

AUGUST

Baking School In-Depth: Churros

The origin of churros is sweetly tangled and widely disputed. Some say Portuguese sailors stumbled upon *youtiao*, a lightly salted golden-brown deep-fried strip of dough in northern China. When they brought the culinary technique of making *youtiao* back home, they transformed the savory pastry into a slightly sweet one. Spaniards fell head over heels for their neighbor's new culinary treat and made it their own by passing the dough through a star-shaped tip, giving the churro its characteristic deep ridges.

Others say nomadic Spanish shepherds created churros while staying high in the mountains with their flocks. As they had no access to fresh pastries, the shepherds could easily make churros in pans over an open fire. Lending an air of authenticity to this delightful story is the fact there is an Iberian breed of sheep called *churra*, whose horns look like churros.



Baking School In-Depth: Churros

Though the exact origins of the churro are unclear, Spanish conquistadors get the glory for introducing them to nearly every port in the New World during the 16th century. And some time after Hernán Cortés returned to Spain with the discovery of Aztec chocolate, the custom of churros con chocolate began. Thick hot chocolate, prepared in the Spanish style, is still a favorite churro accompaniment.

Today, you can find these precious pastries fried by a street food vendor and dusted with cinnamon sugar in Mexico or served at the breakfast table in Spain with a divinely luscious hot chocolate—at home, they make for an indulgent weekend breakfast, the perfect afternoon snack, or a gratifying finale to any meal. Churros have gloriously crispy edges, yet they are incredibly soft and tender when biting into them. Our Mexican-inspired version are dredged in cinnamon sugar and plunged into a rich, dark chocolate sauce laced with red pepper and cinnamon. These churros require a rather stiff pâte à choux to help them hold their shape, leaving plenty of nooks and crannies for the cinnamon sugar to cling to. If creating a choux dough and deep-frying these long, slender golden churros seems intimidating, have no fear as we walk you through the straightforward process of making these divine delicacies.



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

Excellent recipes require wonderful ingredients. Here's how our recipes' ingredients contribute to making the very best churros.

WATER: The steam created by the pâte à choux's high water content causes the churros to beautifully puff up without the help of yeast or other chemical leavening agents.

UNSALTED BUTTER: When making the pâte à choux, the butter melts into the water and incorporates smoothly and evenly, assuring consistency in flavor and texture in every mouthwatering bite. Butter also adds a lavish flavor and creates a silky texture to our Cinnamon Chocolate Sauce.

GRANULATED SUGAR: Traditional, unadorned churros aren't intended to be sweet by themselves. Instead, the small amount of sugar in the dough creates a beautiful golden crust during frying. Then comes the sweet rolling of the fried churro in cinnamon sugar and a plunge into an indulgent chocolate sauce that's sweetened with sugar.

KOSHER SALT: We love using kosher salt because, unlike most commercial salt, it doesn't contain iodine, making it taste purer and more palatable. Also, the salt crystals are larger. Table salt is much finer, so you would use half of what a recipe with kosher salt calls for.

VANILLA EXTRACT: Vanilla extract is a magical ingredient that adds instant depth of flavor and complexity to the churros.



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ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR: The proteins in the eggs and flour set the structure of your choux. All-purpose flour has a high-enough protein content (10% to 12%) to help your choux dough rise and hold its shape after frying. Using low-protein flour, like cake or pastry flour, will cause the churros to deflate while cooling.

EGGS: Eggs infiltrate your dough with protein, moisture, and flavorful fat. Eggs loosen the thick, cooked choux thanks to the high water content in the whites and enrich it with fat from the yolks. And because eggs solidify when cooked, they will also help ensure the fried churros set properly and hold their final shape.

GROUND CINNAMON: Cinnamon is the ideal spice to blend with sugar used for tossing the hot churros in after being fried, and it bolsters the flavor of the chocolate sauce beautifully.

HEAVY WHIPPING CREAM: Cream gives the Cinnamon Chocolate Sauce a rich flavor and luscious texture.

UNSWEETENED COCOA POWDER: Also called natural cocoa powder, unsweetened cocoa powder is made from ground roasted cocoa beans. It has a strong flavor, and acidity gives the cocoa a sharp, almost citrusy flavor, which is perfect in our Cinnamon Chocolate Sauce.

LIGHT CORN SYRUP: Corn syrup adds viscosity, slight sweetness, and glossy shine to the chocolate sauce.

GROUND RED PEPPER: Red pepper lends a bold, complex flavor to the chocolate sauce and is characteristic of Mexican hot chocolate, which contains warming spices.

UNSWEETENED CHOCOLATE: Unsweetened chocolate in the chocolate sauce adds such a deep flavor since you only need a small amount to achieve a robust cocoa taste.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

We recommend this set of tools for our technique



SHEARS: Heavy-duty shears are both versatile and efficient, and they guarantee a clean cut when snipping the choux dough into the hot oil for deep-frying. (Pictured is the [Zwilling Shears & Scissors](#).)

DEEP FRYER: This high-performance deep fryer makes frying a breeze! It keeps the oil temperature consistent, even when frying multiple churros at one time. Plus, the automatic oil filtration system cleans and stores oil after each use, making cleanup effortless. (Pictured is the [All-Clad Deep Fryer](#).)

SAUCEPAN: You want a stainless steel saucepan that will heat efficiently and evenly with precise temperature control and no hot spots when cooking the *pâte à choux* and our Cinnamon Chocolate Sauce. (Pictured is the [Williams Sonoma Signature Thermo-Clad™ Stainless-Steel Saucepan](#).)

PIPING TIP: When piping the choux dough into the hot oil, using a closed star piping tip will make it simple to get those beautiful, deep, desirable churro ridges. (Pictured is the Ateco #844 Pastry Tip.)

TOOLS OF THE TRADE



STAND MIXER: As a precious energy- and time-saver, a stand mixer will help cool down and beat the *pâte à choux* quickly into glossy, smooth submission. (Pictured is the [KitchenAid® Artisan Stand Mixer](#).)

RIMMED BAKING SHEET: The uses for a rimmed baking sheet in the kitchen are endless, and for this recipe, it's the perfect tool for draining and transporting the fried churros to their cinnamon-sugar delight. (Pictured is the [Williams Sonoma Goldtouch® Pro Nonstick Non Corrugated Quarter Sheet](#).)

TONGS: Used for gently turning the churros while frying and retrieving them from the hot oil, tongs are an essential tool when making churros. They are also the perfect instrument to straighten the *choux* if you notice the churros start to curve or bend once they hit the hot oil. (Pictured is the [OXO 12" Tongs](#).)

SPATULA, WHISK, WOODEN SPOON, AND GLASS BOWLS: For all your mixing needs, you really can't beat the basics. A spatula is perfect for scraping the *choux* out of the mixing bowl, a whisk helps achieve a perfectly smooth chocolate sauce, the wooden spoon is essential for stirring the *choux* while it's cooking on the stovetop, and glass bowls are the perfect vessels for measuring, prepping, and mixing all your ingredients. (Pictured are the [Williams Sonoma Silicone FSC® Wood Spoonula with Classic Wood Handle](#), [Williams Sonoma Olivewood Spoon](#), [Williams Sonoma Olivewood Whisk](#), and [Glass Mixing Bowl 10-Piece Set](#).)

TOOLS OF THE TRADE



OPTIONAL: If you don't have a countertop deep-fryer, don't fret! A Dutch oven and a thermometer make a lovely tool swap.

ENAMEL-COATED CAST-IRON DUTCH OVEN: Dutch ovens are ideal for deep-frying because of the unmatched heat distribution and retention of cast iron. They keep the oil temperature even and consistent, even when frying multiple churros at once. Plus, the enameled coating makes them incredibly easy to clean. (Pictured is the [Staub Enameled Cast Iron Round Dutch Oven, 5½-Qt.](#))

THERMOMETER: A candy or deep-fry thermometer will be essential in monitoring the temperature of your oil. Slight fluctuations in temperature are to be expected, but oil that's too hot will cook the exterior of your churros faster than the interior, resulting in a potentially burnt exterior or raw interior. Too low and your churros won't form an outer crust fast enough to prevent oil from soaking into your dough. (Pictured is the [OXO Thermocouple Thermometer.](#))

CINNAMON-SUGAR CHURROS



CINNAMON-SUGAR CHURROS

Makes about 24 churros

Churros have wonderfully crisp ridges on the outside yet are delicate and buttery on the inside. These Mexican-inspired churros are tossed in cinnamon sugar and dunked into a luscious, dark chocolate sauce subtly spiced with red pepper and cinnamon, which are characteristic spices found in Mexican hot chocolate. These light, crunchy pastries rise beautifully not from yeast or a chemical leavening agent but because they're made with pâte à choux!

- 1 cup (240 grams) water
- 6 tablespoons (84 grams) unsalted butter, cubed and softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (150 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (12 grams) granulated sugar, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons (141 grams) all-purpose flour
- 3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature
- 1 large egg white (30 grams), room temperature
- Vegetable oil, for frying
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons (3 grams) ground cinnamon
- Cinnamon Chocolate Sauce (recipe follows)

1. In a medium saucepan, combine 1 cup (240 grams) water, butter, 1 tablespoon (12 grams) sugar, salt, and vanilla; bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Remove from heat; add flour, stirring with a wooden spoon until combined. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until smooth and a skin forms on bottom of pan, 1 to 2 minutes.
2. Transfer mixture to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle

attachment, and beat at low speed until cooled slightly, about 1 minute. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. (Batter will appear broken but will come back together as eggs are incorporated.) Add egg white; beat until a smooth, glossy dough forms. (Dough should pass the “V” test [see Notes] and will hold a slight peak when pinched between fingers.) Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes to 1 hour.

3. In a large Dutch oven or a countertop fryer, pour oil to a depth of 2 inches, and heat over medium heat until a deep-fry thermometer registers 360°F (182°C) to 365°F (185°C). (See Notes.)
4. Line a rimmed baking sheet with paper towels.
5. In a large shallow bowl, stir together cinnamon and remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (150 grams) sugar.
6. Place dough in a large pastry bag fitted with a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch closed star piping tip (Ateco #844). Applying even pressure, carefully pipe dough in batches (2 or 3 at a time) in a straight line about 6 inches in length into hot oil. Using kitchen shears, cut dough at the end closest to the piping tip when it gets to desired length. (If dough is not staying straight, use tongs to help straighten dough immediately after piping, if desired.) Fry until puffed and golden brown, $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 minutes per side. Remove from oil, and let drain on prepared pan. Toss hot churros in cinnamon sugar. Place on serving platter. Serve with Cinnamon Chocolate Sauce.

Notes: *When the pâte à choux base for these churros has reached the right consistency, it will fall off the paddle attachment and the excess dough left on the paddle will be in a “V” shape.*

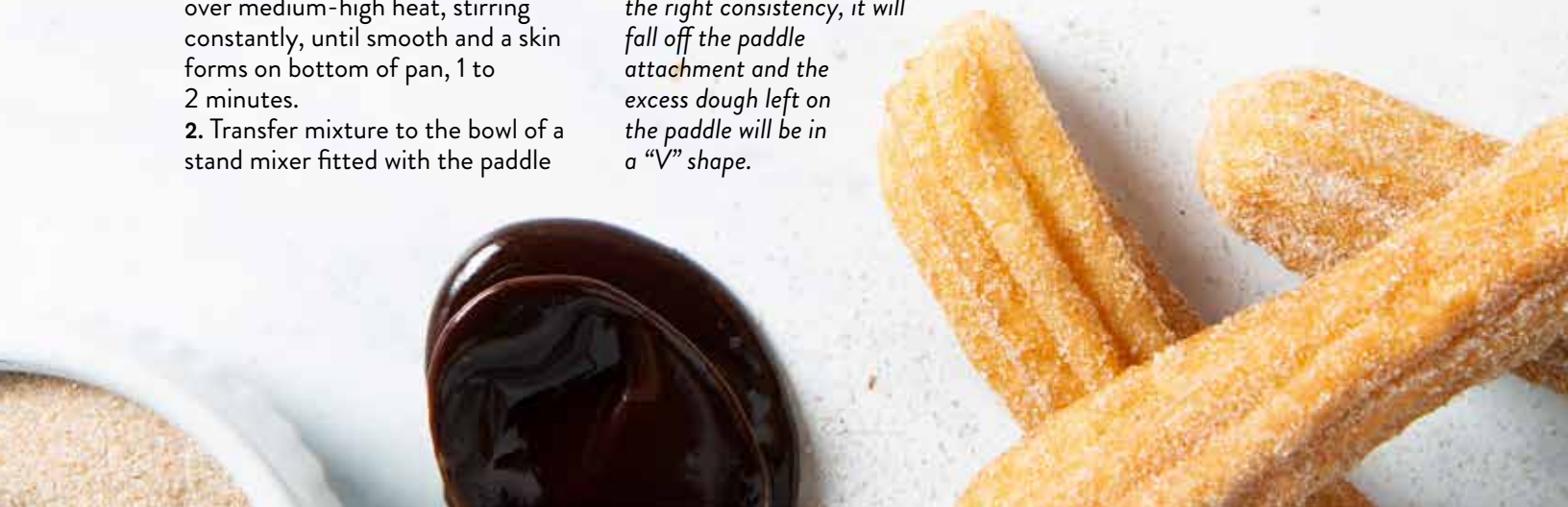
Cold dough can cause oil to fluctuate in temperature. We recommend keeping an eye on the temperature or the ready light of a countertop fryer to confirm oil is at the correct temperature before piping another batch.

CINNAMON CHOCOLATE SAUCE

Makes about 1 cup

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (80 grams) heavy whipping cream, plus more if desired
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (25 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted
- 3 tablespoons (63 grams) light corn syrup
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground red pepper (optional)
- 0.5 ounce (14 grams) unsweetened chocolate, chopped

1. In a medium saucepan, heat cream and butter over medium-low heat until butter is melted. Add sugar; cook, whisking frequently, until sugar mostly dissolves, 6 to 8 minutes. Add cocoa, corn syrup, cinnamon, salt, and red pepper (if using); cook, whisking constantly, until smooth and well combined, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in chocolate until melted. Remove from heat. Add more cream if a thinner consistency is desired. Serve warm. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week. (To reheat, microwave on high in 10-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted and smooth.)



COOKING THE CHOUX

Follow along as we take you through the steps of creating excellent pâte à choux, from stovetop to stand mixer



1. In a medium saucepan, combine 1 cup (240 grams) water, butter, 1 tablespoon (12 grams) sugar, salt, and vanilla; bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Remove from heat; add flour, stirring with a wooden spoon until combined. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until smooth and a skin forms on bottom of pan, 1 to 2 minutes. It is imperative for the water to come to a full, rolling boil before adding the flour to the mixture. Cutting the butter into small cubes guarantees it fully melts by the time the water comes to a boil. If you drop a massive block of butter into the saucepan, you will have to let the water boil longer as you wait for the butter to melt, leading to superfluous evaporation.

TIME FOR A COOL DOWN

Briefly beating the choux dough with the stand mixer will cause its temperature to drop rapidly, making it the ideal temperature to add the eggs



1. Transfer mixture to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, and beat at low speed until cooled slightly, about 1 minute. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition and stopping to scrape sides of bowl. (Batter will appear broken but will come back together as eggs are incorporated.) Add egg white; beat until a smooth, glossy dough forms. (Dough should pass the “V” test [see Notes] and will hold a slight peak when pinched between fingers.) Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes to 1 hour. In this step, the eggs are mixed in one at a time to give the choux its ideal texture, and the fat from the butter and egg yolks and the proteins from the whites help crisp the churro for a firm, golden exterior. Make sure to take time to chill the dough! It stiffens as it cools, allowing it to fry better. Note that this pâte à choux will be quite thick, as it has less liquid and more flour than baked choux recipes. If you use a choux meant to be baked, the inside will be too moist and eggy even after fully frying, and it will not have the correct texture and crispy outside. Make sure to take time to chill the dough! Chilling the dough helps it keep its shape and gives you more control of the batter when piping.

PREPPING TO DEEP-FRY

Take a moment to preheat the oil, prepare a place for the churros to drain, and get the cinnamon sugar ready



1. In a large Dutch oven or a countertop fryer, pour oil to a depth of 2 inches, and heat over medium heat until a deep-fry thermometer registers 360°F (182°C) to 365°F (185°C).
2. Line a rimmed baking sheet with paper towels.
3. In a large shallow bowl, stir together cinnamon and remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (150 grams) sugar.

TIP-TOP PIPING

How to proficiently pipe and fry your churros



1. Place dough in a large pastry bag fitted with a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch closed star piping tip (Ateco #844). Applying even pressure, carefully pipe dough in batches (2 or 3 at a time) in a straight line about 6 inches in length into hot oil. Using kitchen shears, cut dough at the end closest to the piping tip when it gets to desired length. (If dough is not staying straight, use tongs to help straighten dough immediately after piping, if desired.) Fry until puffed and golden brown, $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 minutes per side. Remove from oil, and let drain on prepared pan. Toss hot churros in cinnamon sugar. Place on serving platter. Serve with Cinnamon Chocolate Sauce. The thick, dense dough will be transformed into light and fluffy churros while frying. When the dough hits the hot oil, water within the choux begins to evaporate and turns into a gas. This gas will try to escape, but it can't because a pliable but impassible outer shell surrounds it. Instead, the gas pushes into the dough and causes it to puff up. This keeps the interior soft and pillowy, while the exterior becomes gloriously golden brown.

MAKING THE CINNAMON CHOCOLATE SAUCE

This decadent, complex chocolate sauce is laced with a subtle undertow of spice thanks to the addition of red pepper and cinnamon



1. In a medium saucepan, heat cream and butter over medium-low heat until butter is melted. Add sugar; cook, whisking frequently, until sugar mostly dissolves, 6 to 8 minutes. Add cocoa, corn syrup, cinnamon, salt, and red pepper (if using); cook, whisking constantly, until smooth and well combined, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in chocolate until melted. Remove from heat. Add more cream, if desired, for thinner consistency. Serve warm. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week. (To reheat, microwave on high in 10-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted and smooth.)