



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 palpite 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'amusaient 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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