

# ST. HONORÉ CAKE

SERVES 12 TO 14

I remember the first time I laid eyes on a *gâteau St-Honoré*. It was at my first pastry job at a small French pastry shop. I was sixteen and eager to learn everything I could about the classic French desserts they produced. The holidays were always the busiest for us, filled with longer hours, shirts stained with red and green buttercream, and the phone constantly ringing with orders. Everyone hustled to fill not only the pastry case, but also special cake orders, including the St. Honoré Cake. This French classic is cream puffs filled with vanilla pastry cream, dipped in caramel, and attached to a disk of puff pastry, and then the whole thing is filled with even more delicious cream—this cake blew my mind when I ate it. The technique that goes into this cake may seem complex, but I assure you it's well worth it for this genuine showstopper. **SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:** 2 pastry bags, #8 plain tip, #2 plain tip; additional pastry bag and #4 plain tip (optional, for piping whipped cream)

**Pâte à Choux dough, unbaked**

**1/2 pound Shortcut Puff Pastry; see Note below**

**Granulated sugar, for rolling out the pastry**

**Vanilla Pastry Cream, cooled**

## CARAMEL

**1 cup granulated sugar**

**3 1/2 tablespoons water**

## WHIPPED CREAM

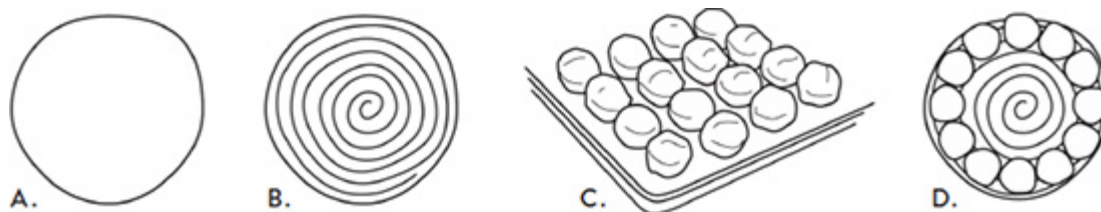
**1 cup heavy cream, chilled**

**1/2 cup confectioners' sugar**

## 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Reserving about 1½ cups of the pâte à choux, fit a pastry bag with a #8 plain tip and fill the bag with the remaining dough. Pipe out 20 small puffs (you only need 16, but pipe extras in case some of them break when you fill them). Follow the basic recipe and bake according to the directions. Meanwhile, fill the same pastry bag with the reserved dough, close the bag at the top, roll it down, and set aside. (Keeping the pastry in the bag prevents it from forming a skin.)

If you don't already have the oven on from making the puffs, preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a nonstick silicone liner.



Sprinkle a work surface with granulated sugar. Roll out the puff pastry to about 1/8 inch thick. Cut out a 9-inch round of pastry (**A**) and place it on the baking sheet. Prick the pastry with a fork to prevent it from rising. Place a sheet of parchment paper over the pastry and invert another baking sheet on top to weight down the pastry. Bake for 15 minutes; the pastry will be only partially baked. Take it out of the oven and remove the top pan and parchment paper.

Using the reserved pâte à choux, pipe a spiral over the whole round of puff pastry (**B**). Return it to the oven and bake until golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes.

Fit another pastry bag with a #2 plain tip and fill the bag with the pastry cream. Fill 16 of the puffs (**C**) with pastry cream. You won't use all the pastry cream for this step; more will get used later.

**MAKE THE CARAMEL:** Line a baking sheet with a nonstick silicone liner. In a small, heavy-bottomed saucepan, stir together the sugar and water and heat over medium heat until the mixture starts to turn a light amber color. Remove from the heat and swirl around (don't stir) until it has an even color. Put it back over the heat until it turns medium amber. Take the pan off the heat and carefully dip the top of each cream puff in the caramel. Place the cream puffs caramel-side down on the baking sheet to cool. This will make a caramel "foot" on the puff (see [photo](#)) for a prettier presentation. Once the caramel on the cream puffs has set, spoon a small amount of caramel on the plain side of each puff to use as the glue, and fasten the puffs onto the outer edge of the circle of puff and choux (**D**), using as many as will fit (there may be 1 or 2 extra). (**NOTE:** If the caramel starts to get too hard and sets while you're working with it, place it back over heat briefly just to remelt it.) The cake will now resemble a crown.

Fill the center with the remaining pastry cream.

**MAKE THE WHIPPED CREAM:** In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, start whipping the cream on low speed. When the cream just begins to gain volume, slowly add the sugar and scrape in the vanilla seeds. (Save the vanilla bean halves for another use; see [here](#).) Continue to whip on medium speed until stiff peaks form. Spread the whipped cream over the top of the cake. (Or fit a pastry bag with a #4 plain tip, fill the bag with the whipped cream, and pipe it over the top.) Let the cake set in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour before serving.

**NOTE:** Make the full recipe of the puff pastry, measure out what you need for this recipe (about one-fourth of the total), and freeze the remaining pastry for another use. (Shhhhh! Don't tell anyone I said so, but it's okay to use store-bought frozen all-butter puff pastry, if you want. You'll need a single sheet of puff pastry.)

*chef it up!*

I know you must be thinking to yourselves, “Really? There’s something fancier than the recipe I just read?” And the answer is yes. When I really want to go all out with a St. Honoré Cake, I top it with a caramel cage. But that’s graduate-level pastry stuff. You’ll have to wait for my next book to learn how to do that.