

The Best Cinnamon Rolls You'll Ever Eat

Big, fluffy, soft, and absolutely delicious. Options for overnight, make-ahead, and freezing.

Overview

These cinnamon rolls are extra soft and fluffy thanks to bread flour, with a rich cinnamon–brown sugar swirl and a vanilla cream cheese frosting that melts into every layer.

At a Glance

Yield	9 rolls (1 9-inch round or square pan)
Prep Time	2 hours (includes rises)
Bake Time	20–25 minutes
Total Time	About 2 hours 20 minutes

Ingredients

Dough

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (180 g) milk (whole or 2% preferred), warmed to about 115°F
- 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons (one 1/4-oz packet) quick-rise/instant *or* active dry yeast
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50 g) granulated sugar
- 4 tablespoons (57 g) salted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 large egg *plus* 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature
- 3 cups (360 g) bread flour, plus more as needed
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- Extra-virgin olive oil, for greasing the bowl

Filling

- 4 tablespoons (57 g) salted butter, softened (room temperature)
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (142 g) packed dark brown sugar
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons ground cinnamon

Cream Cheese Frosting

- 4 oz (112 g) cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (85 g) powdered sugar
- 3 tablespoons salted butter, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions

1. **Warm milk & start yeast.** Warm the milk to about 115°F (warm bath temperature). Add to the bowl of a stand mixer. Sprinkle yeast over the milk. *If using active dry yeast:* add the sugar now and let sit until foamy, about 5 minutes.

2. **Mix the dough.** Add the sugar (if not already added), melted butter, egg, and egg yolk. Mix briefly to combine. Remove the bowl and stir in flour and salt with a wooden spoon until a shaggy dough forms.
3. **Knead.** Fit the dough hook and knead on medium speed until the dough is soft and slightly tacky, 8–10 minutes. If it clings to the bottom, add 1–3 tablespoons flour, 1 tbsp at a time. (*By hand:* knead on a well-floured surface 8–10 minutes.)
4. **First rise.** Lightly oil a large bowl. Shape the dough into a ball, place in the bowl, cover with plastic wrap and a warm towel, and let rise until doubled, 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. It's ready when an indentation from your fingertip does not immediately spring back.
5. **Roll out.** On a generously floured surface, roll the dough to a 10×14 -inch rectangle.
6. **Fill.** Spread the softened butter over the dough, leaving a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch margin along one short edge. In a small bowl, mix brown sugar and cinnamon, then sprinkle evenly over the butter and gently rub it in.
7. **Roll & trim.** Starting from the short side without the margin, roll up tightly. Pinch to seal the seam and place seam-side down. Trim about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from both ends (little filling there).
8. **Slice.** Using unflavored dental floss or a serrated knife, cut nine 1-inch rolls.
9. **Second rise.** Line a 9-inch round or square pan with parchment. Arrange rolls cut-side up, cover, and let rise until puffed, doubled, and touching, 45–60 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).
10. **Bake.** Bake 20–25 minutes, until the edges are lightly golden. Do not overbake; this keeps the centers soft. Cool 10 minutes.
11. **Frost.** Beat cream cheese, powdered sugar, butter, and vanilla (stand mixer with whisk or by hand) until smooth and fluffy, 1–2 minutes. Spread over warm rolls and serve.

Key Tips for Perfect Rolls

- **Milk temperature:** 105–115°F. Too hot can kill yeast.
- **Use bread flour:** Higher protein means softer, fluffier rolls.
- **Room-temp ingredients:** Egg and filling butter at room temp. Use softened (not melted) butter in the filling so it stays put.
- **Rub in the sugar:** After sprinkling the brown sugar, gently rub it into the buttered dough.
- **Flour the surface & pin:** Prevents sticking during rolling.

Overnight, Make-Ahead & Freezing

Overnight (Refrigerator) Method

After step 8 (slicing), arrange rolls in the lined pan, cover tightly, and refrigerate overnight. Before baking, bring to room temp and let proof 45–60 minutes until puffy. Bake as directed.

Freeze Before Baking

After slicing, place rolls in a pan, cover well, and freeze. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight, then proof in a warm spot 30–60 minutes before baking.

Freeze After Baking

Cool completely. Freeze the whole pan or individual rolls (ideally before frosting). Thaw at room temp; warm at 350°F for 10–15 minutes or microwave individual rolls 20–30 seconds. Frost after reheating. (Frosting also freezes well.)

Storage

Cover and keep at room temperature up to 2 hours, then refrigerate up to 5 days. Reheat gently to serve warm and gooey.

Yeast & Flour Notes

- **Instant/quick-rise yeast:** No proofing required (though you may still sprinkle over warm milk).
- **Active dry yeast:** Proof in warm milk with sugar until foamy before mixing. Rise times may be longer.
- **All-purpose flour:** Works in a pinch, but bread flour yields the fluffiest texture.

Helpful Tools

Stand mixer with dough hook (optional), wooden spoon, rolling pin, unflavored dental floss or serrated knife, 9-inch pan, parchment paper.

Dairy-free option: Use almond milk, vegan butter, and vegan cream cheese.

Make it yours: Add nuts, raisins, or warm spices (e.g., a pinch of nutmeg or pumpkin pie spice) to the filling.