



THE DARING BAKERS' SEPTEMBER, 2011 CHALLENGE: FRESH, FLUFFY, FRENCH

Hi everyone! I'm STILL on a sugar rush, but I am not complaining! Everyone outdid themselves in the last candy challenge and I can't thank ya'll enough for filling up my hard drive with HUNDREDS of new candy recipes to try. I will not thank you, though, for shorting out my keyboard due to my drooling over your photos. :P hee!

Lisa Michele & MandyM? OUTSTANDING. I've said it multiple times in last month's challenge and also on your blogs - you blew us away with that challenge. The options, the easy to follow directions, the SUPPORT ya'll gave us in the private forums.. just incredible. Thank you both so very, very, very much for such a fun and informative challenge!! :) If everyone could drop by their respective blogs and leave a little comment love that would be so wonderful.. they both really busted their arses to give us a fantastic challenge with barely any time to do it in. Show 'em that you appreciate their time and efforts, yes?! :D

And now, our winners of the Chocolate Candy Challenge!

Drum roll please....

Our grand prize winner of a \$250.00 Chocoley.com gift certificate is:

Shumi for her Dark chocolate filled with Malibu & Blueberry cashew marzipan white chocolate truffles

Our 2nd runner up winning a gorgeous hamper of all things sweet is:

Rachel Dana for her Dried strawberries, mango paste, roasted salted buttered almonds, pecans, dried coconut, tangerine juice and ginger dipped in dark chocolate.

Our 3rd runner up winning a book-Chocolates and Confections at Home with The Culinary Institute of America is:

Oggi for her brown sugar meringue and salted honey caramels in bittersweet chocolate.

Congratulations to the three of you! And congratulations to all of our participating members for going past your comfort zones and creating the most unique and delicious looking candies EVER! :) How many times after a contest have you read/heard the judges say how hard it was to pick the winner? I know, like every time right? Well I'm NOT KIDDING. Lisa, Mandy and I went over a HUGE list of favorites for over 3 days through email AND THEN we had a conference call between the 3 of us for two more hours! Seriously, there were so many fantastic flavor combinations that this was the toughest contest to judge to date. AWESOME work everyone! xoxoxoxo

This month, we went back into the archives of the Daring Bakers and with the help of Sarah, we are bringing back one of our most asked about challenges.. so get your flour and butter out kids - we're going to have a delicious month ahead of us! Qui! Qui! :)

Hugs! Lis xoxo

Hi! I'm Sarah of well nowhere online really. I'm a Canadian non-blogger, currently living and baking in Warsaw, Poland. I initially wanted to share some of the (wonderful, delicious, incredible) baked goods from my new home with you, but unfortunately some of the major ingredients would not be available worldwide. So instead I decided to challenge us all to make the quintessential French pastry, croissants!

There are actually two kinds of croissants – Parisian and Viennese. My recipe came from Julia Child’s cookbook, so I assumed that they were the Parisian version. However, I have also checked my Larousse Culinary Encyclopedia (which is the coolest book ever, as a side note) and Julia Child’s recipe seems more in line with the Viennese croissant recipe listed there. Either way, croissants are perfect, flaky, buttery, and delicious!

Recipe Source: Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume Two. Julia Child and Simone Beck.

Blog-checking lines: The Daring Bakers go retro this month! Thanks to one of our very talented non-blogging members, Sarah, the Daring Bakers were challenged to make Croissants using a recipe from the Queen of French Cooking, none other than Julia Child!

Posting Date: September 27, 2011

Note: The most difficult part of making croissants is that they take a veeeeery long time. About 12 hours total, with resting and rising periods. However, at certain points you can leave it overnight. I have done the recipe twice – once over three days, and once in 12 hours. Both worked out well.

Mandatory Items: You must make a batch of croissants according to the recipe below.

Variations allowed: I highly recommend trying the originals at least once, but you are free to be as creative as you want. Chocolate and almond croissants are popular . . . let your imagination run wild!

Preparation time: In total, 12 hours.

Making dough, 10 mins

First rise, 3 hours

Kneading and folding, 5 mins

Second rise, 1.5 hours (or overnight in the fridge)

Rolling in the butter (turns one and two), 15 mins

First rest, 2 hours

Turns three and four, 10 mins

Second rest, 2 hours (or overnight in the fridge)

Forming croissants, 30 mins

Final rise, 1 hour (or longer in the fridge)

Baking, 15 mins

Equipment required:

- Measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Mixing bowls of numerous sizes
- Rubber spatula
- Plastic bag
- Pastry scraper
- Counter space or board for rolling and kneading
- Rolling pin
- Plastic wrap
- Baking tray

Croissants

Servings: 12 croissants

Note from Lis: Sarah took so many gorgeous and helpful step-by-step photos for this challenge, that I found the best way to display them is at the bottom of the recipe. Each photo is notated with what you are looking at. :)

Ingredients

¼ oz (7 gm) of fresh yeast, or 1¼ teaspoon (6¼ ml/4 gm) of dry-active yeast (about ½ sachet)
3 tablespoons (45 ml) warm water (less than 100°F/38°C)
1 teaspoon (5 ml/4½ gm) sugar
1 ¾ cups (225 gm/½ lb) of strong plain flour (I used Polish all-purpose flour, which is 13% protein)
2 teaspoons (10 ml/9 gm) sugar
1½ teaspoon (7½ ml/9 gm) salt
½ cup (120 ml/¼ pint) milk (I am not sure if the fat content matters. I used 2%)
2 tablespoons (30 ml) tasteless oil (I used generic vegetable oil)
½ cup (120 ml/1 stick/115 gm/¼ lb) chilled, unsalted butter
1 egg, for egg wash



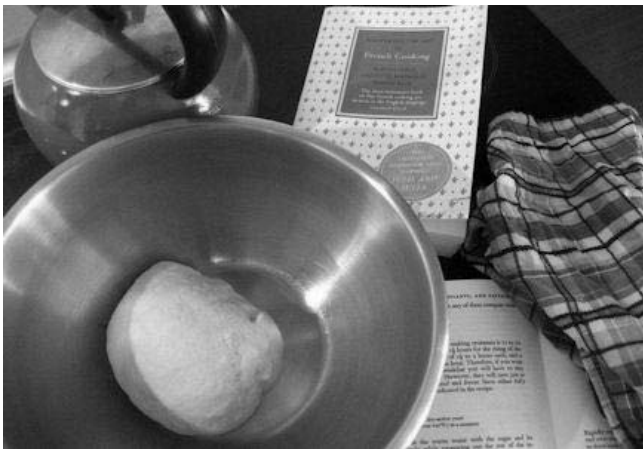
Directions:

1. Mix the yeast, warm water, and first teaspoon of sugar in a small bowl. Leave aside for the yeast and sugar to dissolve and the yeast to foam up a little.
2. Measure out the other ingredients
3. Heat the milk until tepid (either in the microwave or a saucepan), and dissolve in the salt and remaining sugar
4. Place the flour in a large bowl.
5. Add the oil, yeast mixture, and milk mixture to the flour
6. Mix all the ingredients together using the rubber spatula, just until all the flour is incorporated
7. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface, and let it rest a minute while you wash out the bowl
8. Knead the dough eight to ten times only. The best way is as Julia Child does it in the video (see below). It's a little difficult to explain, but essentially involves smacking the dough on the counter (lots of fun if you are mad at someone) and removing it from the counter using the pastry scraper.
9. Place the dough back in the bowl, and place the bowl in the plastic bag (*Photos 1 & 2*)
10. Leave the bowl at approximately 75°F/24°C for three hours, or until the dough has tripled in size. (*Photo 3*)
11. After the dough has tripled in size, remove it gently from the bowl, pulling it away from the sides of the bowl with your fingertips. (*Photo 4*)
12. Place the dough on a lightly floured board or countertop, and use your hands to press it out into a rectangle about 8 by 12 inches (20cm by 30cm). (*Photo 5*)
13. Fold the dough rectangle in three, like a letter (fold the top third down, and then the bottom third up) (*Photos 6 & 7*)

14. Place the dough letter back in the bowl, and the bowl back in the plastic bag. *(Photo 8)*
15. Leave the dough to rise for another 1.5 hours, or until it has doubled in size. This second rise can be done overnight in the fridge *(Photo 9)*
16. Place the double-risen dough onto a plate and cover tightly with plastic wrap. Place the plate in the fridge while you prepare the butter. *(Photo 10)*
17. Once the dough has doubled, it's time to incorporate the butter
18. Place the block of chilled butter on a chopping board.
19. Using the rolling pin, beat the butter down a little, till it is quite flat. *(Photo 11)*
20. Use the heel of your hand to continue to spread the butter until it is smooth. You want the butter to stay cool, but spread easily.
21. Remove the dough from the fridge and place it on a lightly floured board or counter. Let it rest for a minute or two. *(Photo 12)*
22. Spread the dough using your hands into a rectangle about 14 by 8 inches (35 cm by 20 cm). *(Photo 13)*
23. Remove the butter from the board, and place it on the top half of the dough rectangle *(Photos 14 & 15)*
24. Spread the butter all across the top two-thirds of the dough rectangle, but keep it $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (6 mm) across from all the edges. *(Photo 16)*
25. Fold the top third of the dough down, and the bottom third of the dough up. *(Photos 17 & 18)*
26. Turn the dough package 90 degrees, so that the top flap is to your right (like a book). *(Photo 19)*
27. Roll out the dough package (gently, so you don't push the butter out of the dough) until it is again about 14 by 8 inches (35 cm by 20 cm). *(Photo 20)*
28. Again, fold the top third down and the bottom third up. *(Photos 21 & 22)*
29. Wrap the dough package in plastic wrap, and place it in the fridge for 2 hours. *(Photo 23)*
30. After two hours have passed, take the dough out of the fridge and place it again on the lightly floured board or counter.
31. Tap the dough with the rolling pin, to deflate it a little
32. Let the dough rest for 8 to 10 minutes
33. Roll the dough package out till it is 14 by 8 inches (35 cm by 20 cm).
34. Fold in three, as before
35. Turn 90 degrees, and roll out again to 14 by 8 inches (35 cm by 20 cm).
36. Fold in three for the last time, wrap in plastic, and return the dough package to the fridge for two more hours (or overnight, with something heavy on top to stop it from rising)
37. It's now time to cut the dough and shape the croissants
38. First, lightly butter your baking sheet so that it is ready
39. Take the dough out of the fridge and let it rest for ten minutes on the lightly floured board or counter
40. Roll the dough out into a 20 by 5 inch rectangle (51 cm by 12½ cm). *(Photo 24)*
41. Cut the dough into two rectangles (each 10 by 5 inches (25½ cm by 12½ cm)) *(Photo 24)*
42. Place one of the rectangles in the fridge, to keep the butter cold
43. Roll the second rectangle out until it is 15 by 5 inches (38 cm by 12½ cm).
44. Cut the rectangle into three squares (each 5 by 5 inches (12½ cm by 12½ cm))
45. Place two of the squares in the fridge
46. The remaining square may have shrunk up a little bit in the meantime. Roll it out again till it is nearly square
47. Cut the square diagonally into two triangles. *(Photo 25)*

48. Stretch the triangle out a little, so it is not a right-angle triangle, but more of an isosceles. (*Photo 26*)
49. Starting at the wide end, roll the triangle up towards the point, and curve into a crescent shape. (*Photo 27*)
50. Place the unbaked croissant on the baking sheet
51. Repeat the process with the remaining squares of dough, creating 12 croissants in total.
52. Leave the tray of croissants, covered lightly with plastic wrap, to rise for 1 hour
53. Preheat the oven to very hot 475°F/240°C/gas mark 9.
54. Mix the egg with a teaspoon of water
55. Spread the egg wash across the tops of the croissants. (*Photo 28*)
56. Put the croissants in the oven for 12 to 15 minutes, until the tops are browned nicely
57. Take the croissants out of the oven, and place them on a rack to cool for 10 minutes before serving. (*Photo Above*)

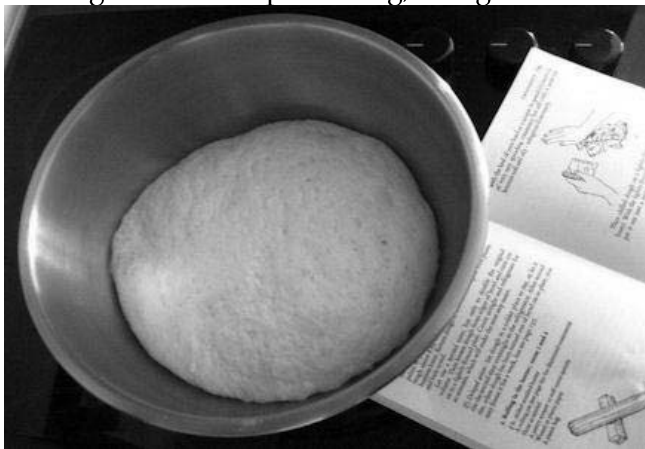
Step-by-Step Photos Courtesy of Sarah:



1: Dough before rising



2: Dough in bowl in plastic bag, rising 3 hours



3: Dough after first rise



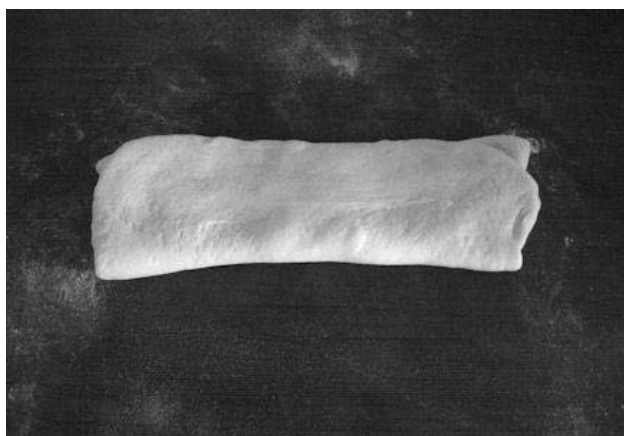
4: Dough removed from bowl after first rise



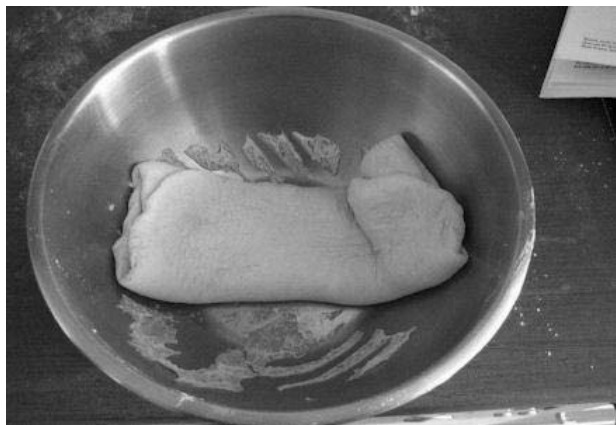
5: Dough rolled out after first rise



6: First fold of dough after first rise



7: Second fold of dough after first rise



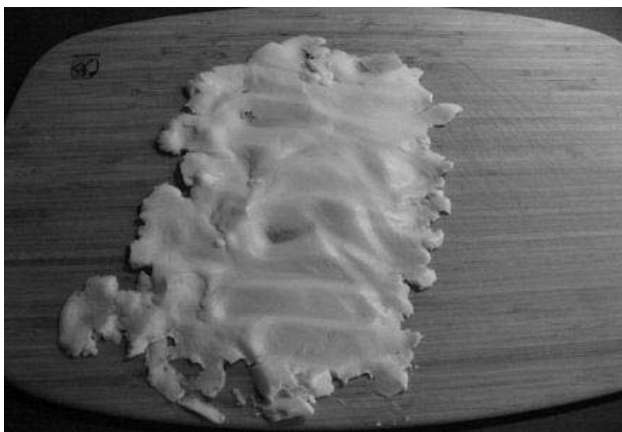
8: Dough back in bowl for second rise



9: Dough after second rise



10: Dough sealed under plastic wrap, placed in fridge after second rise



11: Butter beaten with rolling pin and spread/softened with hand



12: Dough removed from fridge and left to rest on counter



13: Dough rolled out into rectangle



14: Butter removed from board using pastry scraper



15: Butter placed on top of dough rectangle



16: Butter spread evenly across top two-thirds of dough rectangle



17: Bottom third of dough folded up



18: Top third of dough folded down



19: Dough/butter package rotated 90 degrees



20: Dough/butter package rolled out into a rectangle (keeping butter inside the dough)



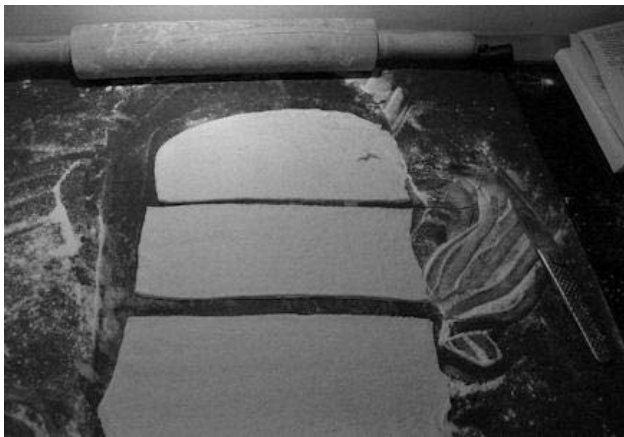
21: Bottom third of package folded up again



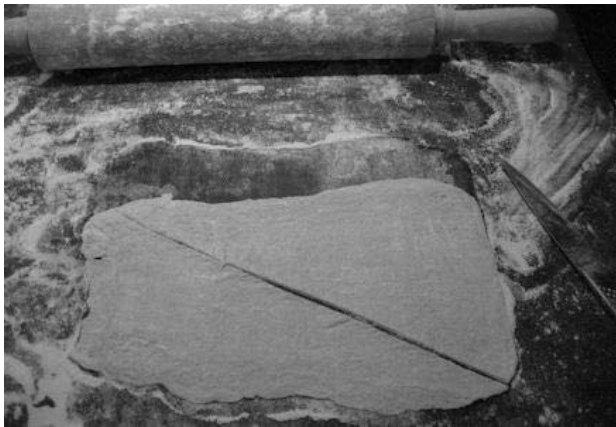
22: Top third of package folded down again



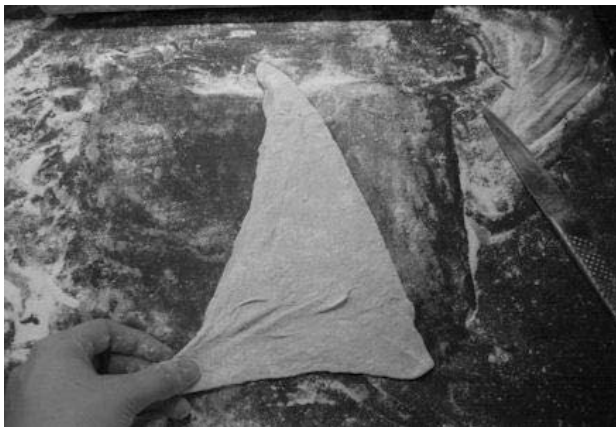
23: Package wrapped in plastic and placed in the fridge



24: After another set of folds and turns, dough rolled into large rectangle and cut in two, and then three pieces (beginning of the croissant shaping stage)



25: Each square cut diagonally to make two triangles



26: Each triangle stretched slightly to make isosceles



27: Triangles rolled from wide to narrow end, and curved into a croissant. Croissants placed on a baking tray to rise



28: After final rise, croissants brushed with egg wash



29: Croissants cooling on rack.

Storage & Freezing Instructions/Tips:

Baked Croissants are best eaten the day they are made. They will survive till the next day in a sealed container. If they seem a little stale, they can be quickly refreshed by warming them in the oven.

Unbaked Croissants should be frozen after shaped and before the last rise. Shape them, put them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, and cover with plastic wrap. Freeze. Once frozen, you can put them into a freezer Ziplock bag or other freezer container. When you want to bake them, take them out, place on a parchment paper lined baking sheet and allow them to thaw completely and proof one more time – meaning, don't bake them when they hit room temp., wait until they have risen again before baking. Bake them as you would normally.

Additional Information:

Check out this video of Julia Child making her own croissants (note that the recipe she follows here is a little different from the one in the book, but it's still fun and helpful to watch)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfygeWLUAmo&feature=related>

More on Julia's croissants with gorgeous photos <http://www.mamaliga.com/desserts/croissants-a-la-julia-child>

Here is a recipe for vegan croissants – it looks like you can just substitute margarine and soy milk

<http://zeats.wordpress.com/2008/02/25/vegan-croissantspain-au-chocolat/>

Here is a recipe for gluten-free croissants – they suggest using rice or sorghum flour

<http://glutenfree.wordpress.com/2008/01/09/gluten-free-homemade-croissants/>

Disclaimer:

*The Daring Kitchen and its members in no way suggest we are medical professionals and therefore are NOT responsible for any error in reporting of "alternate baking/cooking". If you have issues with digesting gluten, then it is YOUR responsibility to research the ingredient before using it. If you have allergies, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure any ingredient in a recipe will not adversely affect you. If you are lactose intolerant, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure any ingredient in a recipe will not adversely affect you. If you are vegetarian or vegan, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure any ingredient in a recipe will not adversely affect you. **The responsibility is YOURS regardless of what health issue you're dealing with.** Please consult your physician with any questions before using an ingredient you are not familiar with. Thank you! :)*