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Miette: Recipes From San Francisco's Most Charming Pastry Shop



Synopsis

Renowned for beautiful cakes and whimsical confections, Miette Patisserie is among the most beloved of San Francisco's culinary destinations for locals and travelers. Miette's pretty Parisian aesthetic enchants visitors with tables piled high with beribboned bags of gingersnaps, homemade marshmallows, fleur de sel caramels, and rainbows of gumballs. This cookbook brings the enchantment home, sharing 100 secret formulas for favorite Miette treats from chef and owner Meg Ray. More than 75 gorgeous color photos capture the unique beauty of Miette desserts and shops. Scalloped edges on the book block enhance the preciousness of this fetching package. Just like the adorable cakes, cookies, clairs and tarts for sale in Miette's case, this book is irresistible!

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Customer Reviews

Miette was one of several bakery recommendations from one of the best bakers in Portland, Oregon. After discovering that all of the other bakery recommendations were excellent, and baking the wonderful Miette's Tomboy Cake recipe in Rose's Heavenly Cakes by Rose Levy Beranbaum, I excitedly pre-ordered Miette's cookbook. Near Great: As other reviewers have written, this is a very pretty cookbook. The author has a wonderful artistic eye that shows on the dust jacket, the end papers, the scalloped edges, the food presentation, and the colors in the book. The photographs are beautiful, which is to be expected from Frankie Frankeny. My only minor complaint is that one needs to turn the page to complete some recipes. But this happens with most cookbooks. For looks and layout, the book deserves almost 5 stars. Failure: With food, presentation is only one half of the equation. The other half is taste. And without well-written recipes, presentation becomes either

impossible or lost in the first bad tasting bite. This is where the book fails due to extremely poor technical editing. First, the conversion from volume to weight is inconsistent. I usually bake using weight. If a book does not offer weights, I convert it myself. However, this book does give measurements in both volume and weight. When making my first recipe, the Lemon Shortbread Cookies, I noticed that it called for 2 cups or 8 ounces (227g) of flour. Usually, if using unbleached all-purpose flour, the weight of 2 cups would be 280g. But I went ahead with the recipe using 227g. The cookies tasted wonderful, but they spread and looked terrible. I froze some of the dough and then baked the cookies, but they still spread. Would this have happened if I had used 280g of flour? I then went through the book and found that there were no consistent conversion factors for either the sugar or flour. Either that, or the volume given in some recipes is incorrect. (Note: I did make two other recipes, Graham Crackers and the Yellow Cupcakes. I assumed the volume was correct and used the following conversions: 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour = 140 grams, 1 cup white (regular or superfine) sugar = 200 grams, and 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar = 218 grams. Appearance and taste were fine for both recipes.) Second, the specifications for ingredients are unclear. After reading the essential ingredients, I assumed that all-purpose flour meant unbleached all-purpose flour. Different flour types weigh different amounts. This will affect the outcome. Adjusting for weight differentials, I had luck with Guisto's Cake and Pastry Flour even though the author says "cake and pastry flours are flavorless and have no character." It could be a matter of tastebuds. And, what does "no character" mean? Meg Ray recommends organic sugar but says it can be replaced with refined sugar but never clarifies if the volume or weight need to be adjusted. I have used both granulated sugar and superfine sugar and both have worked, but was I lucky? Was curious why Meg Ray just did not grind her organic sugar instead of "calibrating" recipes to accommodate the larger crystals. Third, the directions are poor. When making the Lemon Shortbread Cookies, the directions stated to roll dough to 1/2-inch thick 6-by 4-inch rectangle and cut into forty-eight 1-inch squares. This is illogical. Also, when made according to the recipe, the dough actually makes a 1-inch thick 6-by 4-inch rectangle. Since I have baked these cookies, an errata page has partially corrected this problem by saying the recipe makes 24 cookies. But then, the directions should read 1/2-inch thick 6-by-4-inch rectangle. Or maybe, it should be 1/2-inch thick by 12-by-4-inch rectangle and cut into forty-eight 1-inch cookies! Who knows. Other reviewers have noted other direction discrepancies that have now been noted on the errata page. Are there other direction mistakes? I bake a lot and use many cookbooks, and this is the first time I have had to deal with so many inconsistencies. Other bakeries have excellent baking books, e.g., Flour, by J. Chang, especially the brioche and oatmeal raisin cookies, and Tartine by E. Prueitt especially the

croissant and galette, and neither have this many problems. My recommendation to the author: Get two non-Miette bakers (and that means non-Miette students, too) to test each recipe. One should test the volume and directions and the other should test the weights and directions. And then get a good subject matter editor for the next edition. My recommendations to the cookbook buyer: If you want a coffee table cookbook, buy this book. If you want a cookbook for baking, wait for a later edition. ***PS: Took out the links to other books, because I discovered, and was disappointed, that some "reviewers" are compensated for purchases made through these links. ***Update 26 Jul 2011 The updated errata page contains errors. The buttercream directions now have a conflict between 238 degrees in Step 3 and 248 degrees in Step 1. And, the caramel recipe does not mention how much of the fleur de sel to use. The number of cookies for lemon shortbread does not make any sense unless the dough is rolled to a 6"x7" rectangle. The number of large chocolate chip cookies is incorrect. One cannot make thirty-six 3-inch cookies by rolling "... the dough into 2-inch balls." At least, the weights for flour and sugar have now been corrected. But, are there any more errors not listed? Yes, there are. The number of chocolate sables should be forty-two, not thirty-six cookies. The weight for oats in the chocolate chip cookie is incorrect. Extremely disappointed. On a good note, the thumbprint cookies are good with a delicate taste. I served them with and without the jam. Using about 15 grams of dough per cookie, it made a total of thirty-six 1 3/4-inch cookies. But, the chocolate chip cookies (111 cookies of 12g dough) tasted like generic brand store cookies. Cute but not worth eating. Side note: The Miette website no longer mentions the book. ***Update 4 Aug 2011 has announced that a corrected version will be released in October, and purchasers of the "defective copy" ('s term) will be given a free copy. Until then, the book will sit unused on my back shelf. To produce a usable book, it is to be hoped that the new edition will not just use the latest, but incomplete, errata page. But rather, the new edition will have fully tested recipes, and will have been thoroughly and heavily edited. My recommendation now is to wait for reviews of the October corrected book. ***Update 7 Dec 2011 Corrected version. Third printing. Disappointing. After months of waiting for the corrected version, sent the replacement book in November. Unfortunately, the book failed to be thoroughly and heavily tested and edited. Errors and omissions still remain in ingredient specifications and conversions. Here are just two examples: 1) As noted by R.T.T. in his comment to my review, the macaron recipe called for 1 1/2 tsp of cream of tartar but it really should be 1/8 tsp or less for 3 egg whites (b.t.w. a good recipe for macarons is in Bruce Healy's The French Cookie Book), 2) Chocolate chip cookie recipe calls for 1 2/3 cup = 7 1/2 ounces oats. Quaker Oats gives 1 2/3 cups = 133 grams or 4.7 oz. Aside from the objective errors in recipe testing and editing, there are some more basic problems with the recipes. They are not particularly

novel, nor are they great basic recipes. Some are overly complicated for what they are. The Miette website states that this third printing version is only partially-corrected. A fourth printing with additional corrections is to be soon available. In summary, this is a pretty book with, at best, standard, perfunctory recipes. Final Recommendation: Recommend it as a pretty coffee table cookbook and for simple presentation ideas. Strongly recommend NOT buying it for actual baking.

I was really looking forward to this book, but it is so riddled with errors that I cannot recommend it until the book is fixed in another printing. A couple of other reviewers pointed out some errors, and I came across another major one today when I made the caramels. After the caramel is poured into an 8 x 8 pan, you are supposed to wait 15 minutes and then "sprinkle" 1/4 CUP of fleur de sel over it. One-quarter cup of salt over a small pan of caramels is patently absurd (and the picture they have of these great caramels is laughing at that measurement) -- they probably mean 1/4 teaspoon, though who knows for sure. Not sure what is more important in a recipe book than the correct measurements. I feel bad for the author, because the publisher has done a disservice to the book. I'm going to contact them and ask for a replacement for when they fix the errors. What's good about the book: great-looking recipes, especially the small sizes of the cakes. The variety is also stellar. They include not only a wide range of cakes, but also cookies, candies, and basics like frosting and curd. The pictures are lovely and the overall layout of the book is good. I also appreciate that the author has provided the recipes to many of what seem to be her signature items. That is a generosity many other authors with their own stores do not provide. But there are so many errors, it's difficult to trust any recipe. I didn't have the heart to give this book fewer than 3 stars because the caramels were great and the author clearly spent time figuring out how to make these recipes in a home kitchen. But the publisher needs to put out an errata because it's not fair to those of us in the kitchen to have to guess our way through careless errors. The caramels are excellent, by the way, without the quarter-cup of extra salt. *** Updated: June 30, 2011 *** I added a star because the publisher put out an errata. There are a surprisingly large number of measurement errors, to be honest (I counted 18). Except for these caramels -- which is, indeed, supposed to say 1/4 teaspoon salt -- nearly all the corrections are to the weights of flour and sugar, not to their measurements. The errata is available here in the comments of this review -- the author posted a link. *** Updated: July 5, 2011 *** Made the brownies with correct flour & sugar weights. Decadently good. I brought them to a 4th of July party and people kept coming back for more. *** Updated: July 28, 2011 *** sent an email today saying they will send me a new, corrected book when it comes out in October. Glad the publisher and I decided to fix this.

Miette: Recipes from San Francisco's Most Charming Pastry Shop is one of the prettiest books it has been my pleasure to come across. While there are not a huge number of recipes (more is not always better), the recipes that are included cover a wide and very well chosen spectrum. Among the goodies I was delighted to find were both homemade graham crackers and the wonderful chocolate wafers, now nearly unobtainable commercially, that were such a big part of my childhood. Perhaps the thing I liked best, though, was the scale of the recipes. I love to bake, but now that I live alone a full-sized cake or pie is simply too much for me to consume. Ray's recipes, however, are all scaled to small. The cakes run to a mere six inches, the tarts to seven. Her instructions are detailed and easy to follow, making this a book that newer bakers will enjoy using. Highly recommended.

PS - Miette: Recipes from San Francisco's Most Charming Pastry Shop, together with a Wilton Decorator Preferred 6 by 2 Inch Round Pan and a set of pretty pot holders would make a perfect bridal shower gift!

One final note: I've spent several hours searching high and low for 7-inch tart pans as specified in the book, to no avail. While I did find a straight-sided version in silicon, I do not care for silicon bakeware. On rereading the book, I find that Ray does state that the recipes have been tested for either 7 or 8 inch tart pans or 3.5 inch tartlet pans. Here are a couple that would fit the bill - Chicago Metallic Tartlet Pan 4 Cavity, 10.60-Inch by, 9.90-Inch by 1.30-Inch (3-1/2-Inch by .90 Cavities) Paderno World Cuisine 7.875 Inch Fluted Non-Stick Tart Pan with Removable Bottom

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