

Croissants

10g Fresh yeast
385g Milk (cold)
600g Strong white flour
5g Sea salt
250g Butter (slightly salted or unsalted)
1 Beaten egg for brushing

Dissolve the yeast in the cold milk. Make up a fairly stiff, stretchy dough with the flour, salt and yeast mixture. The texture of the dough must not be too soft or the butter will break through it during the folding and rolling process. Put the dough in a polythene bag and into the refrigerator for a minimum of 30 minutes.

Dusting the work top lightly with flour, roll the dough out into a rectangle twice as long as it is wide and about 8mm thick.

You now need to prepare a sheet of butter that will cover two-thirds of the dough. This can be done in two ways. First, put the block of butter into a strong polythene bag and press down on it with a rolling pin, gradually changing to a rolling action as the butter gets thinner, place the butter into the fridge to firm up, remove the butter from the bag by turning the bag inside out. Alternatively, cut slivers of butter about 2mm thick from the block and lay them over two thirds of the dough.

Once you have arranged the butter, fold the uncovered third of the dough over half the buttered part and remaining buttered part back over the resulting sandwich. This will form a 'billet', or parcel, with alternating layers of dough-butter. It is usual to keep a count of the number of fat layers; at this stage we have 2. Make sure that the edges are neatly aligned. Pinch the rims of the dough together to stop the butter slipping around when you roll the billet out.

Roll the dough out in the opposite direction to the first roll to produce another rectangle about twice as long as it is wide. This time, instead of filing the dough in 3, do a 'book turn'. Pick up the short edges of the dough and fold them inwards until they meet in the middle, then fold the 2 'pages' together as if you were closing a book. You have now got 8 fat layers. Put the dough back in its bag and into the fridge for at least half an hour but no longer than 2 hours.

Roll the dough out again (in the opposite direction to the previous roll) and do another book turn, you will now have 32 fat layers, which is the maximum desirable number for a croissant dough.

Return the dough to the fridge for another half an hour or so to keep the butter firm.

The dough is now ready for its final roll. Roll it out to a thickness of about 5mm. Cut into equilateral triangles with sides measuring 10 - 12.5cm, or to the size you require.

Rest the cut pieces for a few minutes to allow the gluten to become more extensible.

Once the croissants have been shaped, brush carefully with beaten egg & cover. Set to prove in a place that is not so warm that there is any danger of the butter melting.

After sufficient proof, bake in a fairly hot oven (200 oc) for about 15 minutes, until golden brown.