

# Crema Pasticcera – Italian Pastry Cream Recipe

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Crema pasticcera Italian pastry cream is the heart of so many beloved Italian desserts – a smooth, glossy custard that’s rich but never heavy, sweet but not overly so, and endlessly versatile. Growing up around Italian kitchens and bakeries, this was the first “fancy” cream I learned to make, even before mastering pie dough. It shows up everywhere: layered in cakes, tucked inside pastries, dolloped into fruit tarts, and folded into whipped cream for a dreamy diplomat filling.

This recipe is simple, deeply traditional, and the one I return to every single time. It’s made with just a handful of staples you probably already have in your kitchen, and when cooked low and slow, it becomes the silkiest custard imaginable. Perfect for everyday desserts or any special occasion.

# Things to know about this Crema Pasticcera Italian Pastry Cream Recipe

## Tips for Perfect Crema Pasticcera

- **Low heat is everything** – slow and steady prevents lumps.
- **Whisk constantly** to keep the texture smooth.
- **Strain it** if you see even a hint of curdling.
- **Use whole milk** for richness and stability.
- **Chill it properly** before using in filled pastries.

## Serving & Variations

- Fill cornetti, bomboloni, or cream puffs
- Layer inside sponge cakes
- Spoon into fruit tarts
- Fold with whipped cream for *crema diplomatica*
- Add cocoa powder to make *crema al cioccolato*
- Add espresso for a mocha version

## Storage

- Store in an airtight container with plastic wrap pressed on the surface.
- Keeps **3–4 days** in the refrigerator.

- Do not freeze – the texture will separate.
- Ready to use your **crema pasticcera**? Try filling some of my favorite Italian desserts: classic Zeppole fried Italian doughnuts or my Christmas cream puffs and it's delicious in my Lemon Italian sponge cake

## Crema Pasticcera Italian Pastry Cream recipe



- 2 cups (480 ml) whole milk
- 1 Lemon zest (remove in wide strips for easy removal)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  vanilla bean, split *or*
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 large egg yolks
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (100 g) granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (30 g) cornstarch
- 2 tbsp (28 g) unsalted butter, cut into pieces

### 1. Warm the milk

In a saucepan, heat the milk with the lemon zest until just steaming. Remove from heat and let it infuse.

### 2. Whisk the base

In a bowl, whisk egg yolks and sugar until pale and thick. Add the cornstarch and whisk until smooth.

### **3. Temper**

Slowly pour the warm milk into the yolk mixture, whisking constantly to prevent scrambling.

### **4. Cook to thicken**

Return everything to the saucepan and cook over medium-low heat, stirring nonstop, until thick, glossy, and creamy.

### **5. Finish**

Off the heat, strain if needed, then stir in the butter and vanilla.

### **6. Chill**

Cover with plastic wrap touching the surface and chill until fully cooled.