

Croissants

Makes about 16

Croissant dough

Makes 1 princess ring and 12-16 croissants (or two princess rings, or 24-32 croissants)

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups milk, heated to warm (105°F–110°F) (I used 1%, but whole is recommended)
- ¼ cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon plus ¼ teaspoon active dry yeast (from two ¼-oz packages)
- 3 ¾ to 4 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 3 sticks (1 ½ cups) cold unsalted butter

Directions:

Make dough:

1. Stir together warm milk, brown sugar, and yeast in bowl of standing mixer and let stand until foamy, about 5 minutes. (If it doesn't foam, discard and start over.) Add 3 ¾ cups flour and salt and mix with dough hook at low speed until dough is smooth and very soft, about 7 minutes.
2. Transfer dough to a work surface and knead by hand 2 minutes, adding more flour as necessary, a little at a time, to make a soft, slightly sticky dough. Form dough into a roughly 1 ½-inch-thick rectangle and chill, wrapped in plastic wrap, until cold, about 1 hour.

Prepare and shape butter:

3. After dough has chilled, arrange sticks of butter horizontally, their sides touching, on a work surface. Pound butter with a rolling pin to soften slightly (butter should be malleable but still cold). Scrape butter into a block and put on a kitchen towel, then cover with other towel. Pound and roll out on both sides until butter forms a uniform 8- by 5-inch rectangle. Chill, wrapped in towels, while rolling out dough.

Roll out dough:

4. Unwrap dough and roll out on a lightly floured surface, dusting with flour as necessary and lifting and stretching dough (especially in corners), into a 16- by 10-inch rectangle. Arrange dough with a short side nearest you. Put butter in center of dough so that long sides of butter are parallel to short sides of dough. Fold as you would a letter: bottom third of dough over butter, then top third down over dough. Brush off excess flour with pastry brush.

Roll out dough:

5. Turn dough so a short side is nearest you, then flatten dough slightly by pressing down horizontally with rolling pin across dough at regular intervals, making uniform impressions. Roll out dough into a 15- by 10-inch rectangle, rolling just to but not over ends. Brush off any excess flour. Fold in thirds like a letter, as above, stretching corners to square off

dough, forming a 10- by 5-inch rectangle. (You have completed the first "fold.") Chill, wrapped in plastic wrap, 1 hour.

Make remaining "folds":

6. Make 3 more folds in same manner, chilling dough 1 hour after each fold, for a total of 4 folds. (If any butter oozes out while rolling, sprinkle with flour to prevent sticking.) Wrap dough tightly in plastic wrap and chill at least 8 hours but no more than 18 (after 18 hours, dough may not rise sufficiently when baked).

Roll out and cut dough:

Cut dough in half, re-wrap one half and place back in the refrigerator. Roll out $\frac{1}{2}$ of dough on a lightly floured surface, dusting with flour as necessary, into an 18- by 10-inch rectangle. Brush off excess flour with pastry brush and trim edges with a pizza wheel or sharp knife. Cut dough vertically into fourths, then horizontally into fourths to make 16 rectangles.

Form croissants and chocolate croissants (if desired):

Place 2 long chocolate pieces (or about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of chips), along a short side of 1 rectangle about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch from edge, letting chocolate pieces extend over sides. Fold bottom edge of dough over batons and roll up dough around chocolate. Place, seam side down, on a parchment-lined large baking sheet.

Make more pastries in same manner, arranging them 2 inches apart on baking sheets.

Let the croissants rise:

Cover croissants on the sheet pan lightly with a kitchen towel.

Let pastries rise until slightly puffy and spongy to the touch, 2 to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. *(I like to let them rise in the oven after I have preheated it for 30-45 seconds then turned it off, that way it is slightly warm.)*

Bake croissants:

Adjust oven racks to upper and lower thirds of oven and preheat to 425°F. Remove towels from on top of pans. Spritz inside oven generously with spray bottle and close door. Put pastries in oven, then spritz again before closing door. Reduce temperature to 400°F and bake 10 minutes without opening door.

Switch position of sheets in oven and rotate sheets 180°, then reduce temperature to 375°F and bake until pastries are deep golden, about 10 minutes more.