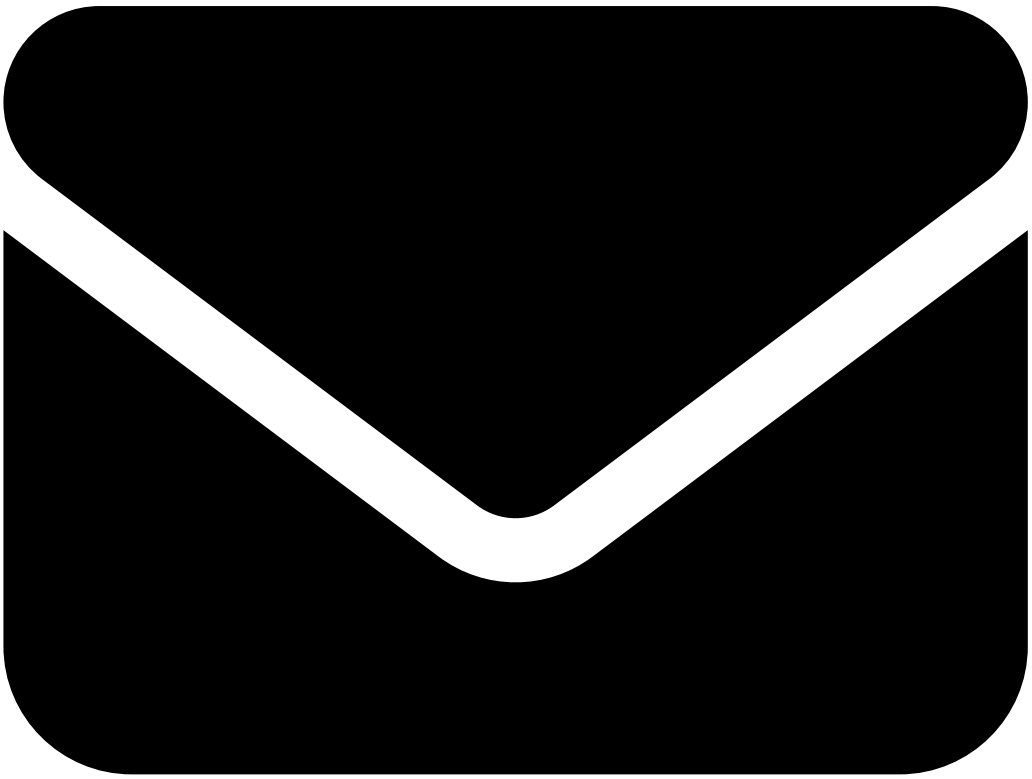
Crema Pasticcera – Italian Pastry Cream Recipe

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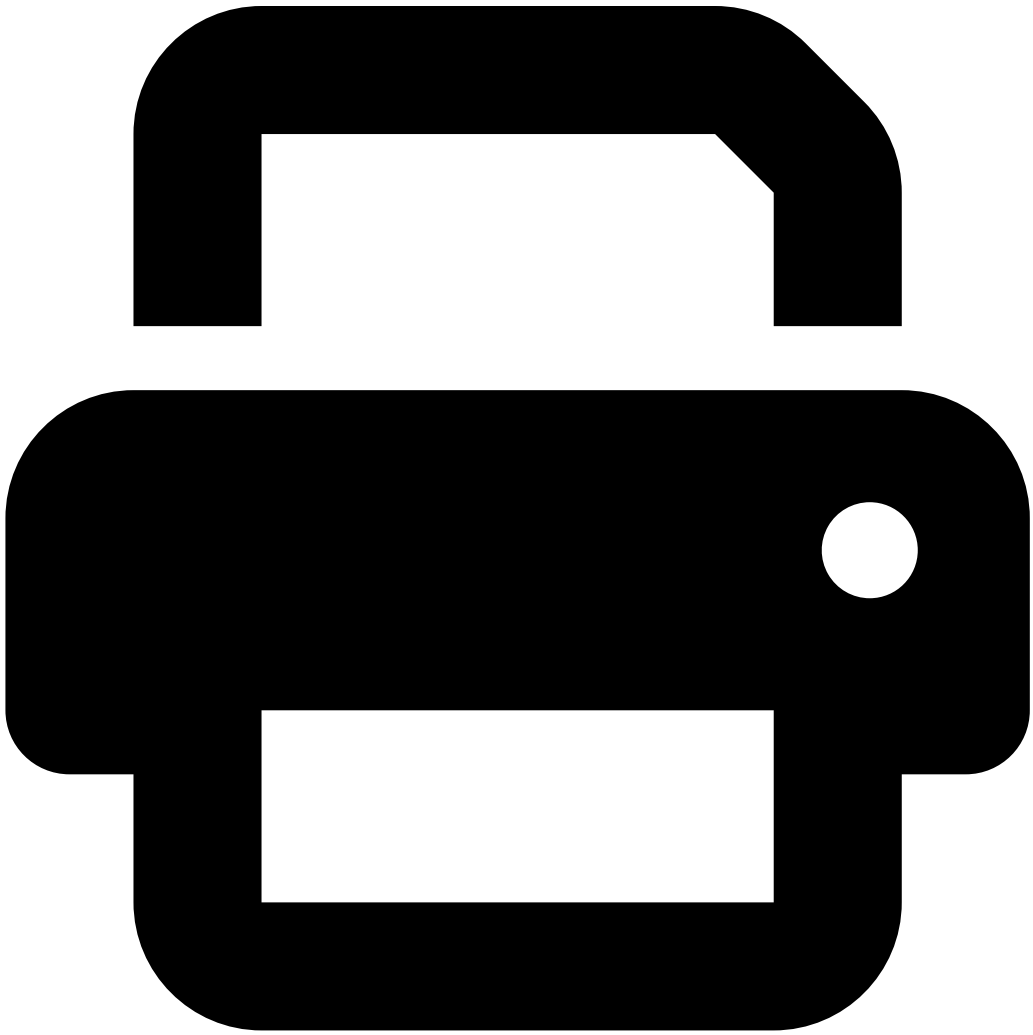









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Crema pasticcera Italian pastry cream is the heart of so many beloved Italian desserts — a smooth, glossy custard that’s rich but never heavy, sweet but not overly so, and endlessly versatile. Growing up around Italian kitchens and bakeries, this was 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



Silky, rich, and infused with vanilla and citrus, this authentic Italian Crema Pasticcera is the classic pastry cream used to fill cakes, tarts, cream puffs, cannoli, and pastries throughout Italy. Made with simple pantry ingredients, it comes together into a smooth, luscious custard that's perfect for countless Italian desserts.

- 2 cups **(480 ml) whole milk**
- 1 Lemon zest (remove in wide strips for easy removal)
- ½ **vanilla bean, split** *or*
- 1 tsp **vanilla extract**
- 4 **large egg yolks**
- ½ cup **(100 g) granulated sugar**
- ¼ 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.

Dessert
Italian
crema pasticcera, Italian pastry cream, authentic Italian custard, pastry