

# Bakery-Style Sicilian Iris: White Custard Cream–Filled Fried Buns

## Difficulty, cost, method, cuisine

- **Difficulty:** Very Easy
- **Cost:** Budget-friendly
- **Cooking method:** Frying (after baking the buns)
- **Cuisine:** Italian (Sicilian)

## Cooking Times and Servings

- **Prep time:** 3 hours 30 minutes (includes rising)
  - **Cook time:** 10 minutes (frying, in batches)
  - **Servings:** 14 iris
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## Ingredients

### For the soft Sicilian buns (Panini)

- 4 cups **all-purpose flour** (500 g) (*or 50/50 AP flour + durum wheat semolina rimacinata by weight*)
- 1½ cups **whole milk**, lukewarm (325 ml)
- ⅓ cup **lard** (80 g) (*or unsalted butter, softened*)
- ⅓ cup **granulated sugar** (60 g)
- 2 tsp **fine salt** (12 g)
- 1 tsp **active dry yeast** (*or 0.4 oz / 12 g fresh yeast*)
- **Milk**, for brushing (1–2 Tbsp)

### For the white custard cream (Crema Bianca)

- 2 cups **whole milk** (500 g)
- ¾ cup **granulated sugar** (150 g)
- 1 **large egg**
- ⅔ cup **all-purpose flour** (80 g)
- 2 tsp **vanilla extract** (*or 1 packet vanillina*)
- **Zest of 1 lemon**, to taste
- ⅓ cup **milk**, as needed to adjust thickness (80 g)

## For coating + frying

- 1¼ cups **all-purpose flour** (150 g)
  - 1¼ cups **water** (300 g)
  - About 2 cups **breadcrumbs** (200 g)
  - **Vegetable oil** (sunflower/canola), for frying (2–3 inches deep)
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## Instructions

### Make the buns

1. Add flour to a large bowl. Pour in lukewarm milk and dissolve the yeast in it. Mix until you get a rough, shaggy dough.
2. **Rest 10 minutes** (this helps the dough hydrate and knead smoother).
3. Add sugar, salt, and lard (or butter). Knead until **smooth, elastic, and uniform**, about **10 minutes** by hand (or 6–8 minutes in a stand mixer).
4. Shape into a ball and place in a lightly greased bowl. Cover and let rise in a warm spot until **doubled**, about **2 hours 30 minutes**.

### Shape and bake the buns

1. Turn dough onto a work surface and knead briefly (1 minute).
  2. Divide into **14 pieces** of about **60 g each** and shape into tight balls.
  3. Place on a lined baking sheet. Cover and let rise again until **puffy and doubled**, about **45–60 minutes**.
  4. Preheat oven to **350°F (180°C)** static. Brush tops with milk.
  5. Bake **2 minutes at 350°F**, then reduce to **320°F (160°C)** and bake until lightly golden, **15–20 minutes total**.
  6. Cool completely. (*Tip: buns are easier to fill if made the day before.*)
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## Make the White Custard Cream (Crema Bianca)

### Cook the custard

1. In a saucepan (heat off), whisk sugar and egg until smooth. Whisk in the flour.
  2. Slowly whisk in the milk to avoid lumps. Add vanilla and lemon zest.
  3. Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until thick and creamy (about **5–8 minutes**).
  4. If the custard is too thick to pipe, whisk in up to ⅓ **cup milk (80 g)** a little at a time.
  5. Transfer to a bowl and cover with plastic wrap touching the surface. Cool completely.
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# Assemble and Fry the Iris

## Fill the buns

1. With scissors or a small knife, cut a small “cap” from the **bottom** of each bun and set aside.
2. Hollow out a little of the inside without breaking the crust.
3. Spoon or pipe custard inside generously.
4. Replace the cap to close.

## Batter, bread, and fry

1. Make the batter: whisk flour and water together until smooth (thin pancake batter consistency).
  2. Dip each filled bun in batter, letting excess drip off.
  3. Roll in breadcrumbs, pressing gently so they stick well.
  4. Heat oil to **350°F (175°C)** in a deep pot.
  5. Fry in batches, turning until deep golden and crisp, about **2–3 minutes per side**.
  6. Drain on paper towels and serve warm.
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## Tips & Tricks

### For perfect bakery-style iris

- **Lievitazione matters:** bake buns right at **double**. Too early = dense; too late = weak structure.
  - **Make buns ahead:** day-old buns are sturdier and fry better.
  - **Cool custard fully:** warm cream makes the bun soggy and can cause leaks.
  - **Keep oil steady:** too hot browns fast; too cool makes them oily.
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## Storage

### When and how to keep them

- Iris are **best eaten the same day**, still crunchy.
- You can keep leftovers at room temperature until the next day, but they soften.
- If possible, store **unfilled buns** and custard separately, then fill + fry fresh.