

Conchas Arcoiris

Rainbow Conchas - Fermented Dough Category

Revised: July 3, 2022

By Chef Alex Peña

Makes 16 large conchas

I probably don't have to tell you that these are perfect for Pride celebrations. This will make the topping for 8 to 10 striped cookies, with the remainder in a marble pattern that is equally cool in its own way. If you want all of them to be striped, double the topping and accept that you will have leftover topping. For the brightest, most vibrant colors for your rainbow conchas, use "electric" or "neon" food coloring gel instead of the standard variety.



Ingredients	Metric	US
Biscocho Dough (below)		
Shortening, melted and cooled, for coating and more for the pans (optional)	12 g	2 Tbsp
Sugar Topping		
Vegetable shortening	190 g	1 cup
Sugar	180 g	$\frac{7}{8}$ cup
Unbleached all-purpose flour	300 g	2 cups + 2 Tbsp
Vanilla extract	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp
Fine salt	Pinch	Pinch
Neon (electric) food coloring gel in red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple		

Special equipment: Bench knife, 3½ in/9 cm round cookie cutter, small offset metal spatula, concha stamp

1. MAKE THE BIZCOCHO DOUGH: Make the dough and let it bulk ferment.

2. SHAPE Line three half-sheet pans with parchment paper or grease with shortening. (I'm old-fashioned and prefer greasing. The bottom of the conchas seem softer from contact of the dough with the shortening.) Turn out the dough onto an unfloored work surface. Working around the perimeter of the dough, starting at the 12 o' clock position, pull and stretch the dough without breaking about 4 in/10 cm away from the mass and press it into the center. Repeat at the 3, 6, and 9 o' clock positions. Repeat the stretching a second time and gluten will develop and firm

the dough. Flip the dough over smooths side up. Using a bench scraper or large knife, divide the dough into 16 equal portions (about 65 g), preferably using a scale

3. REST Melt the shortening in a small saucepan over low heat. Cool until tepid but still liquid. Meanwhile, shape the dough into taut balls. Place the balls on the prepared pans, spacing them well apart, 5 or 6 per pan. Brush the balls with the shortening. Don't miss any spots as it acts as an adhesive for the sugar tops, but don't let the shortening drip and pool on the pans. Let stand, uncovered, in an ambient temperature about 70°F/°C) to rest the dough, for 30 to 45 minutes. The mounds should not rise much.

4. MAKE THE TOPPING To make the topping: In the bowl of a standing heavy-duty mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, mix the shortening and sugar on medium speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Reduce the speed to low. Add the flour, vanilla, and salt, increase the speed to medium, and beat until the topping clumps together, about 2 minutes. The topping dough should be soft, malleable, and moist. Adjust the consistency by mixing in water a teaspoon at a time.

5. COLOR THE TOPPING Divide the topping into six equal portions (about 115 g each). Separately color each portion, in this order: Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple with gel, wiping the bowl and beater clean between each batch with a moist paper towel. The topping dough should be soft, malleable, and moist. Adjust the consistency of each color by mixing in water a teaspoon at a time. Keep the colors separate. Divide each color in half—you have twelve portions of dough.

6. SHAPE THE TOPPING Place a 17-by-13-in/33-by-23-cm piece of parchment paper on the work surface, long side facing you. Place one portion of the red topping in front of you. Work it with your hands to make it more malleable, and squeeze into a rough log. Roll the log under your hands to make a rope about 11 in/27.5 cm long and ½ inch/12 mm wide. Move to the top of the parchment. Using a single portion for each, repeat shaping, in this order, the orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Roll each rope to touch the preceding color at the top of the parchment and press them to adhere. When you are done, you will have a strip about 2½ in/6 cm wide. Flip the strip over on the parchment to move it to the center of the paper. Fold the parchment over the paper. Using light pressure, roll out the strip so it is 17 in/33 cm long and peeking out of the ends of the parchment. Repeat with remaining portions to make two strips. Slide the two strips onto a half-sheet pan and refrigerate for about 10 minutes to slightly firm the dough.

5. ADD THE TOPPING One at a time, transfer a strip of topping to the work surface and uncover so the topping is exposed but still on the parchment. Using a 3½ in/9 cm round cookie cutter, cut out a round of topping. (It will be a little thicker than hand-patted concha topping.) Using a small offset metal spatula, lift the round, place over a dough mound and pat to adhere. Repeat with the remaining topping. When all of the rounds have been cut, gather up the scraps and press the together to get a marbled effect. Cut this topping into the number of pieces to match the uncovered rounds. Using floured hands, pat them into thin rounds about 3½ in/9 cm wide, and place and pat over the remaining mounds. Dust the tops of the conchas with flour. Using a concha stamp, using a decisive, quick motion, punch the design into the toppings, being sure not to cut into the dough. Or make the shell design with a small knife or the curved side of a fork.

6. **PROOF** Let stand, uncovered, in a warm place (about 75°F/24°C) until the pastries look puffed if not doubled in size, about 1 hour (or 1 ½ hours for chilled dough). The topping will begin to separate between the cuts. This separation is a sign that the conchas are ready to bake.

7. **BAKE** Position racks in the top third and center of the oven and preheat to 350°F/180°C. If you have a convection feature, use it—no need to adjust the temperature. Bake two of the pans, switching the position of the pans from top to bottom and front to back halfway through baking, until the conchas are golden brown around the edges with crackled toppings, 20 to 25 minutes. Reserve the third pan in a cooler part of the house while baking the first batch.

8. **COOL** Let cool completely on the pans. (The sugar topping is very hot and fragile out of the oven.). To store, transfer the cooled conchas to an airtight container and store at room temperature for up to 1 day or freeze for up to 3 months. Day-old conchas are excellent when halved, toasted, face-up in a toaster oven and spread with butter (which is how my grandmother would serve them to my brothers and me).



By Chef Alex Peña

Masa de Bizcocho

Bizcocho Dough - Fermented Dough Category

Revised: July 3, 2022

Makes about 2¼ lbs/1 k

Bizcocho is a direct descendant of French brioche, but quite leaner. Brioche is more heavily enriched with butter and eggs, but the original dough was not easy to work with in the Mexican heat. This dough is used in many of the most popular pan dulce, including the iconic concha.

Let me give you some tips about making bizcocho. It is a very soft dough, and its behavior will probably surprise you. Have faith. During its bulk fermentation, the stretching will help it firm up and be easier to handle at the end. Because it is so soft, it is easier to make in a standing mixer, but it can be made by hand if you know it will firm up as you work it. Just try not to add any more flour, or the dough could end up tough.



Timing guide

Mix: 1 minute

Knead: 7 minutes

Bulk Fermentation: About 1 ½ hours (or refrigerate for 10 to 20 hours)

Ingredients

	US Volume	Metric
Water (about 75°F/24°C)	¾ cup	180 ml
Large eggs, without shells at room temperature	2	100 g
Sugar	⅔ cup	130 g
Instant yeast	2 Tbsp	18 g
Vanilla extract	2 tsp	2 tsp
Fine salt	1½ tsp	1½ tsp
Coarsely ground cinnamon	1 tsp	1 tsp
Unbleached all-purpose flour, as needed	3½ cups	500 g
Unsalted butter, softened temperature, cut into Tbsps	8 Tbsp	115 g

Softened butter, for the bowl

Special equipment: Bowl scraper, bench knife

1. **MIX** Add the water, eggs, sugar, yeast, cinnamon, vanilla, and salt to the bowl of a standing heavy-duty mixer. Attach to the mixer and fit with the paddle attachment. On low speed, mix to combine. Gradually mix in the flour to make a very soft dough. Once the dough forms, increase the speed to medium and mix with the paddle or 2 minutes longer. At first it will seem like a batter, but it will begin to tighten.

(To make by hand, whisk the water, eggs, sugar, yeast, cinnamon, vanilla, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Using a wooden spoon, stir in the flour until you can't add any more. Reserve the remaining flour.)

2. **MIX IN BUTTER AND KNEAD** With the machine on medium speed, add the butter, one Tbsp at a time, allowing the dough to absorb the first addition before adding the next. Change to the dough hook. Knead on medium speed until the dough is smooth, mostly cleans the sides but not the bottom of the bowl, wraps around the dough hook, and passes the "windowpane test" (page XXX), about 5 minutes. The dough does not form a ball; it will be very soft and the mixer may "walk," so stay nearby.

(To make by hand, keep the dough in the bowl. Using a bowl scraper, turn the dough over on itself, rotating the bowl often, until the dough is a bit firmer, about 3 minutes. Repeat until all the butter has been added and absorbed. Sprinkle the reserved flour on the work surface. Scrape the dough onto the flour. Using a bench knife, continue the folding (kneading) in the bowl until it passes the windowpane test, about 10 minutes.)

3. **BULK FERMENT AND FOLD** Butter a large bowl or 2-quart/2-qt covered container. Using the bowl scraper, scrape the dough out of the mixer bowl into the large bowl. Cover tightly with plastic wrap. (This is a buttery dough and you do not have to turn the dough to coat.) Place the bowl in a warm place (80°F/27°C to 90°F/32°C). At three 10-minute intervals, stretch the dough to develop gluten: Flour a hand and grab the dough at the "12 o'clock" point of the mass. Stretch the dough at this point without breaking it, lifting about 4 in/10 cm above the mass. Fold this section onto the center of the mass. Repeat at 3, 6, and 9 o'clock points of the dough. Cover again and return to its warm place. After the three stretching phases are done, cover the dough and return to the warm place until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour more. (If you wish, refrigerate the dough for at least 10 but no longer than 20 hours..)