Prep Time: 40 minutes | Cook Time: 25 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour 5 minutes (plus 30 minutes resting)

Table of Contents

- A Little Story Before We Begin
- Ingredients
  - For the Dough
  - For Frying
  - For the Honey Glaze
  - For Decorating
- Equipment
- Step-by-Step Method
  - Step 1 — Make the Dough (10 minutes | Low intensity)
  - Step 2 — Knead (5 minutes | Medium intensity)
  - Step 3 — Rest the Dough (30 minutes | No intensity)
  - Step 4 — Roll and Cut (15 minutes | Medium intensity)
  - Step 5 — Heat the Oil (5–8 minutes | Low–medium intensity)
  - Step 6 — Fry in Batches (3–4 minutes per batch | Medium–high intensity)
  - Step 7 — Make the Honey Glaze (4 minutes | Low intensity)
  - Step 8 — Coat the Struffoli (3 minutes | Medium intensity)
  - Step 9 — Shape and Decorate (5 minutes | Low intensity)
  - Step 10 — Cool and Set (30 minutes | No intensity)
- Tips for Success
- Nutrition (per serving)

A Little Story Before We Begin

Struffoli are the jewel of the Neapolitan Christmas table — tiny, golden, deep-fried dough

balls tumbled in warm honey, piled into a fragrant mountain, and showered with colorful sprinkles and candied citrus. Every family in Naples guards its own version, but the soul of the recipe is always the same: crisp little spheres that stay light inside, glued together with honey that perfumes the whole house with orange and cinnamon. It is a dessert made for sharing, for pulling apart with your fingers, and for celebrating.

Ingredients

For the Dough

- 2½ cups (300 g) all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting
- 3 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons (25 g) granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons (30 g) unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) limoncello or dry white wine (optional, but traditional)
- 1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
- ½ teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- Pinch of fine sea salt

For Frying

- 4–5 cups (1–1.2 L) neutral oil (sunflower, canola, or peanut), for deep frying

For the Honey Glaze

- 1 cup (340 g) honey (a mild variety such as acacia or wildflower)
- 3 tablespoons (40 g) granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon (optional)

For Decorating

- ¼ cup multicolor sprinkles (Italian “diavolilli” or confetti)

- 2 tablespoons candied orange peel, finely diced
- 1 tablespoon candied citron or lemon peel, finely diced (optional)
- Silver dragées (optional)

Equipment

- Large mixing bowl
- Stand mixer with dough hook (or a sturdy wooden spoon)
- Rolling pin
- Bench scraper or sharp knife
- Deep, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven
- Candy/deep-fry thermometer
- Slotted spoon or spider skimmer

- Wire cooling rack lined with paper towels
- Large serving platter

Step-by-Step Method

Step 1 — Make the Dough (10 minutes | Low intensity)

In the bowl of a stand mixer (or a large bowl if working by hand), whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Add the eggs, melted butter, limoncello (if using), orange and lemon zests, and vanilla. Mix on low speed with the dough hook — or stir with a wooden spoon — until a soft, slightly sticky dough forms, about 3–4 minutes.

Step 2 — Knead (5 minutes | Medium intensity)

Turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 4–5 minutes, until smooth and elastic. Add flour a teaspoon at a time only if the dough is unmanageably sticky; it should remain tender, not stiff.

Step 3 — Rest the Dough (30 minutes | No intensity)

Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and let it rest at room temperature for 30 minutes. This relaxes the gluten and makes rolling effortless.

Step 4 — Roll and Cut (15 minutes | Medium intensity)

Divide the dough into 6 equal pieces. On a lightly floured surface, roll each piece into a rope about ½ inch (1.2 cm) thick — roughly the width of your finger. Using a bench scraper or knife, cut the ropes into ½-inch pieces. You should end up with 60–70 small nuggets. Dust

them lightly with flour and keep them on a floured tray so they don’t stick.

Step 5 — Heat the Oil (5–8 minutes | Low–medium intensity)

Pour the frying oil into a heavy pot to a depth of about 2 inches (5 cm). Heat over medium heat until it reaches 350°F (175°C) on a thermometer. Maintain this temperature throughout frying — too hot and the struffoli brown before cooking through; too cool and they turn greasy.

Step 6 — Fry in Batches (3–4 minutes per batch | Medium–high intensity)

Working in batches of 15–20 pieces (never overcrowd the pot), fry the dough balls for 2–3 minutes, stirring gently with a slotted spoon so they color evenly. They are ready when deep golden brown and puffed. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to the paper-towel-lined rack to drain. Repeat with the remaining dough, letting the oil return to 350°F between batches.

Step 7 — Make the Honey Glaze (4 minutes | Low intensity)

In a wide, heavy saucepan large enough to hold all the struffoli, combine the honey, sugar, lemon juice, orange zest, and cinnamon (if using). Warm over low heat for 3–4 minutes, stirring, until the sugar dissolves and the honey is fluid and fragrant. Do not let it boil vigorously.

Step 8 — Coat the Struffoli (3 minutes | Medium intensity)

Add all the fried dough balls to the warm honey syrup. Toss gently with a silicone spatula over low heat for 1–2 minutes, just until every piece is glossy and coated. Remove from the heat immediately.

Step 9 — Shape and Decorate (5 minutes | Low intensity)

While still warm and sticky, transfer the struffoli to a serving platter and, using lightly

dampened hands or a spatula, pile them into a cone or dome shape. Scatter the sprinkles, candied peel, and dragées generously over the top and sides, pressing gently so they adhere.

Step 10 — Cool and Set (30 minutes | No intensity)

Let the struffoli cool at room temperature for at least 30 minutes so the honey sets and the tower holds together. Serve at room temperature, pulling the pieces apart with your fingers.

Tips for Success

- Keep the oil steady at 350°F. This is the single most important variable for crisp, non-greasy struffoli.
- Fry in small batches — the temperature drops if the pot is crowded.
- Coat while the honey is warm, but never let the struffoli simmer in it, or they will soften.
- Make ahead: Struffoli keep beautifully for up to 1 week in an airtight container at room temperature.
- Variations: Add a tablespoon of cocoa to the dough for a chocolate version, or a pinch of anise seed for a traditional southern twist.

Nutrition (per serving)

Based on 10 servings. Values are estimates and will vary with portion size and exact ingredients.

Nutrient	Amount per Serving
Calories	~365 kcal
Total Fat	13 g
Saturated Fat	2.5 g
Carbohydrates	57 g
Sugars	33 g
Protein	4 g
Sodium	75 mg
Fiber	0.5 g