

Fresh Living top tips

Before you get out the whisk, consider the following.

- Weather: Don't make meringues on a rainy day – the sugar in meringue draws moisture and you'll be left with a soggy mess.
- Equipment: Make sure your equipment and utensils are grease-free and that egg whites are free from yolk – this can prevent egg whites from firming up when whipping.
- Storage: Always store meringues in an airtight container as they go soggy easily.

Types of meringue

1. French meringue is made by whipping egg whites and castor sugar together. It's the 'average Joe' of meringue, great for meringue kisses and pie toppings. It's 'uncooked' as the eggs only cook once baked in the oven.
2. Swiss meringue is made by whisking egg whites and sugar over a hot water bath before whipping into stiff peaks, making it the perfect topping if you don't feel like baking meringue – it's technically cooked.
3. Italian meringue is the most stable of the three and is made by whisking a thin stream of hot sugar syrup into whipped egg whites. Perfect for mousse or parfait.

Stages of meringue

Whipping meringue is serious business! It's essential to know about these two stages before embarking on any meringue recipe.

- Stiff peak: Also known as "firm peak", here the mixture is firm and holds its shape. To test this, lift your whisk to create a 'peak', which should hold its shape even after a few seconds. (Take care not to overwhip as it may cause the mixture to split. Stop when you reach stiff peak stage.)
- Soft peak: This refers to the stage of beating egg whites when the mixture is just starting to hold its shape. To test this, lift your whisk to create a 'peak', which should form a point that slowly loses its shape after a few seconds.

Did you know?

Aquafaba is the viscous liquid from a can of chickpeas which – magically – has a similar consistency and behaves much the same as egg whites in baking. Keep in mind that 2 Tbsp (30ml) chickpea liquid is equivalent to 1 egg white, so you can use this ratio when converting meringue recipes to vegan.

Meringue is a thing of velvet beauty, so go on and master it now that you have the know-how.