

# Coffee meringue with chocolate and ginger cream

Meringues are capricious, and can crackle satisfyingly or bounce like a marshmallow, apparently at whim. I find warming the sugar before adding it to the stiffly beaten whites a help towards securing the perfect crisp outer shell and marshmallowy interior, as is my habit of sliding them into a hot oven then immediately turning down the heat. Even then, on a damp day, your meringues can be as soft as a feather pillow. My recipe usually involves a sharp accompaniment of some sort – a lemon curd, blueberry compote or simply the seeds and sunset-orange pulp of raw passion fruit. But this latest rendition sees them flavoured with coffee and filled with a ginger biscuit-flavoured cream and a splatter of dark chocolate. If you can, use the thick crumbly type of ginger biscuits rather than snappy old ginger nuts.

Makes 8 large meringues

For the meringue

caster sugar 300g

egg whites 5

strong coffee 2 tbsp

For the filling

double cream 500ml

ginger cookies 300g

dark chocolate 200g

Make the filling. In a chilled bowl, whip the cream till thick. It should lie in soft folds rather than be stiff enough to stand in peaks. Crush all but three of the biscuits into small pieces (nothing much bigger than 1cm) then gently fold them into the whipped cream. Cover with clingfilm and refrigerate for 2-3 hours, until the biscuits have softened slightly.

Make the meringue. Set the oven at 180C/gas mark 4. Scatter the sugar over a baking sheet then leave in the oven for 5-10 minutes till slightly warm. Whip the egg whites till stiff with an electric beater, then fold in the warmed sugar and continue beating at a fairly high speed till the meringue is glossy and very stiff. Fold in the liquid coffee.

Place the meringue, in 8 generous mounds on a parchment-lined baking sheet and place in the oven. Immediately turn the oven down to 120C/gas mark ½. Leave the meringues for a good hour or so until lightly crisp outside and marshmallowy within. Remove the meringues from the oven and leave to cool and crisp.

Melt the chocolate in a bowl over hot water. Smash a large hollow in the top of each meringue with a spoon, then fill with some of the ginger biscuit cream. Trickle some of the melted chocolate over the meringues and leave to set to a crisp.