

Ciambelle (Unfilled Italian Donuts)

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In Italy, **Ciambelle** are the kind of simple pastry that never goes out of style. Long before elaborate glazes and over-the-top toppings, these golden ring donuts were made with basic pantry ingredients, lightly scented with lemon zest, fried until perfectly puffed, and rolled in sugar. Their name comes from the Italian word *ciambella*, meaning “ring,” and versions of these sweet breads have been part of Italian home baking for generations.

You’ll find them in neighborhood bakeries, at festivals, and on Sunday mornings alongside a strong espresso. They aren’t meant to be flashy – they’re meant to be comforting.

At our restaurant, we served them warm with espresso, just as they would in Italy. There’s something special about that pairing – the slight bitterness of the coffee against the soft, sweet dough. It’s simple, authentic, and unforgettable.

These Ciambelle are exactly that: traditional, unfussy, and rooted in real Italian baking.

Things to know about these Ciambelle (Unfilled Italian Donuts)

- Lemon zest is the signature Italian flavor – don't skip it.
- The dough should be soft and slightly tacky but not sticky.
- Fry at 350°F for even cooking and that golden exterior.
- These are best enjoyed fresh the same day.
- You can bake them, but frying gives the classic texture and flavor.

Storage

- Store at room temperature in an airtight container for up to 2 days.
- Reheat briefly in the microwave (8–10 seconds) to soften.
- They can be frozen (without the sugar coating) for up to 1 month. Thaw, warm slightly, then roll in fresh sugar before serving.
- If you love traditional Italian baking, be sure to check out my other classic recipes and bring even more authentic flavors into your kitchen.

Traditional Italian Esse cookies (S cookies)

Classic favorite Italian Tiramisu recipe a real pick you

up dessert

Or my personal favorite Pureed Apple and walnut bundt

And if you make these Ciambelle, leave a comment and let me know – I love seeing your creations!

Ciambelle (Unfilled Italian Donuts)



- $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour ((440g))
- $2\frac{1}{4}$ tbsp active dry yeast ((1 packet))
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup warm milk ((110°F))
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- 2 pcs egg ((room temperature))
- 4 tbsp unsalted butter (softened)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp salt
- 1 tbsp vanilla extract
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 1 cup granulated sugar ((for coating))
- 4 cups frying oil (canola extra virgin olive oil blend)

1. **Activate the Yeast**

In a small bowl, combine warm milk, 1 tablespoon of the sugar, and yeast. Let sit 5–10 minutes until foamy.

2. **Make the Dough**

In a large bowl (or stand mixer):

- Combine flour, remaining sugar, and salt.
- Add eggs, vanilla, lemon zest, and yeast mixture.
- Mix until combined.
- Add softened butter and knead 8–10 minutes until smooth and elastic.
- The dough should be soft but not sticky.

3. **First Rise**

Place in a lightly oiled bowl, cover, and let rise 1–1½ hours until doubled.

4. **Shape the Rings**

- Turn dough onto a floured surface.
- Roll to about ½-inch thickness.
- Cut circles using a 3-inch cutter.
- Cut a small hole in the center (or use your finger to stretch gently).
- Place on parchment squares.

Cover loosely and let rise again 30–45 minutes.

5. **Fry**

In a deep fry pan Heat oil to 350°F (175°C). Fry 1–2 at a time, about 1–2 minutes per side, until golden brown.

Do not overcrowd.

6. **Coat**

While still warm, roll in granulated sugar.