yolk mixture with a spatula until combined. Carefully fold in the cocoa powder until it's evenly combined. Then gradually add the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ of the meringue, little by little, gently folding to combine before each addition. Be careful not to overmix, as it'll cause the fluffy texture to deflate and you'll end up with a dense cake.

Pour half of the batter onto the first sheet pan, leveling it out with an offset spatula to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the edge of the mat/pan. Repeat with the rest of the batter on the second sheet pan.

Tip: This cake is known as a biscuit, which is a French-style cake that's thin and a bit dry in texture, so you'll have to add moisture by either soaking it with a syrup soak and/or layering it with mousse to make a layered cake.

Bake both sheet pans for 6 to 8 minutes, or until the middle is fully set.

Tip: Never just rely on a timer, as every oven is different; there are three ways to know if the cake is done:

Jiggle it: the cake should still be a little bouncy in the middle.

Nudge it: press the top gently; it should bounce back.

Stick it: stick a cake tester (or toothpick or paring knife) into the center, and if it comes out clean, you're done!

Tip: People often burn chocolate cakes because it's harder to tell if it's cooked through with the dark color of the batter. So be extra careful and check even before the suggested bake time.

Remove the cake from the oven and let cool in the pan. When cooled, use a paring knife to run along the edges of the cake to loosen it from the sides of the pan. Invert the sheet of cake onto another sheet pan or a countertop lined with parchment. Gently peel off the parchment paper or silicone mat. Using your 8-inch round cake ring as a guide, use a paring knife to cut out two even discs of cake from the inside of the ring. Set aside, covered in plastic wrap until ready to use.

Tip: Cutting the cake from inside the ring, as opposed to the outside, ensures that it will fit perfectly in the cake ring when it comes time to assemble the finished cake. Also, don't discard the cake scraps! They're always a pastry chef's favorite. Break them into small pieces to sprinkle on top of ice cream, or enjoy by the handful as is.

Best enjoyed fresh the day-of. The cake can also be made in advance. In the fridge: cover in plastic wrap and keep chilled for up to 3 days. In the freezer: cover in plastic wrap and store in an airtight container in the freezer for no more than 2 to 3 weeks. To defrost, keep it in the plastic wrap and place in the fridge for 2 to 3 hours until it is moist and soft again. Always defrost in the fridge to keep bacteria from developing, and keep it wrapped so that condensation forms outside the plastic wrap.

CHOCOLATE CAKE ACCENT: SWISS MINI MERINGUES



INGREDIENTS

266g (2¼ cups) confectioners' sugar

120g (4 each) large egg whites

EQUIPMENT

Whisk

Spatula

Stand mixer or hand mixer with whisk attachment

Candy thermometer

Piping bag

Plain #804 tip (⅜-inch/1 cm diameter)

Sheet tray

Parchment paper

Optional: Two 4-inch diameter by 2-inch tall ring molds (if making baked meringue base for pavlovas)

STORAGE

Store in a closed, airtight container at room temperature, away from humidity, for up to 1 week.

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 200°F (95°C) for conventional or 175°F (80°C) for convection.

Fill a medium pot with about 3 inches (about 7.5 cm) of water and bring to a simmer. In a medium heat-proof bowl (or the metal bowl of a stand mixer), stir together the confectioners' sugar and egg whites. Place the bowl on top of the pot of simmering water. The bowl should sit on the rim of the pot, well above the water.

Whisk the egg white mixture constantly as it warms. When it reaches 113°F (45°C) and feels hot to the touch and the sugar is fully dissolved, remove the bowl from the pot.

Using a stand mixer or hand mixer fitted with a whisk, whip the egg whites on high speed. As they whip, the egg whites will double in volume, thicken, and cool. When finished, the meringue will be very fluffy, with a consistency similar to shaving foam, and hold a medium-soft peak. This should take about 5 minutes, depending on your mixer.

CHOCOLATE CAKE ACCENT: SWISS MINI MERINGUES

Tip: Don't worry about over-whipping the meringue. It won't affect the final outcome of the product, so better to over- whip than under- whip.

Tip: When making meringue, it is very important to use clean tools. If a drop of oil (or other fat) or egg yolk gets into the egg whites, the meringue will not whip properly.

OPTIONAL: If you want to add flavorings to this meringue, add them after the meringue is whipped to the proper consistency so that the flavorings don't impede the whipping process. With a rubber spatula, gently fold in any desired flavorings into the meringue (or you can leave the meringue plain-flavored as well). Feel free to separate the meringue into batches and use different flavors, like cocoa powder, ground cinnamon, grated lemon zest, or peppermint extract. Just make sure you keep all tools clean for each to avoid mixing them.

Tip: The more you work the meringue, the looser its structure becomes. When it bakes, a loose meringue will become flat and dense. It is very important to be as gentle as possible at this stage.

Tip: When choosing flavorings, pick ones that are very concentrated. Ground spices, alcohol-based extracts, and citrus zests are all good options. You can also add a drop of natural food coloring to your Swiss meringue to create colored Mini Me's.

To make Mini Me's:

Yield: about 200

Place a #804 plain tip in a plastic piping bag and use scissors to cut the bag to fit the tip. Fold over the top of the piping bag so it forms a lip all the way around. Form your non-dominant hand into a "C" shape and rest the bag in your hand, letting the lip of the bag

fall over your fingers. Using a spatula, place 2 large scoops of meringue in the bag so that it is one-third full. Push the meringue down toward the tip of the bag.

Tip: It is important to work with the meringue while it is slightly warm to the touch or else it will be too thick to pipe evenly.

Line a sheet pan with parchment paper. At each corner, pipe a small dot of meringue under the parchment and push the parchment flat. This will help keep it "glued" to the sheet pan.

Holding the piping bag at a 90-degree angle, or perpendicular, about ½ inch (1.25cm) above the sheet pan, pipe a dot of meringue with steady, even pressure until it reaches the size of a dime. Pull the piping bag straight up to create a fine point. (You should have a meringue teardrop shaped like a Hershey's Kiss.) Repeat piping drops about ½ inch (1.25cm) apart until all the meringue is used, refilling the piping bag as necessary. (You might need to use a few sheet pans, depending on the size of the Mini Me's.)

Bake the meringues for 20 minutes. Rotate the pan 180 degrees and bake for 20 minutes more. Continue to rotate every 20 minutes until the meringues are completely dry, about 1 hour 20 minutes total. The Mini Me's should be crispy all the way through. Transfer the Mini Me's, still on the parchment paper, to a wire rack to cool completely. When cool, remove gently from the parchment with your fingers.

MORE ON MERINGUES

The style of meringue Chef Dominique makes for the meringue drops that decorate his chocolate cake is the Swiss meringue. To make it, you gently cook the egg whites and sugar in a bowl set over a pan of boiling water (what Chef refers to as a “double boiler”) so that the meringue will become stable when whipped and can be easily piped for the baked meringue drops. This style of meringue is dense and smooth, so it’s usually used as a base to be mixed with other frostings, such as buttercream. It can also be piped and baked to make crunchy mini meringues (what Chef Dominique calls Mini Me’s), or molded in a ring mold and baked to create a fluffy meringue base for a pavlova. In America, it’s commonly used on top of a Lemon Meringue Pie or to cover a Baked Alaska, a classic dessert consisting of a round of cake, topped with ice cream, then encased in meringue to insulate it from the heat of the broiler or torch, which browns and caramelizes the meringue like a toasted marshmallow. Both desserts traditionally use French meringue; though in the past couple of decades, pastry chefs have begun using Swiss meringue in its stead.

For a variation on the cake, you can also pipe discs of meringue as a layer for the chocolate cake (in lieu of making mini me’s to decorate it).

TO MAKE A BAKED 4” MERINGUE BASE:

Yield: two 4-inch baked meringues

Once you’ve finished making your meringue (before it’s baked), place your two ring molds onto a silicone mat on a baking sheet (if you don’t have a silicone mat, you can also just line your baking sheet with parchment). Using a spatula, transfer half of the meringue into the first ring mold, smoothing out the sur-

face so that the meringue fully fills the mold. Carefully remove the ring. Repeat with the second ring.

Tip: If you don’t have a ring mold, you can use a spatula to form two mounds that are roughly 4-inch by 2-inch each. The meringue will spread slightly when baked.

Bake for 10 minutes at 375°F (190°C). Then turn down the oven to 325°F (163°C) and bake for 20 minutes more, until the outside of the meringue forms a thin and crunchy shell (about 1/8” thick) and is golden blonde in color, and the inside is tender and still a bit moist. Let the meringue cool to room temp (be careful not to touch it too much as it might deflate). Top with Chantilly and fresh fruits and enjoy.

There are two other styles of meringue you’ll encounter: **French and Italian.**

French meringue is made by mixing sugar with raw egg whites and is the least stable type of meringue. As such, it will usually need to be baked, so it’s best used when folded into other batters to give them lift and lightness or baked for crunchy meringue cookies. This type of meringue is the one you will learn to make for the biscuit element in the chocolate cake.

TO MAKE FRENCH MERINGUE:

Yield: about 900g

In a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, whip 300g (10 each) large egg whites on medium speed until soft peaks form. Gradually pour in 300g (1½ cups) granulated sugar a little bit at a time while continuing to mix until the mixture is smooth and shiny and has formed stiff peaks.

MORE ON MERINGUES

Stop mixing. Gently fold in 300g (2½ cups) confectioners' sugar by hand with a spatula until incorporated, being careful not to overmix and deflate the meringue. Now you can use the meringue to pipe and bake as needed for your desired recipe.

Italian meringue is the most stable of the three because it requires hot sugar syrup to be drizzled into whipped egg whites so you get beautiful, fluffy peaks. It'll be satiny in texture and will give you tall, proud peaks when you frost your cakes or pipe onto a cake or tart. To make Italian meringue, follow the recipe below:

TO MAKE ITALIAN MERINGUE:

Yield: about 500g, enough to top one 8-inch tart, cake, or pavlova

Make a sugar syrup by combining 286g (1½ cups) granulated sugar and 72g (⅓ cup) water in a small saucepan over medium heat while stirring to dissolve the sugar.

While the syrup is heating up, start whipping 144g (5 each) large egg whites in a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment on medium speed until they're foamy and cloudy. As soon as your sugar syrup reaches 250°F (121°C), remove from heat and stream it slowly into the whipping egg whites, continuing to whip on high until you get soft peaks. When you lift the whisk up, the meringue should still be warm and hold its shape. If it's cold, you've gone too far!

Decorate or pipe your tart/cake immediately. You can also gently brown the surface of the meringue with a small hand-held butane torch to give it a caramelized finish (be sure to ignite the torch away from the meringue first, so the meringue doesn't end up tasting like butane). Use the meringue right away. Don't store it in the fridge, because the sugar will start to separate and seep and that fluffy texture will start to deflate.

CHOCOLATE CAKE FILLING: MOUSSE



Makes: 1 kg (enough for an 8-inch cake)

Time: 30 minutes (not including time in the fridge)

INGREDIENTS

2 each gelatin sheets

(silver strength/160 bloom)

448g (2 cups) heavy cream

312g (1⅓ cups) whole milk

308g (11 oz) dark chocolate (70% cocoa content),
finely chopped

Tip: If you can't find gelatin sheets, use powdered gelatin. One gelatin sheet = 1 scant tsp (2.3g) powdered gelatin. For every tsp of gelatin, bloom in 1 tbsp (15g) water.

EQUIPMENT

Stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment

Hand blender

Whisk

Spatula

Thermometer

STORAGE

Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

METHOD

Soak the gelatin sheets in a bowl of ice water until soft, about 20 minutes. (If using powdered gelatin, sprinkle 2 tsp (6g) gelatin over 6 tsp (30g) water in a small bowl, stir, and let sit for 20 minutes to bloom.)

Tip: Whether using sheet or powdered gelatin, you must use cold water since warm or hot water will immediately dissolve the gelatin and you will not be able to work with it.

In a small pot, bring the milk to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally with a whisk. Remove from heat.

Place the dark chocolate in a medium heatproof bowl. Pour half of the hot milk over the chocolate and let it stand for 30 seconds. Stir gently with a spatula until the milk has melted the chocolate. Once melted, pour in the remaining milk, and stir to combine.

Switch to a hand blender and emulsify the ganache until smooth, glossy, and free of any lumps.

Squeeze out any excess water from your bloomed gelatin sheets. Whisk the bloomed gelatin into the hot ganache until the gelatin has dissolved. When

CHOCOLATE CAKE FILLING: MOUSSE

finished, the ganache should have the consistency of mayonnaise. Let cool to 90 to 95°F (32 to 35°C).

In a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, whip the cream until it forms medium-stiff peaks.

Tip: At room temperature, the ganache will remain smooth but won't melt the whipped cream.

Using a large rubber spatula, slowly pour the ganache into the whipped cream as you constantly fold until fully incorporated. Be careful not to overmix, so as not to deflate the airy texture of the mousse.

Cover the mousse with plastic wrap pressed directly on the surface, to prevent a skin from forming.

Refrigerate for at least 12 hours to set.

VARIATION

To make a silky hazelnut dark chocolate mousse, start with the dark chocolate mousse recipe, and add in 100g (⅓ cup) store-bought hazelnut paste as you warm up your milk. You can purchase hazelnut paste online.

DARK CHOCOLATE MIRROR GLAZE

Makes: 500g (enough to glaze an 8-inch cake)

Time: 30 minutes, plus overnight chilling time

INGREDIENTS

206g (1 cup) sugar

142g (½ cup, plus 1½ tbsp) heavy cream

12g (4 tsp) gelatin, powdered

60g (¼ cup) water, cold

148g (⅔ cups) water, room temperature

71g (½ cup, plus 5 tsp) cocoa powder

EQUIPMENT

Spatula

Fine mesh strainer

Hand blender

Thermometer

Wooden spoon

STORAGE

Store in the fridge in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Tip: Make this the day before you're ready to glaze your cake, as the glaze needs to set in the fridge first before using.

METHOD

In a medium pot, bring sugar and heavy cream to a boil over medium heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves.

In a small bowl, dissolve the gelatin in 60g (¼ cup) of cold water.

In a bowl, combine the 148g (⅔ cups) room temperature water with the cocoa powder, stirring with a spatula until it becomes a uniform paste.

Stir the bloomed gelatin into the cream-sugar mixture until dissolved, then stir in the cocoa powder paste until combined. Remove the pot from the heat, and pour the glaze mixture through a mesh strainer over a heatproof bowl to remove any clumps of undissolved cocoa powder. Emulsify the mixture with a hand blender to remove any lumps, until smooth.

Cover and chill in the fridge overnight to set, until ready to use.

When you're ready to glaze your cake, remove the glaze from the fridge and heat in the microwave until it's exactly 86 to 95°F (30 to 35°C), so it's liquid and pourable and will give your cake a shiny, uniform finish. If it looks like it's slightly separated, use a hand blender to blitz it together. Make sure to tap the container a bit so that the bubbles from blending go away.

RUM SYRUP

Makes: About 500g

Time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

250g (1¼ cups) sugar

250g (1 cup) water

20g (4½ tsp) dark rum

EQUIPMENT

Whisk

STORAGE

Store in the fridge in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

METHOD

In a pot, bring sugar and water to a boil while stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and stir in rum. Let cool to room temperature.

Tip: This is known as a simple syrup, which is a sugar syrup made with a 1:1 ratio of sugar to water.

CHOCOLATE CAKE FINISHING: ASSEMBLY & PRESENTATION



Makes: 1 8-inch cake

COMPONENTS

1kg biscuit
500g rum syrup
1kg dark chocolate mousse
500g dark chocolate mirror glaze, rewarmed
170 Mini Me's
Vanilla ice cream, for serving

EQUIPMENT

Cardboard cake circle
8-inch cake ring
1 sheet acetate, cut at least 2 inches wide (at least the height of the cake you want to make) and 26 inches long (the circumference of the cake ring, plus a bit of extra to overlap)
Pastry brush
2 large offset spatulas

METHOD

Place the 8-inch cake ring on a parchment paper-lined sheet pan and line the inside with the sheet of acetate.

Place the first circle of chocolate cake in the bottom of the ring on the sheet pan and brush lightly with half the rum syrup. Press the cake with your fingers while you're doing this to ensure that the cake is not soaked but damp and lightly moistened with the syrup.

Using a ladle, pour half the mousse over the cake, pressing the top gently with the bottom of the ladle to make sure the mousse is even.

Place the second cake layer gently over the mousse, then brush again with the remaining rum syrup.

Pour the remaining mousse over the cake and press again to make sure the top is even. Transfer the assembled mousse cake, on the sheet pan, to the freezer. Freeze until firm, at least 4 hours.

Remove the sheet pan from the freezer and lift off the cake ring. Peel away the acetate. Using 2 large offset spatulas, transfer the mousse cake to a wire rack set in a rimmed sheet pan.

Once the glaze is ready, position it over the center of the cake and immediately pour it all on, allowing gravity and force to cover the cake fully in the glaze. Quickly, while the glaze is still liquid, use an offset spatula to smooth the top and sides of the cake, if necessary. Let the cake stand until the glaze sets completely.

CHOCOLATE CAKE FINISHING: ASSEMBLY & PRESENTATION

Using the offset spatulas, transfer the cake to a cardboard cake circle. Holding the bottom of the cake firmly with one hand, use a paring knife to trim the glaze from the bottom so it's even and clean. Place the cake on a serving plate or cake stand.

Arrange the meringues all over the top and side of the cake so the tips are pointing outward. Eat immediately within 1 to 2 days.

Tip: The finishing touch of adding the baked meringue drops is optional. If you use the meringue drops, make sure to twist them a tiny bit when you add them to the cake to ensure they are set firmly in the glaze and won't fall off.

To serve, slice the cake into thin wedges. Place a slice on a serving plate and place a small, thumbnail-sized scrap piece of flourless chocolate cake next to the cake. Make a quenelle of ice cream, or use a scoop, and place the ice cream on top of the cake scrap to prevent it from melting and sliding around the plate.

LEARN MORE

Before you begin making the cake, it's imperative to be prepared and **work in a clean, orderly fashion**; this is one of Chef Dominique's most important lessons for success in baking. In this cake, the egg whites must be beaten in a well-cleaned and well-dried bowl to prevent any grease or water from impeding the white's ability to incorporate air and become light and fluffy. This is very important since the egg whites will be the sole ingredient to provide lift to the batter and, thus, lightness to the cake. This cake, also sometimes called an **Italian genoise**, is a French style that eschews chemical leaveners like baking powder and soda for the mechanical lift of air trapped in the protein of the beaten egg whites. When you add sugar to these beaten egg whites, the proteins in the whites become stabilized—and sweetened, of course—forming a smooth ingredient that can be efficiently folded into batter.

While traditional chocolate mousse doesn't include **gelatin** because it's meant to be soft and eaten soon after being made, Chef Dominique incorporates gelatin into the mousse for this particular cake to stabilize it and give it a pleasing texture, even when chilled. Gelatin comes in two forms: sheets and powdered. Either can be used in place of the other (at a ratio of 3 sheets per ¼-ounce packet of powdered gelatin). If you want to add flavorings to your mousse, such as peanut butter or hazelnut paste, mix them into the milk while it's heating to ensure they dissolve evenly. Making mousse begins with making ganache. Pouring the hot milk over the chocolate helps to melt the chocolate fully so it creates a ganache with a smooth texture. Once the ganache is made, it's important to allow it to cool to room temperature so that when it is folded into the whipped cream, it does not melt

the cream, thus deflating it and knocking out all the air that helps give the mousse its light, airy texture. Consistency is key when pouring the mousse onto the cake. Use the bottom of the ladle to lightly tap the mousse, which will help create an even layer across the cake and over the top of the finished dessert. The cake will need ample time to freeze so that it sets properly so do not try to rush this step. This **step** is essential to creating the ideal texture for the mousse, which should always be served chilled. If it comes to room temperature, it can become too soft to stay in place while cutting the cake.

It is best to make the **glaze** ahead of time and keep it in the refrigerator. That way, you can re-warm and re-emulsify it when you're ready to use it, instead of waiting around for hours so that it cools to the proper consistency. The glazing process happens fast: be prepared with your cake set on a wire rack before you glaze. When you pour the glaze, pour it from the center so that the glaze flows evenly over the cake, ensuring a smooth surface. If you pour from the side and then return to the center, the glaze will set on the outsides first, then be pushed up by the new glaze, forming ripples and waves which will mar the appearance of the cake.



CHAPTER 13-14

BONBONS



MASTERCLASS

BONBONS



“The beauty of chocolate,” Chef Dominique notes, “is that you can build something beautiful with it, melt it down again, and give it new life.”

CHAPTER REVIEW

The delight of biting into a chocolate bonbon is related to both texture and taste—the clean snap of the outer shell gives way to the smooth, rich ganache filling inside, which you can flavor with any number of fruit purées, herbs, extracts, or spices.

In this chapter, you will learn how to make these fanciful creations, as well as the invaluable technique of tempering chocolate. Tempering is a process in which you melt, cool, then re-warm chocolate to a specific temperature so its fats realign and crystallize in the ideal way to create a smooth, glossy finish and appetizingly snappy texture. Untempered chocolate sets matte, often with white streaks of cocoa butter on the surface (this is called “bloom”) and crumbles rather than breaks evenly.

Chef Dominique shares two methods of tempering: The first is called “tabling” and uses a marble slab or other cool surface to cool the chocolate as you move it around with bench scrapers, which helps mix the cooler chocolate touching the marble with the warmer chocolate on the surface, ensuring all the chocolate comes to the proper temperature at the same time (like stirring a sauce in a pot), resulting in an evenly set final product. The second method, called “seeding,” uses finely chopped chocolate to cool down already melted chocolate to the proper consistency—like using ice cubes to cool down warm water.

Once you’ve mastered tempering chocolate, Chef Dominique takes you through the steps for lining your bonbon molds, filling them with ganache, and then sealing them with the final layer of tempered chocolate, called the “foot.” Once the bonbons are complete in their molds, it’s important to let them cool slowly to room temperature. “Cooling slowly,” Chef Dominique notes, “allows for proper crystallization so the bonbon has a smooth, delicate texture.” It’s another small but important detail in producing excellent-quality chocolates. When you work with so few ingredients, these technical specifics make all the

BONBONS

difference. Once your bonbons are ready, you will unmold them to see their shiny outer shells enveloping the silky smooth ganache filling within.

For the ganache filling, you can choose to keep the flavor plain or learn to incorporate various flavors that complement the chocolate and cut through its richness, like passionfruit and banana, Chef Dominique's favorites. The recipes for both flavors are provided in this workbook.

BONBON BASE: TEMPERED CHOCOLATE SHELL



INGREDIENTS

2 kg (4 lbs 6 ½ oz)
premium-grade chocolate

Tip: You cannot use chocolate chips as they contain stabilizers and are not able to be tempered

EQUIPMENT:

2 rubber spatulas
Ladle
Instant-read thermometer
2 bench scrapers
Sheet pan with ice
Metal bowl
Medium saucepan
Towel

There are two techniques for tempering:

TABLETOP TECHNIQUE FOR TEMPERING

Start with a marble or granite surface, which is clean and dry and doesn't absorb heat. The surface should be cool. If it's not, or if the temperature in your work space is warm, lay a rimmed sheet pan on the marble then fill it with ice. Let the chilled sheet pan rest on the marble for 2 minutes to cool the marble.

Meanwhile, melt the chocolate to the proper temperature. Pour enough water into a medium saucepan to come 1 inch up the side, then bring to a simmer over medium-low heat. Place the chopped chocolate in a metal bowl, then set the bowl over the simmering water. Stir until the chocolate is fully melted and heated to the proper temperature, as indicated below:

Dark chocolate: 118°F (48-50°C)

Milk chocolate: 113°F (45°C)

White chocolate: 109°F (43°C)

When the chocolate is ready, remove the chilled sheet pan, if using, and wipe the marble surface completely dry. Remove the bowl from over the

BONBON BASE: TEMPERED CHOCOLATE SHELL

saucepan and wipe the bottom dry to prevent any condensation from dripping onto the marble surface. Pour 80 percent of the melted chocolate onto the marble and reserve the remaining chocolate in the bowl to the side. Using two bench scrapers, slowly move the chocolate from the center outward to the sides to make a rectangle. Continue scraping the chocolate from the sides inward and back out again; this is also referred to as “agitating the chocolate.” Scrape the bench scrapers against each other to clean them as you work.

Watch as the chocolate starts to thicken and develop a gleam. The temperature should be about 84°F (29°C), and the chocolate should feel slightly cool to the touch, as it’s just below body temperature. Using the bench scrapers, return the agitated chocolate to the bowl with the remaining melted chocolate and stir gently to combine. The agitated chocolate will reheat slightly as the whole amount comes to the proper temperature. If it doesn’t, place the bowl of chocolate over the saucepan and stir continuously with a rubber spatula until the chocolate reaches the proper temperature, as indicated below:

Dark chocolate: 88°F (31°C)

Milk chocolate: 86°F (30°C)

White chocolate: 86°F (30°C)

In your first few times tempering, always make sure to test by dipping an offset spatula or piece of parchment paper into the chocolate to see if it sets shiny. If not, try again with the same chocolate. Once tempered, chocolate must be used immediately. If it solidifies, re-temper.

SEEDING TECHNIQUE FOR TEMPERING

Melt two-thirds of the chocolate that you want to temper.

Finely chop the remaining one-third. Slowly mix one-third of the chopped chocolate into the melted chocolate and stir with a rubber spatula until it’s fully melted. Continue adding half the remaining chopped chocolate, stirring until melted, then stir in the remaining chopped chocolate. As you add the chopped chocolate and “seed” the melted chocolate, it will cool. (Think of it like adding ice cubes to a sink full of water.)

The chocolate should be tempered to the proper temperature (see chart above) by the time all the chopped chocolate has been incorporated.

This technique may be faster, but it’s less precise. It is a great alternative for smaller kitchens.

FIRE AND WATER

Two things will ruin chocolate and make it unusable.

- If you heat chocolate on its own to over 129°F (54°C), you will burn or scorch it.
- If you wet the chocolate with water or steam while tempering it, the chocolate will seize and turn grainy and pasty. This often happens by condensation dripping onto your work surface from under the bowl of melted chocolate, or the work surface not being completely dry before pouring the melted chocolate over it. Always thoroughly dry any surface or equipment that may come into contact with water to ensure it does not ruin your chocolate.

BONBON FILLING: GANACHE



Makes: 920g (3 cups)

Time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

421g (1¾ cups) heavy cream

431g (15¼ oz) dark chocolate (66%)

67g (4¾ tbsp) butter, softened and cubed

EQUIPMENT

Whisk

Immersion/hand blender

Candy thermometer

STORAGE

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 to 3 days.

METHOD

In a medium pot, bring the cream to a boil. Remove from heat.

Place the chocolate in a large heatproof bowl. Pour half the hot cream over the chocolate, and gently stir with a whisk until the chocolate is mostly melted. Pour in the remaining hot cream and stir with the whisk until smooth and the chocolate has fully melted and emulsified with the cream.

Tip: You're whisking to melt the chocolate here, not to incorporate air. Stop whisking when all the chocolate is melted.

Let the ganache cool to 95°F (35°C). Add the softened butter and blend the mixture with an immersion/hand blender until smooth and there are no lumps. (Adding butter gives the ganache a tiny bit of shine and sheen, and also helps give the ganache a smooth mouthfeel.) Once the ganache cools to room temperature, use immediately to fill your chocolate bonbons.

BONBON FILLING: GANACHE

VARIATION

To turn your dark chocolate ganache recipe into a floral, fragrant banana-passionfruit ganache filling for your bonbons, substitute half of the cream (200g) with 100g (½ cup) banana purée and 100g (½ cup) passionfruit purée or juice, making sure to warm them with the remaining cream in Step 1.

Tip: Both banana and passionfruit purées are available online. If you can't find banana purée, you can purée 100g of peeled ripe bananas in a blender until smooth. To make your own passionfruit purée, scrape the insides from halved ripe passionfruits into a sieve, to remove the seeds, and scrape the pulp through the sieve and into a bowl until you have 100g.

Banana and passionfruit pair well together, and are an example of how one ingredient can enhance the flavor in another—in this case, passionfruit gives bananas a brighter, more floral and fragrant flavor while adding a hint of tartness to balance out the sweetness.

BONBON FINISHING: FILL, CAP, AND UNMOLD



Makes: 30 to 40 bonbons
(depending on the size of your molds)

COMPONENTS

2kg tempered dark chocolate
920g dark chocolate ganache

EQUIPMENT

Chocolate mold
Bench scraper
Ladle
Plastic piping bag

STORAGE

The bonbons can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week.

METHOD

Clean the mold and dry thoroughly to ensure there is no water left.

Using a ladle, pour enough of the tempered chocolate into each form to coat well. Invert the mold over the bowl of chocolate, allowing all the excess chocolate to drain back into it. Slide a bench scraper across the top of the mold to clean off the excess chocolate, leaving just a thin coating in each of the forms. Let the chocolate cool until it hardens, about 15 minutes.

Place the ganache in a piping bag and twist the open end to close. Snip off the tip and pipe the ganache into each form until it comes almost to the level of the mold, about 20 to 25gs. Let the ganache crystallize (i.e. set and start to harden) in the chocolate-lined molds for 1 hour at room temperature.

Using the ladle, pour more tempered chocolate over each form to cover it completely, then use the bench scraper again to clean off the excess, leaving behind a flat, even coating of chocolate over the ganache filling.

Let the chocolate bonbons stand at room temperature until the chocolate fully hardens, about 1 hour.

Invert the mold over a clean work surface and gently twist the mold (tapping lightly if necessary) to allow the bonbons to fall out.

BONBONS

LEARN MORE

While tempering chocolate may seem intimidating, it's quite simple to execute as long as you are prepared and follow **a few simple rules**. As Chef Dominique emphasizes, water is the enemy of chocolate. Once a small drop comes into contact with the tempered chocolate, it is destroyed and cannot be saved (that's because chocolate itself is an emulsion and water chemically destabilizes that emulsion, turning something smooth into something stiff and grainy). Be mindful of where water can come into contact with your melted chocolate, be it via a drop on the countertop surface, steam coming up the sides of the bowl from the double-boiler, or from a spatula that hasn't been thoroughly dried.

You don't have to have a marble slab to use the tabling technique—you can work on any **non-porous countertop**. To ensure it's cool enough to affect the chocolate, you can do as Chef Dominique does and place a sheet tray filled with ice on top of the counter for a few minutes before you need it to cool it down (be sure to wipe any condensation on the counter after you remove the sheet tray to ensure it's completely dry). If using the seeding method, make sure to chop your chocolate as finely as possible so it is easier and faster to melt in the warm chocolate. Either way, don't worry if your chocolate doesn't temper correctly the first time because you can always remelt it and start again.

For the filling of your bonbons, you can **flavor the ganache** by adding fruit purées or extracts to the cream so they heat together and infuse their flavors in the cream. If using solid flavorings like whole spices or tea, simply strain the hot cream before incorporating into the ganache. Similarly, if you want to make your bonbons dairy-free, you can substitute any nut milk for the cream in this recipe.

As inconsequential as it may seem, Chef Dominique's method for adding the hot cream to the chocolate **in two batches** accomplishes two things at once: It allows you to melt the chocolate more gently and also allows you to re-emulsify the chocolate more easily once all the cream is added. Although most cookbooks will tell you to add the hot cream all at once, Chef Dominique's method will give you a smoother texture, which is paramount in the filling for bonbons. Similarly, you can apply this tip when it comes to adding the butter—add it once the ganache cools to a temperature just above body temperature, so that the room temperature butter emulsifies into the chocolate and helps maintain that silky smooth texture.



CHAPTER 15

THE PERFECT CROISSANT



MASTERCLASS

THE PERFECT CROISSANT



“Making croissants is a labor of love and dedication—a lifelong baking project.”

Chef Dominique likens the croissant to an omelet: “It’s just a few ingredients,” he says, “but you need skills and to understand how everything works together.” This humble French pastry is all about mastering time-intensive techniques to produce perfect results. But do not be intimidated by this task; rather, with Chef Dominique guidance, you will learn how to make croissants, hone your skills with each subsequent batch you create, and spot the difference between a good croissant and an exceptional one by understanding how the intricate pastry is constructed.

Croissants begin with a levain, which is essentially the sourdough starter used to make bread. In the croissant, however, levain contributes a more tangy, acidic flavor, balancing out the richness of the butter fat. You will learn how to mix, proof, and fold the dough; how to make perfect lines and edges to keep everything neat; and how to build the hundreds of tiny layers that give croissants their rise. (Pro tip: buy a ruler, if you don’t have one already!)

Mastery over pressure is essential to making a perfect croissant. You must exert gentle pressure on the rolling pin while flattening the dough so that you don’t crush or tear the layers in the dough, and you must use barely any pressure at all to gently stretch the cut dough triangles and roll them into the final croissant shape. As Chef Dominique notes: “Making croissants is really difficult, but it’s not impossible; it just requires a lot of patience. If you make them for the first time at home, and they’re not perfect, don’t be afraid to make them again and again and again.”

Baking Timeline



THE PERFECT CROISSANT



Makes: 12 to 15 croissants

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes two days before; 2 hours one day before; 1 hour the day of. (This timing does not include at least 4 to 5 days needed in advance to make the levain starter.)

INGREDIENTS

Levain Starter

200g (¾ cup + 1 ⅓ tbsp) all-purpose flour,
plus more for feeding

200g (¾ cup + 1 ⅓ tbsp) water, room temperature,
plus more for feeding

Croissant Dough

12g (4¼ tsp) dry instant yeast
(preferably SAF Gold Label)

203g (¾ cup + 1¼ tbsp) cold water, cold

560g (4¼ cups + 2½ tbsp) all-purpose bread flour,
plus more as needed for dusting

METHOD

1 Week Before:

MAKE LEVAIN STARTER

Day 1:

In a large mixing bowl at least twice the size of your mixture, combine 50g (3⅓ tbsp) flour and 50g (3⅓ tbsp) water and mix with a spatula until evenly combined. Loosely cover with a dish towel or cheesecloth and leave at room temperature spot for 24 hours.

Day 2:

Add another 50g (3⅓ tbsp) flour and 50g (3⅓ tbsp) water, mix with spatula to combine. Loosely cover and leave at room temperature for another 24 hours.

Day 3:

Add another 100g (6⅔ tbsp) flour and 100g (6⅔ tbsp) water, mix with spatula to combine. Loosely cover and leave at room temperature for another 24 hours.

Day 4:

Remove 20 percent of the levain mixture from the container and discard. Loosely cover and leave at room temperature for another 24 hours.

Day 5:

Check if your levain is ready to use. It should be light, bubbly, and fluffy, and have a pronounced fermentation aroma without any acidity. If it's not quite there, "feed" the levain again each day with equal parts flour and water that's equal to the weight of the levain, until it's ready.

THE PERFECT CROISSANT

Croissant Dough Continued

29g (2 tbsp) high-fat “European-style” or Vermont (preferably 83 to 84 percent butter fat) unsalted butter, softened
 72g ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup + $1\frac{3}{4}$ tsp) granulated sugar
 50g (1 each) large egg
 15g (1 tbsp) heavy cream
 12g ($2\frac{1}{8}$ tsp) kosher salt
 68g ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) prepared levain
 As needed nonstick cooking spray

Tip: Instant yeast is often used for doughs with higher sugar content, because this yeast needs less water to react and sugar tends to pull water from dough. You can substitute the same quantity of active dry yeast, but you may get a denser final product.

Butter Block:

284g ($2\frac{1}{2}$ sticks) high-fat European-style or Vermont unsalted butter, softened (83 to 84 percent butter fat)

Egg Wash:

2 eggs, 1 pinch of salt, and a dash of milk, beaten together

EQUIPMENT

Stand mixer with dough hook attachment
 Plastic wrap
 Parchment paper
 Ruler
 Sheet pan
 Large offset spatula or bench scraper
 Pastry brush
 Whisk
 Large rubber spatula

Day 1:

MAKE DOUGH

1. In a small bowl, stir together the yeast and room temperature water until dissolved. Combine the flour, butter, sugar, egg, cream, salt, 68g levain, and yeast mixture in a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook. Start mixing on the lowest speed and mix for 1 minute, then increase the speed to medium and mix about 3 to 4 minutes more, until the dough is just combined. When finished, the dough will be rough and have very little gluten development. It will also be elastic and come out of the bowl as one piece.

2. Lightly grease a medium bowl with nonstick spray. Transfer the dough into the bowl and cover with plastic wrap pressed directly on the dough, to prevent a skin from forming. Proof the dough in a warm spot until doubled in size, 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours.

3. Remove the plastic wrap and punch down the dough by folding the edges into the center, releasing as much of the gas as possible. Invert the bowl of dough and allow the dough to fall onto a piece of plastic wrap, then shape the dough into a 10-inch (25cm) square. Place the dough, still on the plastic wrap, on a sheet pan and cover with another sheet of plastic wrap. Refrigerate overnight.

MAKE BUTTER BLOCK

1. Draw a 7-inch (18cm) square on a piece of parchment paper with a pencil. Flip the parchment over so the butter won't come into contact with the pencil marks. Place the softened butter in the center of the square and cover with another sheet of parchment

THE PERFECT CROISSANT

paper. Use an offset spatula or bench scraper to spread the butter evenly to fill the square. Refrigerate overnight.

Tip: It's important that the butter is truly softened to make forming the butter block easy. Once perfectly room temperature, the butter will be spreadable and have the consistency of cream cheese.

Day 2:

MAKE THREE FOLDS

1. Remove the butter mixture from the refrigerator and let stand for 5 to 10 minutes to become pliable enough to work with. It should still be soft enough to bend slightly without cracking. If it is too firm, gently beat it with a rolling pin on a lightly floured work surface until it becomes pliable. Make sure to press the butter back to its 7-inch (18 cm) square after working it.

2. Lightly flour your work surface. Remove the dough from the refrigerator, making sure it is very cold throughout. Place the dough on the work surface. Arrange the butter block in the center of the dough so it looks like a diamond in the center of the square (rotated 45 degrees, with the corners of the butter block facing the center of the dough sides). Pull the corners of the dough up and over to the center of the butter block. Pinch the seams of dough together to seal the butter inside. You should have a square slightly larger than the butter block.

3. Lightly dust the work surface with flour to ensure that the dough won't stick. With a rolling pin, using steady, even pressure to roll out the dough from the center so that it triples in length. This will take several passes and you may need to add more flour in

between rolling to keep the dough from sticking to the surface and rolling pin. When finished, you should have a rectangle about 20 by 10 inches (50 by 25 cm) and ¼ inch (6 mm) thick.

4. Place the dough so the shorter sides run left to right. From the top side, fold one-third of the dough onto itself, keeping the edges lined up with each other. From the bottom side, fold the remaining one-third of dough on top of the side that has already been folded. Line up all the edges so that you are left with a smaller rectangle. This technique is called a "letter fold," since the dough is folded as if it were a piece of paper going inside an envelope. Wrap the dough tightly in plastic wrap and place on a sheet pan. Refrigerate for about 1 hour to relax the gluten.

5. With the seam always facing to the right, repeat steps 3 and 4 for your second and third folds. After the third fold, refrigerate the dough for 1 hour.

Tip: If you don't have enough space in the refrigerator, you can gently fold the dough in half to fit.

6. Place the dough on a lightly floured work surface. With a rolling pin, using steady, even pressure, roll out the dough from the center vertically from the top to bottom so that it triples in length. This will take several passes and you may need to add more flour in between rolling to keep the dough from sticking to the surface and rolling pin. When finished, you should have a rectangle about 24 by 10 inches (60 by 25 cm) and 1/4 inch (3 mm) thick. Rotate the dough sheet 90° so that the long sides run left to right.

7. Lightly flour the work surface and lay the dough flat. Trim about ½ inch of dough from each side to make a

THE PERFECT CROISSANT

neat rectangle. Using a ruler, start from the left side and score the dough every 3 inches (8 cm) along the bottom edge until you reach the right side of the dough. Make the first score on the top edge 1½ inches (4 cm) from the left end. Continue scoring the top edge every 3 inches (8 cm). These staggered marks should give a nice guideline for cutting triangles. Use a large chef's knife to connect each score mark on the top with the two at the bottom on either side of it. The isosceles triangles should measure 3 inches (8 cm) wide and 10 inches (25 cm) long. There will be narrow triangles of dough left over at each end. Place the cut triangles on a parchment paper-lined sheet pan, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

8. Remove the dough triangles from the refrigerator, and make sure there is no flour on your work surface. Working with one triangle at a time, hold the base of the triangle with one hand and use the fingertips of your other hand to lightly grasp the triangle near its base and gently stretch it an additional 2 to 3 inches (5 to 8 cm) in length, pulling your fingers toward the tip and being careful not to tear the dough.

Tip: Stretching out the dough not only gives you more to roll, it also relaxes the dough.

ROLL AND SHAPE

1. Starting at the wide end, roll the croissant dough toward the tip, keeping steady and even pressure as you roll, until it comes to a rest on the tip of the triangle. When finished, make sure the tip of the dough is on the bottom of the croissant or else it will unravel in the oven.

2. Line a sheet pan with parchment paper. Place the

croissants on the sheet pan about 4 inches (10 cm) apart. Lightly lay a piece of plastic wrap over the croissants and refrigerate overnight.

Day 3:

BAKE

1. Remove the tray of croissants from the refrigerator. Keep them lightly covered in plastic wrap. Let stand at room temperature until tripled in size, about 2 to 3 hours.

Tip: This step is called “proofing”, a step in bread and viennoiserie baking that activates the yeast in the dough. When proofed at the proper temperature and environment, you’ll see the croissant dough triple in size and become light, fluffy, and jiggly. What’s most important in the proofing step is to make sure the dough is neither overproofed (where it’s proofed up so much that it eventually collapses, causing the layers to separate and the butter to leak) or underproofed (which will result in a tight crumb and you won’t get those fluffy, flaky layers).

2. Place a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C) for conventional or 350°F (175°C) for convection. In a small bowl, make the egg wash by whisking together the eggs, salt, and milk.

3. Gently remove the plastic wrap from the croissants. Lightly brush the croissants with the egg wash, making sure not to apply too much pressure to prevent deflating the croissants. Bake on the center rack for 12 to 15 minutes until golden brown. Remove from the oven and let cool briefly.

STORAGE

Best served fresh and hot out of the oven. Croissants should be eaten within 5 hours of baking.

LEARN MORE

“Flour, butter, and the levain are the three critical ingredients to making a good croissant,” Chef Dominique notes. As such, take care to buy quality ingredients so the finished croissant is equally exemplary. Buy fresh, all-purpose flour and use high-quality, **European-style butter** that has the highest fat content you can find. Good butter is like clay: it’s malleable and elastic, even when cold from the refrigerator.

The **quality of the levain** depends on how long it ferments, so follow Chef Dominique’s recipe closely. To make levain, you must first let flour and water capture the natural yeasts in the air, which will give the croissants the same slightly acidic, pleasing smell you normally get from a freshly-baked loaf of sourdough bread. This process takes about 5 days to get going. Then, once it is, you must add new amounts of flour and water to feed the yeast, literally, and allow it to grow, thus producing more and more of itself and developing layers and layers of flavor. Once the levain is ready, you will take some of it to use in making Chef Dominique’s croissants, but you will be left with much more, so be prepared to either give it away to other bakers and friends or continue feeding it to make more croissants. The levain, after all, is the “DNA in the croissant,” as Chef Dominique notes.

Once you’re working with quality ingredients, make sure to follow the steps closely to make sure the dough you’re working with is the **proper temperature**. If the dough gets too cold, it can be difficult to roll and the butter layers inside can break apart and become brittle, which will impede the development of flaky layers in the finished croissant. Keep the countertop cool and work with the dough while it’s

cold from the refrigerator, trying not to handle it too much with your hands to avoid warming. Work quickly, but calmly, and keep everything as neat as possible. This both minimizes the amount of waste from the dough, but also keeps the dough in the perfect shape to give you the beautiful croissants you’re after in the end.

Once the croissants are rolled, be careful not to destroy all those beautiful layers you worked to build up. Be gentle when **rolling and shaping** the croissants and use a light hand when applying the egg wash—you don’t want the brush to drench the dough or crush it. Once baked, allow the pastries to cool to room temperature and use a sharp serrated knife so it can cut through, not crush, all those flaky layers. The layers inside should resemble a “honeycomb” in that they should not look dense, and the air pockets should be of an even size from the inside to the outside. Smell the croissant; it should smell yeasty and buttery.

If you cut into your freshly-baked croissant and find that it’s hasn’t come out as you’d imagined, examine its interior structure and look for **these common signs** that things might have gone wrong while making your croissants:

- If the croissant has air pockets that are very small and the texture is “breadly” (chewy and tough), that means the croissant dough was overhydrated. This can happen when there’s excess moisture in the air or too much water was added to the dough in the beginning. To correct this, add a little less water than the recipe calls for and see how the dough absorbs it. If it looks and feels well-hydrated

LEARN MORE

- and supple, it's likely that you don't need the extra water. Keep in mind that a humid environment could contribute to overhydration of dough.
- If the croissant has a dry ring of crumb on the outer edge, that means the croissant was baked for too long because the oven wasn't hot enough. The faster you bake the croissant, the better because you want the outside to set and turn deep golden brown at the same time the inside is cooked through.
 - If the croissant has a slightly concave bottom and uneven air pocket size inside, that means the croissant dough was under-proofed and did not develop the strength necessary to stabilize the dough that comes from proper proofing time. If you're unsure about whether your dough is proofed long enough, it is better to give the dough a few more minutes than to pull it too early and risk working with dough that isn't ready.

THINKING CREATIVELY ABOUT PASTRY



“What makes pastry unforgettable is the memories. It’s the emotion that goes into food. I always try to take this into consideration. I think it’s fun for people—this new way of interacting with food.”

Chef Dominique has made a career of making playful desserts that are full experiences for patrons, not just an afternoon pick-me-up. From the opening of his bakery in New York City, where the Cronut®, his croissant-doughnut hybrid, put him on the map to his dozens of fanciful inventions since, Chef Dominique has fun thinking of new techniques and new ways of presenting his pastries. “I always think of how to make my food interactive so it connects with people.”

Here, Chef Dominique demonstrates a few of his most beloved creations. First is his Frozen S’more, inspired by American nostalgia—kids sitting around campfires and roasting marshmallows. The treat consists of vanilla ice cream and a chocolate wafer enveloped in honey-sweetened meringue and served on a

smoke applewood branch. The meringue is torched to order, allowing snackers to taste the freshly caramelized marshmallow against the chilled ice cream center. Second is the Flowering Hot Chocolate, inspired by the blooming chrysanthemum tea leaves in hot water. Chef Dominique developed the dish for his bakery in Japan, where it was a hit with patrons who loved how it mimicked the opening of cherry blossoms, with its marshmallow petals unraveling in the hot chocolate to reveal a beautiful flower.

Next up is his Chocolate Chip Cookie Shot, another play on an iconic American dessert, where Chef Dominique ups the ante by shaping the cookie like a shot glass, lining it with chocolate to seal it, and filling the “glass” with ice-cold, local milk that’s infused with Tahitian vanilla beans. You take a sip of the milk, bite off the warm cookie, and repeat until the whole dessert disappears.

Finally, Chef Dominique shows off his Pop Fleur, an haute take on a Push-Pop where wakamomo (a local Japanese fruit that tastes like “peach mixed with lychee”) flavors frozen yogurt and is pushed through a specially-designed lid that mimics a piping tip used for piping rosettes of icing on cakes.

THINKING CREATIVELY ABOUT PASTRY

As you strike out on your own, endeavor to apply the same creativity that Chef Dominique does to everything you make. Don't be afraid to play around with your desserts in form and flavor because, after all, working with pastry should always be playful and fun. Once you've mastered the foundational aspects of pastry that Chef Dominique teaches in this class, the same whimsical spirit that he applies to create his desserts is within reach for you, too.

CONCLUSION

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“When working with pastry, think about the people you’re serving the food to, your connection or relationship to them, and the experience you want them to leave with. And don’t forget to always be creative.”

