

Top 5 Authentic Italian Carnival Desserts (Easy Recipes)

1) Chiacchiere (Italian Fried Ribbons)

Introduction

Known across Italy as **Chiacchiere**, **Frappe**, **Cenci**, or **Bugie**, these paper-thin fried pastries are the signature Carnival sweet—light, crisp, and finished with a snowfall of powdered sugar.

Cooking Times & Servings

- **Prep time:** 25 minutes (+ 30 minutes resting)
- **Cook time:** 15 minutes
- **Servings:** 6–8

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tbsp unsalted butter, softened
- 1 tbsp rum or grappa (optional)
- Zest of 1 lemon + 1 orange
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 tsp baking powder (optional)
- Neutral oil for frying (canola/vegetable)
- Powdered sugar, for dusting

Step-by-Step Method

1. In a bowl, mix flour, sugar, salt (and baking powder if using). Add eggs, butter, citrus zest, and rum. Knead until smooth.
 2. Wrap and let rest **30 minutes** at room temperature.
 3. Divide dough and roll **very thin** (about 1–2 mm). A pasta roller works great.
 4. Cut into strips/rectangles; cut a small slit in the center if you like.
 5. Heat oil to **350°F**. Fry a few at a time **20–40 seconds per side** until lightly golden.
 6. Drain on paper towels and dust with powdered sugar once warm.
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2) Castagnole (Classic Italian Carnival Donut Holes)

Introduction

These soft little fried dough balls are a true Italian home-style Carnival treat—quick to make, lightly scented with orange, and impossible to stop eating.

Cooking Times & Servings

- **Prep time:** 15 minutes
- **Cook time:** 15–18 minutes
- **Servings:** 6–8

Ingredients

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tbsp Sambuca/anisette or rum (optional)
- Zest of 1 orange (or lemon)
- 1 pinch salt
- Neutral oil for frying
- Granulated sugar or powdered sugar (to finish)

Step-by-Step Method

1. In a bowl, whisk flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and zest.
 2. Add eggs, melted butter, and liqueur (if using). Mix until a soft dough forms (add 1–2 tbsp flour if sticky).
 3. Roll into small balls (hazelnut-sized).
 4. Heat oil to **340–350°F**. Fry in batches, turning often, **2–3 minutes** until golden.
 5. Drain and roll in granulated sugar (or dust with powdered sugar).
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3) Venetian Fritters (Frittelle Veneziane with Raisins)

Introduction

A Venice Carnival icon: fluffy fritters packed with raisins (and sometimes pine nuts), finished with powdered sugar. They're soft inside with a gently crisp exterior.

Cooking Times & Servings

- **Prep time:** 20 minutes (+ 1 hour rising)
- **Cook time:** 15–20 minutes
- **Servings:** 8–10

Ingredients

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- 2 1/4 tsp active dry yeast (1 packet)
- 1 cup warm milk (105–110°F)
- 2 large eggs
- 3 tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1 tsp vanilla extract (optional)
- 1 pinch salt
- 1/2 cup raisins, soaked and well-drained
- 2 tbsp pine nuts (optional)
- Neutral oil for frying
- Powdered sugar, for dusting

Step-by-Step Method

1. Stir yeast into warm milk with 1 tsp sugar; let sit **10 minutes** until foamy.
 2. In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, salt, and zest. Add yeast mixture, eggs, and melted butter. Mix into a thick, soft dough.
 3. Fold in raisins (and pine nuts).
 4. Cover and let rise **1 hour** or until doubled.
 5. Heat oil to **340–350°F**. Drop spoonfuls of dough into oil and fry **2–3 minutes per side** until golden.
 6. Drain and dust heavily with powdered sugar.
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4) Tuscan Rice Fritters (Frittelle di Riso)

Introduction

These traditional Tuscan fritters start with rice cooked in sweet milk, then get fried into tender, lightly crisp bites—perfect with orange zest and a sugar coating.

Cooking Times & Servings

- **Prep time:** 15 minutes (+ 30 minutes cooling)
- **Cook time:** 25–30 minutes
- **Servings:** 8–10

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup Arborio (or other short-grain) rice
- 2 1/2 cups milk
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- Zest of 1 orange (or lemon)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract (optional)
- 1 pinch salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- Neutral oil for frying
- Granulated sugar or powdered sugar (to finish)

Step-by-Step Method

1. Bring milk, sugar, salt, and zest to a gentle simmer. Add rice and cook on low **18–20 minutes**, stirring, until creamy and thick.
 2. Transfer to a bowl and cool **30 minutes** (warm is fine—just not hot).
 3. Mix in eggs. Add flour and baking powder; stir until thick.
 4. Heat oil to **340–350°F**. Fry spoonfuls **2–3 minutes per side** until golden.
 5. Drain and roll in sugar (or dust with powdered sugar).
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5) Sweet Ricotta Ravioli (Ravioli Dolci di Carnevale)

Introduction

Crispy fried pastry “pillows” filled with sweet ricotta and chocolate chips—an authentic Carnival favorite in many Italian regions, especially in the Center and North.

Cooking Times & Servings

- **Prep time:** 35 minutes (+ 20 minutes resting)
- **Cook time:** 15–18 minutes
- **Servings:** 6–8 (about 18–24 ravioli)

Ingredients

Dough

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 3 tbsp unsalted butter, softened
- 2–3 tbsp milk (as needed)
- Zest of 1 lemon or orange
- 1 pinch salt

Filling

- 1 1/4 cups whole-milk ricotta, well-drained
- 1/3 cup powdered sugar
- 1/3 cup mini chocolate chips
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract (optional)
- Orange zest (optional)

For Frying & Finishing

- Neutral oil for frying
- Powdered sugar, for dusting

Step-by-Step Method

1. Make the dough: combine flour, sugar, salt, and zest. Add eggs and butter; knead until smooth, adding milk 1 tbsp at a time if needed. Rest **20 minutes**.

2. Make filling: mix ricotta, powdered sugar, vanilla, zest (if using), and chocolate chips.
 3. Roll dough thin (about 1–2 mm).
 4. Spoon filling onto half the sheet, leaving space between mounds. Cover with the other half, press out air, and seal well. Cut into squares with a wheel or knife.
 5. Heat oil to **340–350°F**. Fry **1–2 minutes per side** until golden.
 6. Drain and dust with powdered sugar once warm.
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Carnival Dessert Tips (So They Turn Out Like Italy)

Keep your oil temperature steady

Aim for **340–350°F** for most Carnival sweets. Too hot = dark outside/raw inside; too cool = greasy pastries.

Drain well before sugaring

Let fried pastries sit on paper towels for a minute so sugar sticks better and stays crisp.

Make-ahead note

Most Carnival sweets taste best **the same day**, especially chiacchiere and fritters, for maximum crunch.