

Classic Vanilla Pastry Cream (Crème Pâtissière)

Prep: About 15 minutes (plus chilling) • Cook: 5–10 minutes

Silky, vanilla-forward custard that's rich yet balanced, perfect for filling eclairs, cream puffs, tarts, and layer cakes with a smooth, luxurious finish.

Ingredients

- 4 large egg yolks (cold or room temperature)
- 3 Tablespoons (23 g) cornstarch
- 2 cups (480 ml) whole milk (do not use low-fat or nondairy)
- 1/2 cup (100 g) granulated sugar
- 1 Tablespoon (14 g) unsalted butter (softened to room temperature)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- from 1/2 vanilla bean vanilla bean seeds (seeds scraped (or use an extra 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract))
- small pinch salt

Instructions

1. In a large heatproof bowl (preferably with a pour spout), whisk the egg yolks and cornstarch together until thick and combined; if too dry, add a few drops of the milk to bring it together. Set aside.
2. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, combine the milk and sugar. Whisk until the sugar dissolves and bring to a gentle simmer, then remove from heat.
3. Temper the eggs: Slowly stream the warm milk mixture into the yolk–cornstarch mixture while whisking constantly.
4. Strain the mixture back into the saucepan through a fine-mesh sieve to catch any solids.
5. Return the saucepan to medium heat and whisk constantly. The surface will look frothy at first; continue cooking until the cream thickens and large bubbles burst, about 1–2 minutes. Cook until pudding-like or 185–190°F (85–88°C), then remove from heat.
6. Whisk in the butter, vanilla extract, vanilla bean seeds, and a small pinch of salt. Let cool for 10 minutes.
7. Transfer the pastry cream to a heatproof bowl and press plastic wrap directly onto the surface to prevent a skin from forming.
8. Refrigerate until cold and set, at least 3 hours or overnight. Stir to smooth before using.

Tags: Custard, French, Pastry Filling, Vanilla, Make Ahead, Dessert

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