Cannoli Filling

Make-ahead · Makes enough for about 16 large cannoli (8 per filling)

Ken's note: TBD

Two fillings: classic ricotta, and a fully homemade pistachio-chocolate chip (no jarred pistachio cream). Make both for a mixed platter of 16, or double either one. Store-bought shells are fine. Drain the ricotta overnight, and fill the shells right before serving.

Ingredients

Classic ricotta

- 1 lb whole-milk ricotta, drained overnight
- ¼ cup powdered sugar, sifted
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- Zest of ½ orange (or 1 lemon)
- A pinch of kosher salt
- ⅓ cup chocolate chips, finely chopped

Pistachio-chocolate chip

- ¾ cup shelled unsalted pistachios, plus ¼ cup finely chopped, for the ends
- 1–2 Tbsp honey or powdered sugar
- A pinch of kosher salt
- A drop of almond extract (optional)
- 1 lb whole-milk ricotta, drained overnight
- 2 Tbsp powdered sugar, sifted
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- ⅓ cup chocolate chips, finely chopped

Method

1. Beat the drained ricotta until smooth. Beat in the powdered sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, zest, and salt. Taste — add a spoonful of sugar only if it needs it. Shake the chopped chocolate in a sieve to drop the dust, then fold the chips in. Cover and refrigerate up to 2 days.
2. In a food processor, blitz the ¾ cup pistachios with the honey or powdered sugar and a pinch of salt until they form a paste, adding a teaspoon of oil if the mixture stays dry. The almond extract, if you use it, goes in now.
3. Beat the drained ricotta until smooth. Beat in the pistachio paste, 2 Tbsp powdered sugar, and vanilla. Taste and add a spoonful of sugar only if it needs it. Fold in the chopped chocolate (shake off the dust first). Cover and refrigerate up to 2 days.
4. **To fill:** optionally brush a thin layer of melted chocolate (about ½ cup chips, melted) inside the shells and dip the ends, up to 2 hours ahead; let it set. The lining helps the shells stay crisp. Pipe the filling in from both ends so each shell is full, dip the ends in chopped pistachios or chopped chocolate, and dust with powdered sugar. Serve right away — filled shells start to soften within an hour.
5. For a creamier classic filling, swap 4 oz of the ricotta for mascarpone.

Notes

To drain the ricotta. line a fine-mesh sieve with cheesecloth or a double layer of paper towels, set it over a bowl, add the ricotta, cover, and refrigerate overnight. Discard the liquid. This is what keeps the filling thick enough to pipe. Each filling uses 1 lb whole-milk ricotta (2 lb if you make both).