

# Cannelés

Makes about 45 mini cannelés

It's thought that these little cakes were first made centuries ago by cloistered nuns in Bordeaux; however, it's a fact that they're very beloved—and not just in Bordeaux, but in Paris, other parts of France, and in bakeries across America. They're a sweet completely different from any other, so it's easy to understand how they'd capture the imaginations of pastry lovers everywhere.

The name comes from the shape of the molds in which they're baked: Cannelé means “channeled,” or “crenelated,” and the molds, traditionally made of copper, are beautifully ridged, flat on the bottom and slightly indented on top. The cakes are made from a thin batter, like the kind you'd use for crêpes, which is highly flavored with rum and vanilla and left to rest in the refrigerator overnight. When the cannelés are baked, the exterior becomes dark and firm, and the interior, a fascinating cross between custardy and chewy, remains very moist. Pull one apart, and you'll find irregular pockets and holes—almost like the ones in a yeast cake, like babka or kugelhopf.

Traditionally, cannelés were made in copper molds brushed with beeswax, and they turned almost as dark as nuggets of coal. Today, most bakers use silicone molds and forego the beeswax. You can get that charred color with silicone and without beeswax, but I call them done when the bottoms are almost black and the sides a deep caramel. Silicone molds are available as minis, which I use, and large; if you use the large ones, you'll have to adjust the baking time (and, obviously, you'll get a different yield). Mini Bundt molds also make lovely cannelés.

This recipe was given to me by Joëlle Caussade, whose husband, Gilles, owns a lively Paris bistro, Le Petit Vendôme, where Joëlle makes the mini cannelés that are served with coffee.

A word on timing: The batter needs to rest in the refrigerator for at least 12 hours, so plan ahead.

2 cups (480 ml) whole milk  
1¼ cups (250 grams) sugar  
2 tablespoons (1 ounce;  
28 grams) unsalted butter  
1 cup (136 grams) all-purpose flour  
2 large eggs  
1 large egg yolk

2½ tablespoons dark rum  
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract  
Melted unsalted butter, for the molds

At least 1 day before making the *cannelés*: Bring the milk,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cu of the sugar and the butter to a boil in a medium saucepan, stirring occasionally to make sure the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat and let cool until the mixture reaches 140 degrees F. (If you don't have a thermometer, cool the milk for 10 to 15 minutes; it should still feel hot to the touch.)

While the milk is cooling, put the flour and the remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar into a strainer and sift them onto a piece of parchment or wax paper. Keep the strainer at hand.

Working with a whisk, beat the eggs and yolk together in a large bowl until blended. Whisking without stopping, start adding the hot milk, just a little at first; then, when you've got about a quarter of the milk blended into the eggs, whisk in the remainder in a steady stream. Add the flour mixture all at once and whisk—don't be afraid to be energetic—until the batter is homogeneous. You might have a few lumps here and there, but you can ignore them.

Strain the batter into a large bowl or, better yet, a pitcher or a large measuring cup with a spout; discard any lumps in the strainer. Whisk in the rum and vanilla, cover the container tightly and refrigerate the batter for at least 12 hours. (The batter can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.)

Lightly brush the *cannelé* molds (see page 222) with melted butter and put the pan in the freezer. The pan only needs to be frozen for 30 minutes, but if you put it into the freezer right after you make the batter, you won't have to wait for it on baking day.

When you're ready to bake: Center a rack in the oven and preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Put a cooling rack on the sheet and put the frozen *cannelé* molds on the rack.

Remove the batter from the fridge. It will have settled and formed layers, so give it a good whisking to bring it back together, then rap the container against the counter to debubble it a bit. Fill the *cannelé* molds about three quarters full.

Bake the *cannelés* for 30 minutes, then lower the oven temperature to 400 degrees F and bake for another 30 minutes or so. *Cannelés* are supposed to get very dark—black really—but if you're concerned that yours are darkening too fast or too much, place a piece of parchment or foil over the molds.

When properly baked, the bottoms will be dark and the sides of the little pastries will be a deep brown—think mahogany. (I spear a *cannelé* with a bamboo skewer and pull it out of its mold to inspect it.) While the *cannelés* bake, they may puff above the tops of the molds, like popovers or soufflés, and then, as they continue baking, or when they're pulled from the oven, they'll settle down. Pull the whole setup from the oven and put it on a cooling rack.

Let the *cannelés* rest in their molds for 10 minutes, then turn them out onto a cooling rack. (Resting gives the tender pastries a chance to firm so they'll hold their shape when unmolded.) Be careful: Even though you've waited 10 minutes, because of the caramelized

sugar and melted butter, cannelés are hotter than most other pastries. Let the cannelés cool until they are only slightly warm or at room temperature.

**Serving:** Cannelés are traditionally served alongside coffee or tea and often turn up on trays of mignardises, the small sweets that are after-dessert desserts.

**Storing:** The batter needs to be refrigerated for at least 12 hours, but it can hold there for up to 3 days. As for the baked cannelés, they're perfect the day they are made and still good, but firmer and chewier, the day after. Keep the cannelés in a dry place at room temperature. Lightly cover them if you like.