



Daring Bakers November 2009 Challenge hosted by Lisa Michele of Parsley, Sage, Desserts and Line Drives

....so put away your baking pans and get out the deep fry thermometer and oil! Hi everyone, thanks for baking, err, deep frying with me this month! We're making Cannoli! This is/was my first time making cannoli from scratch, but it's well worth it, and a great new experience/dessert to add to your repertoire. I hope you all enjoy, and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone's take on this sweet (or savory, if desired) Italian favorite.

PLEASE READ THROUGH THE CHALLENGE COMPLETELY, AS THERE IS A LOT OF LENIENCY THIS MONTH

Here are your blog-checking lines:

*The November 2009 Daring Bakers Challenge was chosen and hosted by Lisa Michele of **Parsley, Sage, Desserts and Line Drives**. She chose the Italian Pastry, Cannolo (Cannoli is plural), using the cookbooks *Lidia's Italian-American Kitchen* by Lidia Matticchio Bastianich and *The Sopranos Family Cookbook* by Allen Rucker; recipes by Michelle Scicolone, as ingredient/direction guides. She added her own modifications/changes, so the recipe is not 100% verbatim from either book.*

Cannoli are known as Italian-American pastries, although the origin of cannoli dates back to Sicily, specifically Palermo, where it was prepared during Carnevale season, and according to lore, as a symbol of fertility. The cannoli is a fried, tube-shaped pastry shell (usually containing wine) filled with a creamy amalgamation of sweetened ricotta cheese, chocolate, candied fruit or zest, and sometimes nuts. Although not traditional, mascarpone cheese is also widely used, and in fact, makes for an even creamier filling when substituted for part of the ricotta, or by itself. However, cannoli can also be filled with pastry creams, mousses, whipped cream, ice cream etc. You could also add your choice of herbs, zests or spices to the dough, if desired. Marsala is the traditional wine used in cannoli dough, but any red or white wine will work fine, as it's not only added for flavor or color, but to relax the gluten in the dough since it can be a stiff dough to work with. By the way, the name 'Lidisano' is a combination of Lidia, Lisa and Sopranos..LOL

Posting Date – November 27, 2009

Equipment:

Cannoli forms/tubes - optional, but recommended if making traditional shaped cannoli.

Deep, heavy saucepan, enough to hold at least 2-3-inches of oil or deep fryer

Deep fat frying thermometer. although the bread cube or bit of dough test will work fine.

Metal tongs

Brass or wire skimmer OR large slotted spoon

Pastry bag with large star or plain tip, but a snipped ziplock bag, butter knife or teaspoon will work fine.

Cooling rack

Paper bags or paper towels

Pastry Brush

Cheesecloth

Sieve or fine wire mesh strainer

Electric Mixer, stand or hand, optional, as mixing the filling with a spoon is fine.

Food Processor or Stand Mixer – also optional, since you can make the dough by hand, although it takes more time.

Rolling pin and/or Pasta roller/machine

Pastry or cutting board

Round cutters - The dough can also be cut into squares and rolled around the cannoli tube prior to frying. If making a stacked cannoli, any shaped cutter is fine, as well as a sharp knife.

Mixing bowl and wooden spoon if mixing filling by hand

Plastic Wrap/Clingfilm

Tea towels or just cloth towels

Required: Must make cannoli dough and shells. **If you don't have or do not want to purchase cannoli forms, which I would never ask of any of you, you could simply cut out circles, squares, or any shapes you want and stack them with the filling of your choice to make stacked cannoli's aka Cannolipoleons (directions below).** If desired, you can channel MacGuyver and fashion something heat proof to get traditional shaped cannoli (6-8 inch sawed off lengths of a wooden broom stick or cane, sanded down and oiled, is THE authentic cannoli form!), or non-traditional shapes such as creating a form to make bowls, or even using cream horns if you happen to have them. Mini cannoli would be great too, and I've provided links to retailers of cannoli forms of all sizes.

Also, for those who don't like to cook or bake with alcohol - grape juice, cranberry juice, pomegranate juice, apple juice..any sweet juice of a fruit, especially ones used in or to make wine, can be substituted. Just add a little more vinegar to insure you get enough acid to relax the dough



6-8 inch long by 3/4 to 1 inch circumference cannoli forms aka your basic cannoli form size

Variations: The filling is YOUR choice! Anything you want to fill them with is perfectly fine, sweet or savory, or you can use the filling recipe provided – making whatever changes you want to it. Cannoli would make a great addition to a Thanksgiving dessert table/spread. In many Italian households, during the holidays, cannoli is always part of the dessert offerings. You could also make a Thanksgiving themed cannoli, like pumpkin cannoli (I came up with a great pumpkin filling recipe below) or apples, pecans, walnuts, any dried fruits etc. An idea to gussy up your cannoli is; dipping the rims of the shell in melted chocolate and rolling in chopped nuts or sprinkles, then letting them set prior to filling. Dipping or pressing mini chocolate chips into the filled ends OR just stirring mini chocolate chips into the filling prior to stacking or filling whatever shaped shells you come up with, is another great idea and makes a nice presentation. The sky is the limit here, be creative! Naturally, if you have any dietary restrictions, by all means, go with it. I've provided a link to a gluten-free cannoli recipe and a slightly savory vegan cannoli recipe to help get you started.

Bonus option: Make your own ricotta and/or mascarpone cheese!

<http://lisamichele.wordpress.com/2009/05/04/eating-my-curds-and-ditching...>

<http://www.bakingobsession.com/2009/05/02/homemade-mascarpone-cheese/>

Technically, I know, this is not baking, and if you prefer to steer clear of the deep fry, you can bake the shell. You won't get the snappy, blistery texture and appearance that make cannoli so special, but I'm sure it'll taste good nonetheless. Here's a link where the cook bakes some of his cannoli shells:

<http://www.ifood.tv/network/cannoli/recipes>

Lidisano's Cannoli

Makes 22-24 4-inch cannoli

Prep time:

Dough – 2 hours and 10-20 minutes, including resting time, and depending on whether you do it by hand or machine.

Filling – 5-10 minutes plus chilling time (about 2 hours or more)

Frying – 1-2 minutes per cannoli

Assemble – 20–30 minutes

RECIPE NOTE: THE EQUIVALENTS FROM THIS RECIPE WERE PREPARED USING THIS CONVERSION SITE:

<http://www.gourmetsleuth.com/index.asp>.

CANNOLI SHELLS

2 cups (250 grams/16 ounces) all-purpose flour

2 tablespoons (28 grams/1 ounce) sugar

1 teaspoon (5 grams/0.06 ounces) unsweetened baking cocoa powder

1/2 teaspoon (1.15 grams/0.04 ounces) ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon (approx. 3 grams/0.11 ounces) salt

3 tablespoons (42 grams/1.5 ounces) vegetable or olive oil

1 teaspoon (5 grams/0.18 ounces) white wine vinegar

Approximately 1/2 cup (approx. 59 grams/approx. 4 fluid ounces/approx. 125 ml) sweet Marsala or any white or red wine you have on hand

1 large egg, separated (you will need the egg white but not the yolk)

Vegetable or any neutral oil for frying – about 2 quarts (8 cups/approx. 2 litres)

1/2 cup (approx. 62 grams/2 ounces) toasted, chopped pistachio nuts, mini chocolate chips/grated chocolate and/or candied or plain zests, fruits etc.. for garnish

Confectioners' sugar

CANNOLI FILLING

2 lbs (approx. 3.5 cups/approx. 1 kg/32 ounces) ricotta cheese, drained

1 2/3 cups (160 grams/6 ounces) confectioner's sugar, (more or less, depending on how sweet you want it), sifted

1/2 teaspoon (1.15 grams/0.04 ounces) ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon (4 grams/0.15 ounces) pure vanilla extract or the beans from one vanilla bean

3 tablespoons (approx. 28 grams/approx. 1 ounce) finely chopped good quality chocolate of your choice

2 tablespoons (12 grams/0.42 ounces) of finely chopped, candied orange peel, or the grated zest of one small to medium orange

3 tablespoons (23 grams/0.81 ounce) toasted, finely chopped pistachios

Note - If you want chocolate ricotta filling, add a few tablespoons of dark, unsweetened cocoa powder to the above recipe, and thin it out with a few drops of warm water if too thick to pipe.

DIRECTIONS FOR SHELLS:

1. In the bowl of an electric stand mixer or food processor, combine the flour, sugar, cocoa, cinnamon, and salt. Stir in the oil, vinegar, and enough of the wine to make a soft dough. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and well blended, about 2 minutes. Shape the dough into a ball. Cover with plastic wrap and let rest in the fridge from 2 hours to overnight.
2. Cut the dough into two pieces. Keep the remaining dough covered while you work. Lightly flour a large cutting or pastry board and roll the dough until super thin, about 1/16 to 1/8" thick (An area of about 13 inches by 18 inches should give you that). Cut out 3 to 5-inch circles (3-inch – small/medium; 4-inch – medium/large; 5-inch;- large. Your choice). Roll the cut out circle into an oval, rolling it larger and thinner if it's shrunk a little.
3. Oil the outside of the cannoli tubes (You only have to do this once, as the oil from the deep fry will keep them well, uhh, oiled..lol). Roll a dough oval from the long side (If square, position like a diamond, and place tube/form on the corner closest to you, then roll) around each tube/form and dab a little egg white on the dough where the edges overlap. (Avoid getting egg white on the tube, or the pastry will stick to it.) Press well to seal. Set aside to let the egg white seal dry a little.
4. In a deep heavy saucepan, pour enough oil to reach a depth of 3 inches, or if using an electric deep-fryer, follow the manufacturer's directions. Heat the oil to 375°F (190 °C) on a deep fry thermometer, or until a small piece of the dough or bread cube placed in the oil sizzles and browns in 1 minute. Have ready a tray or sheet pan lined with paper towels or paper bags.
5. Carefully lower a few of the cannoli tubes into the hot oil. Do not crowd the pan. Fry the shells until golden, about 2 minutes, turning them so that they brown evenly.
6. Lift a cannoli tube with a wire skimmer or large slotted spoon, out of the oil. Using tongs, grasp the cannoli tube at one end. Very carefully remove the cannoli tube with the open sides straight up and down so that the oil flows back into the pan. Place the tube on paper towels or bags to drain. Repeat with the remaining tubes. While they are still hot, grasp the tubes with a potholder and pull the cannoli shells off the tubes with a pair of tongs, or with your hand protected by an oven mitt or towel. Let the shells cool completely on the paper towels. Place shells on cooling rack until ready to fill.
7. Repeat making and frying the shells with the remaining dough. If you are reusing the cannoli tubes, let them cool before wrapping them in the dough.



Cannoli shell preparation, cutting out the dough circles, sealing the dough around the form, frying the shells, finished shells ready to fill

Pasta Machine method:

1. Divide the dough into 4 equal pieces. Starting at the middle setting, run one of the pieces of dough through the rollers of a pasta machine. Lightly dust the dough with flour as needed to keep it from sticking. Pass the dough through the machine repeatedly, until you reach the highest or second highest setting. The dough should be about 4 inches wide and thin enough to see your hand through
2. Continue rolling out the remaining dough. If you do not have enough cannoli tubes for all of the dough, lay the pieces of dough on sheets of plastic wrap and keep them covered until you are ready to use them.
3. Roll, cut out and fry the cannoli shells as according to the directions above.

For stacked cannoli:

1. Heat 2-inches of oil in a saucepan or deep sauté pan, to 350-375°F (176 - 190 °C).
2. Cut out desired shapes with cutters or a sharp knife. Deep fry until golden brown and blistered on each side, about 1 – 2 minutes. Remove from oil with wire skimmer or large slotted spoon, then place on paper towels or bags until dry and grease free. If they balloon up in the hot oil, dock them lightly prior to frying. Place on cooling rack until ready to stack with filling.

DIRECTIONS FOR FILLING:

1. Line a strainer with cheesecloth. Place the ricotta in the strainer over a bowl, and cover with plastic wrap and a towel. Weight it down with a heavy can, and let the ricotta drain in the refrigerator for several hours to overnight.
2. In a bowl with electric mixer, beat ricotta until smooth and creamy. Beat in confectioner's sugar, cinnamon, vanilla and blend until smooth. Transfer to another bowl and stir in chocolate, zest and nuts. Chill until firm. (The filling can be made up to 24 hours prior to filling the shells. Just cover and keep refrigerated).

ASSEMBLE THE CANNOLI:

1. When ready to serve..fill a pastry bag fitted with a 1/2-inch plain or star tip, or a ziplock bag, with the ricotta cream. If using a ziplock bag, cut about 1/2 inch off one corner. Insert the tip in the cannoli shell and squeeze gently until the shell is half filled. Turn the shell and fill the other side. You can also use a teaspoon to do this, although it's messier and will take longer.
2. Press or dip cannoli in chopped pistachios, grated chocolate/mini chocolate chips, candied fruit or zest into the cream at each end. Dust with confectioner's sugar and/or drizzles of melted chocolate if desired.

PUMPKIN FILLING

1/2 cup (123 grams/4.34 ounces) ricotta cheese, drained
1/2 cup (113 grams/4.04 ounces) mascarpone cheese
1/2 cup (122.5 grams/4.32 ounces) canned pumpkin, drained like ricotta
3/4 cup (75 grams/2.65 ounces) confectioner's sugar, sifted
1/2 to 1 teaspoon (approx. 1.7 grams/approx. 0.06 ounces) pumpkin pie spice (taste)
1/2 teaspoon (approx. 2 grams/approx. 0.08 ounces) pure vanilla extract
6-8 cannoli shells

1. In a bowl with electric mixer, beat ricotta and mascarpone until smooth and creamy. Beat in confectioner's sugar, pumpkin, pumpkin pie spice, vanilla and blend until smooth. Transfer to another bowl, cover and chill until it firms up a bit. (The filling can be made up to 24 hours prior to filling the shells. Just cover and keep refrigerated).
2. Fill the shells as directed above. I dipped the ends of the shells in caramelized sugar and rolled them in toasted, chopped pecans.



Top row - left to right: Filling the cannoli, variety of cannoli Bottom row - left to right: Stacked cannoli, pumpkin cannoli

TIPS AND NOTES:

- Dough must be stiff and well kneaded
- Rolling the dough to paper thinness, using either a rolling pin or pasta machine, is very important. If the dough is not rolled thin enough, it will not blister, and good cannoli should have a blistered surface.
- Initially, this dough is VERY stubborn, but keep rolling, it eventually gives in. Before cutting the shapes, let the dough rest a bit, covered, as it tends to spring back into a smaller shapes once cut. Then again, you can also roll circles larger after they're cut, and/or into ovals, which gives you more space for filling.
- Your basic set of round cutters usually doesn't contain a 5-inch cutter. Try a plastic container top, bowl etc, or just roll each circle to 5 inches. There will always be something in your kitchen that's round and 5-inches if you want large cannoli.
- Oil should be at least 3 inches deep and hot – 360°F-375°F, or you'll end up with greasy shells. I prefer 350°F - 360°F because I felt the shells darkened too quickly at 375°F.
- If using the cannoli forms, when you drop the dough on the form into the oil, they tend to sink to the bottom, resulting in one side darkening more. Use a slotted spoon or skimmer to gently lift and roll them while frying.
- DO NOT crowd the pan. Cannoli should be fried 2-4 at a time, depending on the width of your saucepan or deep fryer. Turn them once, and lift them out gently with a slotted spoon/wire skimmer and tongs. Just use a wire strainer or slotted spoon for flat cannoli shapes.
- When the cannoli turns light brown - uniform in color, watch it closely or remove it. If it's already a deep brown when you remove it, you might end up with a really dark or slightly burnt shell.
- Depending on how much scrap you have left after cutting out all of your cannoli shapes, you can either fry them up and sprinkle with confectioner's sugar for a crispy treat, or let the scraps rest under plastic wrap and a towel, then re-roll and cut more cannoli shapes.
- Push forms out of cannoli very gently, being careful not to break the shells as they are very delicate. DO NOT let the cannoli cool on the form, or you may never get it off without it breaking. Try to take it

off while still hot. Hold it with a cloth in the center, and push the form out with a butter knife or the back of a spoon.

- When adding the confectioner's sugar to the filling..TASTE. You may like it sweeter than what the recipe calls for, or less sweet, so add in increments.
- Fill cannoli right before serving! If you fill them an hour or so prior, you'll end up with soggy cannoli shells.
- If you want to prepare the shells ahead of time, store them in an airtight container, then re-crisp in a 350°F (176 °C) oven for a few minutes, before filling.
- Practice makes perfect. My first batch of shells came out less than spectacular, and that's an understatement. As you go along, you'll see what will make them more aesthetically pleasing, and adjust accordingly when rolling. My next several batches turned out great. Don't give up!!

Links:

Alternative:

Gluten free cannoli recipe that looks great –

<http://evilcakelady.blogspot.com/2009/02/annmaries-gf-birthday-cannoli.h...>

Vegan cannoli –

<http://www.godairyfree.org/Alisa-s-Blog/Alisa-s-Milk-Free-Blog/Vegan-Can...>

<http://community.livejournal.com/vegancooking/2307428.html#cutid1>

Online resources:

http://www.pastrysampler.com/Questions_and_Answers/cannoli.htm

<http://www.seriousseats.com/talk/2009/01/hey-jerzeeeeeeee-i-want-to-make-c...>

Videos:

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=cannoli&search_type=&aq=f – scroll through, loads of videos on the making of the shells. filling, etc. Mario Batali's are particularly good.

Photos:

<http://www.flickr.com/search/?w=all&q=cannoli&m=text> – Loads of beautiful and unique cannoli photos along with the traditional. Great way to get some ideas for fillings and décor.

Online retailers for cannoli forms

<http://www.fantes.com/cannoli.html#small>

https://www.pastrychef.com/CANNOLI-TUBES_p_36-1202.html - If you want to buy a lot of them for one set price.

http://www.consiglios.ca/ProductCart/pc/viewCat_h.aspx?Category=408&gclid=...

http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_ss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=...

I'll be here every day to answer any questions. You can also email me at lismi171@yahoo.com. Happy cannoli making!