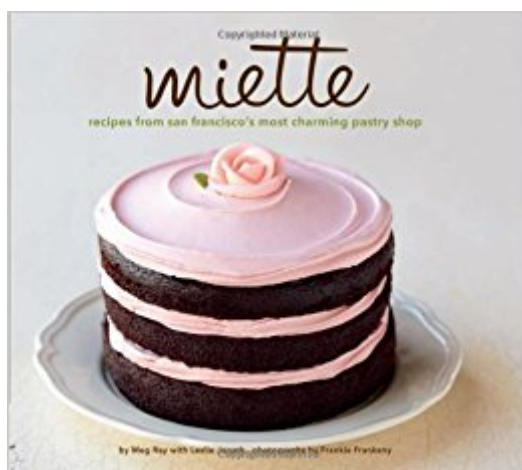


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# Miette: Recipes From San Francisco's Most Charming Pastry Shop



## 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!

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Meg Ray is chef and owner of Miette and Miette Confiserie. She lives in Oakland, California. Leslie Jonath is the author of several cookbooks, crafting, and children's books. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Frankie Frankeny is one of Entertainment Weekly's "100 Most Creative People in the United States" and a frequent photographer for Chronicle Books. She lives in San Francisco.

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  $\frac{1}{8}$  -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- inch thick 6-by-4- inch rectangle. Or maybe, it should be  $\frac{1}{8}$  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 1/8 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.

There are errors in these recipes, which don't bother me as I don't often follow recipes to the letter. I tend to use recipes as an idea guide--and often will read one and just say "I don't think so..." and make a substitute. So I will say, I love this book and love especially the recipe for salted caramels, as these make great gifts, as do the marshmallows. Frankly, I liked the candy section better than the cake sections. Baking, however, is precise and takes some knowledge of the relationship of ingredients. If you are not familiar with the proportions of fat to sugar, flour to liquid, volumetric (cups) vs gravimetric (using a scale and a bowl) you'll get frustrated with this book, which is American but rather straddles the European tradition of gravimetric baking. So it's slightly confused, to my way of thinking. The author has a successful confectionery story in San Francisco and it could be her signature recipes, done in bulk for retail sale, were imperfectly translated to single batch recipes. To use the cake recipes and cookies, you'd have to be aware if the conversion was accurate; if not, you can often correct with flour or liquid IF you are used to that. I have no trouble altering bread recipes the same way; measure into my bread machine and then I look. Nope. That's wrong. And I adjust. But I took off stars because really, you should be able to follow a recipe to the letter and have it come out no matter what your skill level. So, if you are not into baking, disaster could result from errors like 1/4 CUP of salt rather than a 1/4 tsp or whatever it was supposed to be. I was not about to throw a quarter cup (12 tps!) of salt on a pan of caramel. You want a few crystals of fleur de sel to crunch on as an accent to the sweetness, not a coating like powdered sugar on a donut?! Second issue: a lot of English gateaus (cakes) use a 7" pan. (You can see a 7" layer cake aka a gateau on the cover.) But this size pan is a bit hard to find in the US. 8" and 10" are standard, but finding 7" tins is difficult; here is one: ProCook Non-Stick Loose Bottom Cake Pan 7" Round A lot of my English books call for that 7" pan (is it because their ovens are quite

small--mine was tiny in Germany. Who knows? But they are not as common here.)Despite these criticisms, I enjoy reading this book and it's useful for ideas to entertain--the simple but elegant iced decorations, the ideas for flavored caramels (with herbal overtones) or marshmallows, which can be extraordinary when home-made. Even the author's ideas for packaging with narrow ribbons is just beautiful to look at.As a cake "bible" no no no. As a cake and confectionery exploration, yes yes.

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