

ITALIAN FRIED CREAM PUFFS WITH PASTRY CREAM

Bignè Fritti alla Crema

Prep Time	30 minutes	Cook Time	30 minutes
Cooling Time	1 hour	Servings	16-18 cream puffs

Ingredients

For the Pastry Cream

- 2 cups (480 ml) whole milk
- 4 large egg yolks
- 1/2 cup (100 g) granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup (40 g) cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Finely grated zest of 1/2 lemon
- Pinch of salt

For the Bignè

- 1 cup (240 ml) water
- 1/2 cup (115 g) unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt
- 1 cup (125 g) all-purpose flour
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature

For Frying

- Vegetable or peanut oil, as needed

For Coating

- About 3/4 cup (150 g) granulated sugar

Instructions

1. Make the Pastry Cream

Pour the milk into a medium saucepan. Add the lemon zest and heat over medium-low heat until hot but not boiling. In a bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar until pale and creamy. Add the cornstarch and whisk until smooth. Slowly whisk about one-third of the warm milk into the egg mixture, then pour everything back into the saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat, whisking constantly, for 3-5 minutes, until thick and smooth. Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla. Transfer to a bowl, cover the surface directly with plastic wrap, cool completely, then refrigerate.

2. Prepare the Choux Pastry

Place the water, butter, sugar, and salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a gentle boil. Add the flour all at once and immediately stir vigorously with a wooden spoon. Continue cooking and stirring for about 2 minutes, until the dough pulls

away from the sides of the pan and forms a smooth ball. Remove from the heat and let cool for 5-10 minutes.

3. Add the Eggs

Add the eggs one at a time, beating thoroughly after each addition. The dough may look separated at first; continue mixing until each egg is fully incorporated before adding the next. The finished dough should be smooth, glossy, and thick enough to slowly fall from the spoon in a wide ribbon. Depending on the size of the eggs, you may not need every last drop of the fourth egg.

4. Heat the Oil

Pour 2 1/2-3 inches (6-7.5 cm) of oil into a deep, heavy saucepan. Heat to 325-335°F (165-170°C). Keep the temperature moderate so the bignè have enough time to puff and cook through before becoming too dark.

5. Fry the Bignè

Using two teaspoons, carefully drop small portions of dough into the hot oil. Do not make them too large; the dough expands considerably. Fry only a few at a time for about 5-7 minutes, turning occasionally, until deeply golden and puffed on all sides. Transfer to a tray lined with paper towels and continue with the remaining dough.

6. Coat with Sugar

While the bignè are still slightly warm, roll them generously in granulated sugar. Let them cool completely before filling.

7. Fill with Pastry Cream

Transfer the chilled pastry cream to a piping bag fitted with a small round tip. Make a small opening in the side or bottom of each bignè and pipe in a generous amount of pastry cream. Alternatively, slice each bignè partially in half and spoon the pastry cream inside.

Nonna's Tips

- Keep the oil at 325-335°F (165-170°C). If it is too hot, the bignè will brown before the centers are properly cooked.
- Use small portions of dough because choux pastry expands dramatically while frying.
- Do not overcrowd the pan; the bignè need room to expand and move in the oil.
- Let the cooked dough cool for 5-10 minutes before adding the eggs.
- Fill the bignè close to serving time for the best contrast between the lightly crisp exterior and the cold, silky pastry cream.
- A little fresh lemon zest gives the pastry cream a classic Italian flavor.

Storage

Unfilled bignè are best eaten the same day and can be kept at room temperature for several hours. Once filled with pastry cream, refrigerate in a covered container and enjoy within 1-2 days. For the best texture, fill them shortly before serving.

Nutrition Facts

Per bignè	Amount
Calories	180 kcal
Carbohydrates	19 g
Protein	4 g
Fat	10 g
Saturated Fat	4 g
Cholesterol	85 mg

Sodium	75 mg
Sugar	10 g
Fiber	0.3 g

Nutrition values are approximate and vary depending on oil absorption and the amount of filling used.