TANGZHONG CINNAMON ROLLS

TANGZHONG

One method, two doughs: classic and pumpkin • 8 large or 12 smaller rolls

Adapted from **Kiley Heard's** classic and pumpkin cinnamon rolls · Well Made by Kiley
https://www.wellmadebykiley.com/blog/perfect-classic-cinnamon-rolls

Shared method for both variants: tangzhong, shaping, baking & frosting

OVEN	PAN	YIELD	TOTAL
350°F, then 375°F	**9×13", buttered**	**8 large or 12 smaller**	**~3 hrs + tangzhong cooling**

> ***Make the tangzhong first:*** Each variant starts with a tangzhong that has to cool to room temperature before it goes into the dough. Make it an hour ahead, or the day before and refrigerate it (let it warm up before using).

Ingredients

BEFORE BAKING (BOTH VARIANTS)

- **½ cup (120ml)** heavy cream, for pouring over the rolls

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING (BOTH VARIANTS)

- **8 oz (250g; 1 block)** cream cheese, softened
- **¼ cup (58g)** salted butter, softened
- **1¾ cups (210g)** powdered sugar
- **1 tsp (4g)** vanilla bean paste or extract

Instructions

UNIVERSAL SHAPE, BAKE & FROST PROTOCOL

1. **Make the dough:** Follow the Classic or Pumpkin tab through the first rise and the filling.
2. **Roll out:** Butter a 9×13" pan. On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough to **16×15"** for 8 large rolls or **24×15"** for 12 smaller rolls.
3. **Fill:** Spread the filling evenly over the dough, leaving a very thin border.
4. **Shape:** Cut along the long side into 2"-wide strips. Roll each strip up from the short end into a tight coil and tuck the tail underneath. (Or roll the whole sheet into a log and slice 2" rolls with a sharp knife or unflavored floss.)
5. **Proof:** Arrange in the pan, cover, and proof 25–30 minutes until puffy while the oven heats to 350°F.
6. **Cream:** Warm the cream about 15 seconds in the microwave and pour it all over the rolls.
7. **Bake:** Bake at 350°F (22–24 minutes for 8 large rolls, 20–22 minutes for 12 smaller), then raise the oven to 375°F and bake 5–7 minutes more, until golden and cooked through.
8. **Frost:** While they bake, beat the cream cheese and butter until fluffy, then beat in the powdered sugar and vanilla. Rest the rolls 10–15 minutes, spread on the frosting while they're still warm, and serve.

WHAT'S A TANGZHONG?

A small portion of the recipe's flour cooked with liquid into a thick paste before it goes into the dough. Cooking lets the flour's starch absorb far more liquid than it could cold, and it holds onto that moisture through baking, so the rolls come out softer and fluffier and stay soft longer. The tangzhong's flour and liquid come out of the dough's totals, so the dough feels tackier than usual. Resist adding much extra flour.

DON'T OVER-RISE

The first rise is only 30–45 minutes, and the dough won't double. That's on purpose: a longer rise makes the rolls too airy.

OVERNIGHT

Assemble the rolls in the pan, cover tightly, and refrigerate overnight instead of the second proof. In the morning, let them come to room temperature and proof 45–60 minutes, then add the cream and bake.

STORAGE

Covered at room temperature for 1 day (keep frosting in the fridge separately), frosted in the fridge for 3 days, or unfrosted and frozen for up to 2 months. Reheat at 325°F for 10–15 minutes and frost fresh.

CLASSIC

TANGZHONG

Classic cinnamon rolls with a milk tangzhong

*Adapted from **Kiley Heard's** Perfect Classic Cinnamon Rolls, with the tangzhong from **Bon Appétit's** Cinnamon Rolls with Cream Cheese Frosting*

> ***Still testing:*** The tangzhong uses the milk Kiley blooms the yeast in, so, as in Bon Appétit's recipe, instant yeast is whisked straight into the cooled tangzhong. Expect to adjust the flour by a tablespoon or two.

Ingredients

MILK TANGZHONG

- **¾ cup (180ml)** whole milk
- **¼ cup (31g)** all-purpose flour

DOUGH

- **½ cup (110g)** granulated sugar
- **2½ tsp (9g)** instant yeast
- **½ cup (120g)** Greek yogurt (any %) or sour cream, room temp
- **½ cup (113g)** salted butter, very softened (almost melted)
- **2 eggs**, room temp
- **1 tsp (4g)** vanilla bean paste or extract
- **509g** bread flour (4½ cups minus the tangzhong's ¼ cup)
- **1 tsp (6g)** salt

CINNAMON FILLING

- **½ cup (113g)** salted butter, softened (not melted)
- **1 cup (240g)** light brown sugar
- **2 tbsp (12g)** cinnamon
- **1 tsp (4g)** vanilla bean paste or extract

Instructions

TANGZHONG

1. In a medium saucepan, whisk the milk and flour until smooth. Cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until thickened and the whisk leaves visible lines on the bottom of the pan, about 2 minutes.
2. Scrape the tangzhong into the bowl of a stand mixer and let it cool to room temperature.

DOUGH

3. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour and salt.
4. Add the instant yeast, sugar, yogurt, butter, eggs, and vanilla to the tangzhong and whisk to combine. Add the flour mixture and mix with the dough hook on low for 1 minute, until barely combined, then rest 5 minutes.
5. Mix on medium 5–7 minutes (or knead by hand 5–7 minutes) until smooth, elastic, and pulling away from the bowl. Add flour 1 tbsp at a time only if it won't pull away; keep it slightly tacky.
6. Cover in a lightly greased bowl and let rise somewhere warm for **30–45 minutes only**.
7. While the dough rises, mix the filling ingredients until combined.
8. Continue with the **Master Method**: roll, fill, shape, proof, bake, and frost.

SIDE-BY-SIDE TEST: YEAST METHOD

Still to test. This version follows Bon Appétit and whisks instant yeast straight into the cooled tangzhong, replacing Kiley's step of blooming the yeast in warm milk (her milk now goes into the tangzhong). Bake a batch of Kiley's original alongside this one and compare the rise, crumb, softness, and flavor.

PUMPKIN

TANGZHONG

Pumpkin spice cinnamon rolls with a pumpkin tangzhong

*Adapted from **Kiley Heard's** Homemade Pumpkin Cinnamon Rolls, with the pumpkin tangzhong from **Justine Doiron's** Pumpkin Tangzhong Cookies*

> ***Still testing:*** A portion of pumpkin tangzhong replaces the dough's ½ cup purée and 20g of its flour. Cooking drives off water, so scale the portion to the finished weight: ***use 140 × (finished weight ÷ 495) grams*** (the raw mix is ~425g pumpkin + 70g flour). For example, 420g finished → about 119g; 450g → about 127g. Record your finished weight and how the dough felt.

Ingredients

PUMPKIN TANGZHONG (MAKES EXTRA)

- **1 (15 oz) can** pumpkin purée
- **½ cup (70g)** all-purpose flour

DOUGH

- **¾ cup (180ml)** milk of choice, warmed to 110°F (warm bath, not hot)
- **½ cup (120g)** brown sugar, light or dark, divided
- **2½ tsp (11g)** active dry yeast (or instant yeast)
- **~140g** pumpkin tangzhong, room temp (in place of ½ cup pumpkin purée; adjust for evaporation, see above)
- **½ cup (113g)** salted butter, very softened (almost melted)
- **1 egg**, room temp
- **1 tsp (4g)** vanilla bean paste or extract
- **520g** bread flour (4½ cups minus about 2½ tbsp)
- **1 tsp (6g)** salt
- **2 tsp (4g)** pumpkin pie spice
- **1½ tsp (3g)** cinnamon

PUMPKIN SPICE FILLING

- **½ cup (113g)** salted butter, softened (not melted)
- **1¼ cups (300g)** light brown sugar
- **¼ cup (60g)** leftover pumpkin tangzhong or plain pumpkin purée
- **1 tbsp (6g)** cinnamon
- **2 tsp (4g)** pumpkin pie spice
- **1 tsp (4g)** vanilla bean paste or extract

Instructions

PUMPKIN TANGZHONG

1. Add the pumpkin purée and flour to a pot over medium heat and stir into a paste. Cook, stirring constantly, 5–6 minutes, until it's a thick paste (almost like drying glue), starts to film on the bottom of the pot, and turns a shade darker.
2. **Weigh the finished tangzhong** (weigh the pot empty first, or scrape it all into a tared bowl). Cool completely (the fridge speeds this up), then let it come back to room temperature before using. Leftovers keep in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

DOUGH

3. Stir 1 tbsp of the brown sugar into the warm milk and sprinkle the yeast over the top. Let it sit 5–7 minutes, until frothy. (With instant yeast, skip the wait.)
4. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, pumpkin pie spice, and cinnamon.
5. In a stand mixer bowl, combine the yeast mixture, the rest of the brown sugar, the pumpkin tangzhong, butter, egg, vanilla, and flour mixture. Mix with the dough hook on low for 1 minute, until barely combined, then rest 5 minutes.
6. Mix on medium 5–7 minutes (or knead by hand 7–9 minutes) until smooth, elastic, and pulling away from the bowl. Add flour 1 tbsp at a time only if it won't pull away; keep it slightly tacky.
7. Cover in a lightly greased bowl and let rise somewhere warm for **30–45 minutes only**.
8. While the dough rises, mix the filling ingredients until combined. A little curdling is fine; it melts in the oven.
9. Continue with the **Master Method**: roll, fill, shape, proof, bake, and frost.