

ITALIAN BUTTERCREAM

MAKES ENOUGH TO FROST A 9-INCH LAYER CAKE

For an Italian buttercream, beaten egg whites are “cooked” with a hot sugar syrup before butter is added to make the frosting. The sugar syrup is heated to what is called the soft ball stage (you’ll be familiar with this term if you’ve ever made candy). Although the actual temp for soft ball stage is 240°F, sugar syrup—much like a baked cookie—“carryover cooks.” So stopping 2° earlier gives the syrup some wiggle room to continue cooking. **SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:** candy thermometer

3/4 cup + 7 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon sugar

1/4 cup water

1/2 cup egg whites (see Note)

Drop of vanilla extract (or more to taste)

10 ounces + 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed, at room temperature

In a small, deep saucepan, combine $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons of the sugar and the water and bring to a boil. Continue to cook the syrup over medium heat until the temperature reaches 238°F.

Meanwhile, in a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the egg whites on low speed while gradually adding the remaining 5 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon sugar. Beat in the vanilla.

Once the sugar syrup has reached 238°F, slowly pour the syrup along the side of the egg white bowl while the mixer is going at low speed. Make sure you don’t get the syrup on the moving whisk, as it is very hot and you can get burned. Continue to whip the whites to full volume or stiff peaks.

While still whipping, slowly add the butter, whipping until all the butter has been added. The whites will deflate and fall, but

when you continue to whip it will come back together and fluff back up.

NOTE: Crack egg whites into a liquid measuring cup until you get to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. You'll need about 3 eggs.