## Basic Meringue Recipe

**Ingredients:**

* 4 large egg whites (at room temperature)
* 1 cup (200 g) granulated sugar
* ½ teaspoon cream of tartar (optional, helps stabilize)
* 1 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)
* A pinch of salt

**Instructions:**

1. Preheat your oven to 225°F (105°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a clean, grease-free bowl, combine the egg whites, cream of tartar, and salt.
3. Using an electric mixer, beat the mixture on low speed until foamy.
4. Increase the speed to high and gradually add the sugar, about 1 tablespoon at a time, beating well after each addition. Continue until the sugar is fully dissolved and the mixture is thick, shiny, and forms stiff peaks. (You can test by rubbing a bit between your fingers; it should feel smooth, not gritty.)
5. Stir in the vanilla extract if using.
6. Transfer the meringue mixture into a piping bag fitted with a large star tip or simply spoon dollops onto the prepared baking sheet.
7. Bake in the preheated oven for 1 hour. After baking, turn off the oven and leave the meringues inside with the door closed for another 1-2 hours to cool completely.
8. The meringues should be crisp on the outside and can be stored in an airtight container away from moisture.

Enjoy your light and crispy meringues!