

The Curious Case Of The Almost Meringue Muffins
How a baking disaster became a healthy breakfast.

One of my best friend's favorite things in life are meringues. You know, the crispy, sweet cloud *things* that are less than cookies and more than frosting—the ones that feel like you are eating nothing and everything all at once. Well, my girlfriend is obsessed with them. She talks about the airy confections with a wistful yearning. Her passion is comparable to that of Romeo and Juliet's—as if life's injustices have driven a wedge in between her and her one true love (that is, until her next bakery visit).

With my meringue loving friend's birthday approaching, I decided to make all of her dessert dreams come true. I set out to make homemade meringues, because stopping by an European café would be too easy. Plus, they seemed super simple to make—the cost-benefit ratio was too great to pass up. With two or three ingredients, what could go wrong? Well, plenty.

Meringues are comprised of egg whites and sugar - that's it! However, after extensive googling a “stabilizing agent” seemed like a wise addition. The internet agreed that, for stability, lemon juice would be as effective as cream of tartar. Given that cream of tartar sounded ‘fishy’ to me, I happily opted for the lemon juice.

I combined my ingredients and got to whipping. I am still unsure as to where my missteps began, but the whipping was certainly problematic. You see, I do not own an electric mixer. Thus, I made the hubris-fueled decision to use a fork. Meringues date back to 1692, long before the comforts of kitchen appliances. If a little elbow-grease was good enough for [François Massialot](#), it was good enough for me. Or, so I thought.

After what felt like hours of tendonitis-inducing efforts, I recognized the need for a shift in approach. I refrigerated my sugary egg whites, and texted my fanciest friend and implored her to save my arm. I dashed over to her over-stocked kitchen for a culinary power-tool. Armed with an electronic accomplice, I returned to my sugar-whites with a renewed drive for sweet success. The results, while frothier, were still nowhere near to the ethereal batter staring at me from my iPhone.

A blender could not salvage my blunder. Defeated, I took to discussion boards. Apparently this simple “two or three ingredient” dessert is absurdly fickle. Elements such as humidity, type of bowl, and egg temperature can thwart the most earnest meringue ambition; not to mention, if your measurements are the slightest bit off, you are sunk.

I accepted my meringue failure, but I could not accept tossing my sugar-whites. So, I added some flour, a couple ripe bananas, baking soda, and a few spices. The batter looked and tasted great, so I dropped it in a muffin tin and baked it. Out came the fluffiest muffins I have ever made. Maybe it was all in ‘the beating’, or maybe the baking gods cut me a break—regardless, redemption was found in the form of protein-packed, low-calorie breakfast treats.

With my Almost Meringue Muffins in tow, I stopped by a bakery for some real-deal meringues. I arrived at my bestie's birthday party with an unconventional arrangement of goodies, but the thought was right on point. Meringues may have eluded me for now, but they have not seen the last of me!