

CLASSIC CROISSANT DOUGH

Yield: about 12 croissants

Layer upon layer of butter and dough produce the ultimate French breakfast treat. This pastry classic dates back to 1686, when Austrian bakers created this treat to commemorate a military victory over Turkey. "Croissant" in French means "crescent," a nod to the crescent shape on the Turkish flag. Be sure to give yourself the time and counter space you'll need to enjoy the process of making the dough.

Dough Block (Détrempe):

1/2 cup (4 ounces) warm whole milk (110°F to 115°F)
1 teaspoon plus 2 tablespoons (1 ounce) sugar, divided
4 teaspoons (3/8 ounce) active dry yeast or 1 tablespoon instant yeast
4 cups (20 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon salt
1/2 stick (2 ounces) cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
1 cup (8 ounces) cold milk

Butter Block (Beurrage):

3 1/2 sticks (14 ounces) cold unsalted butter
2 tablespoons (1 ounce) unbleached all-purpose flour

1. **To prepare dough block:** Pour the warm milk into a small bowl and whisk in 1 teaspoon of sugar. Whisk in yeast and set aside for 10 minutes, or until yeast is activated and the mixture is bubbling.
2. To the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine flour, remaining sugar, salt, and butter. Blend on medium speed until the butter is cut into tiny pieces and the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add the yeast mixture and the cold milk. Switch to a dough hook and mix on the lowest speed for 6 to 8 minutes, until liquid is absorbed and the ingredients form a tight, smooth dough. Dust a work surface lightly with flour and turn the dough out onto it. Knead dough 3 to 5 times and bring together into a tight ball. Don't overwork dough or you'll have trouble rolling it later. Place the dough, seam-side down, into a lightly greased bowl, and using a sharp knife, cut two deep, perpendicular slashes into the dough in the shape of a cross (this will help with rolling the dough out into a rectangle shape later). Cover loosely with plastic wrap (to allow a little room for expansion) and refrigerate, 30 to 60 minutes.
3. **To prepare butter block:** Cut butter into 1/2-inch pieces, toss with flour, and refrigerate for 20 minutes. To a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat floured butter on medium speed, scraping down the bowl once or twice with a bowl scraper, for 1 to 2 minutes, until butter and flour form a smooth mass. You are not trying to beat air into the mixture, just make it pliable and smooth while keeping it cold. Scrape butter onto a piece of parchment paper or plastic wrap, wrap it up, and refrigerate while you roll out the dough.
4. **To incorporate butter into dough:** Dust work surface with flour. Place the dough in the center and dust the top with flour. Roll dough into a 15"x12" rectangle with a short side parallel to the edge of your work surface. Gently pull or stretch dough to form straight edges and sharp corners. Brush any flour from the surface of dough. Visually divide dough lengthwise into 3 equal, 5-inch wide sections (you can lightly mark dough with a ruler or the back of a knife). Spread cold but pliable butter evenly over the top two sections of dough, leaving the bottom third empty and leaving a 1/2-inch border around the edges of buttered sections. This is best done with your fingers since the butter isn't quite warm enough to spread easily with a spatula. Alternatively, you can place butter between two sheets of parchment and roll it into a 9 1/2"x11" rectangle. Peel off one sheet of parchment, invert buttered rectangle over the dough rectangle, center it, and peel off the other sheet of parchment.
5. **To encase butter with a letter fold (first turn):** Fold the empty bottom third up over the center third of the dough. Then fold top third down over center. Pinch together seams along the bottom and sides of dough. Roll your rolling pin across the top briefly and gently 3 or 4 times to help seal seams. This completes both the incorporation of butter and your first turn of the dough. If butter has become warm, wrap dough in plastic and refrigerate for 1 hour before continuing with the second turn. If you have worked quickly and butter is still cold yet pliable, continue with the next turn.



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6. Book fold (second turn): Position the dough with the short side parallel to your work surface and the long fold on your left. Dust the dough with flour and roll it into a 20"x12" rectangle. Brush any flour from the surface of dough. Fold dough using the book fold method: Fold two short edges into the center of the dough, leaving a 1/4-inch crevice between them. Fold dough using the precisely and square corners as you fold. Now fold one side over the other, as though you were closing a book. Roll your pin across the top of the dough briefly and gently 3 or 4 times to seal seams. This completes your second turn. Wrap dough in plastic and refrigerate for 1 hour.

7. Letter fold (third turn): Remove the dough from refrigerator, dust with flour, and roll again into a 15"x12" rectangle with a short side parallel to the edge of your work surface. Brush any flour from the surface of dough. Fold dough using letter fold method: Visually divide dough lengthwise into 3 equal, 5" wide sections (you can lightly mark dough with a ruler or the back of a knife). Fold the bottom third up over the center of dough, and then fold the top third down over the center, making sure to square corners and fold as neatly and precisely as possible. Roll your rolling pin across the top of dough again briefly to help seal seams. This completes your third turn. The croissant dough is finished. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 24 hours before cutting, shaping, and baking the dough.



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