

Crema Pasticcera (Pastry Cream)

Makes about 3 cups

Crema pasticcera can be made several ways. The basic recipe consists of milk, egg yolks, sugar, flavorings, and flour or cornstarch, which act as thickeners. The many variations to the basic recipe include replacing the milk with a combination of milk and cream, which makes the pastry cream richer. Additional egg yolks will yield a richer cream. For a dessert in which the pastry cream is the star of the show or needs to be more stable so it can hold a shape, I usually use these variations to prepare a richer pastry cream, as in the *Torta Millefoglie* (page 86). You may prefer lighter pastry cream for filling *éclairs* (page 149) or doughnuts (page 151). Flavor variations for pastry cream are endless: steep the dairy with cinnamon, espresso beans or powder, or shredded coconut. Add extracts, chocolate or nut pastes. With a little imagination you can take a simple dessert and turn it into something extraordinary.

2 cups plus 2 tablespoons (500 ml) whole milk
1 vanilla bean, split and seeded
6 large egg yolks, at room temperature
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup plus 1 tablespoon (160 g) superfine sugar
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (40 g) all-purpose flour, sifted

1. Reserve $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (120 ml) milk. In a small saucepan over medium heat, bring the remaining milk and the vanilla bean and seeds just to a boil. Remove from the heat, cover, and allow vanilla to steep for 10 to 12 minutes.
2. In a medium bowl using a large whisk, beat the egg yolks and sugar until pale in color, 3 to 4 minutes.
3. Add the flour and continue to whisk until smooth. Gradually add the reserved milk and whisk to combine well.
4. Gradually pour the egg mixture into the vanilla-infused milk whisking to combine well.
5. Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly until thickened, 3 to 5 minutes.
6. Strain the custard through a fine-mesh sieve into a small heatproof bowl (discard the solids).
7. Place a sheet of plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the custard to prevent a skin from forming as it cools. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Variation Crema Pasticcera 2 (Pastry Cream 2)

Follow the basic Crema Pasticcera procedure with the following modifications:

1. Reduce the whole milk to 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon (250 ml).
2. In Step 1, add 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon (250 ml) heavy cream to the pan with the milk and the vanilla.
3. Increase the egg yolks to 7 large egg yolks total.