FABULOUS FRENCH MERINGUE

Ingredients

- 4 large free-range egg whites, at room temperature
- 115g caster sugar
- 115g icing sugar sifted
- Food colouring (paste)

Preheat oven to 110C (100C fan/220F)
Sift icing sugar at least once

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 110C /100C fan/220F.
2. Separate eggs.
3. Sift icing sugar.
4. Line 2 baking sheets with non-stick liner or parchment paper.
5. Tip 4 large egg whites into a large *clean* mixing bowl (not plastic) (copper is the best choice, but stainless-steel works nicely as well).
6. Beat the egg whites on medium speed with an electric mixer until the mixture stands up in stiff peaks when you lift the blades; this takes about 4 or 5 minutes.
7. Turn the speed up and start to add 115g caster sugar, a dessertspoonful at a time. Continue beating for 3-4 seconds between each addition. It's essential to add the sugar slowly at this stage as it helps prevent the meringue from weeping later. However, don't over-beat. When ready, the mixture should be thick with a lovely glossy finish.
8. Add the food colouring if desired. It's entirely up to you on how much food colouring you want, depending on what kind of colour you would like to have. (The colour will always be a few shades lighter in the finished product as it mixes in and as it bakes, so don't be shy with your colour).
9. Add in icing sugar over the mixture, one third at a time, gently folding it in with a rubber spatula or wooden spoon. Again, *don't over-mix*. The mixture should now look smooth and billowy.
10. Either pipe the meringue onto the parchment paper using a piping bag or drop them in rough rounds with a spoon in big or small drops. Be creative and have fun shaping your meringue!

11. Bake for 1 ½-1 ¾ hours in a fan oven, 1 ¼ hour in a conventional or gas oven, until the meringues sound crisp when tapped underneath and are a pale colour. If you didn't add any food colouring, then they should be a slightly pale coffee colour.
12. Leave to cool on the trays or a cooling rack.