

THE LOVE FRANCE GUIDE №
001

The Croissant

AUSTRIAN ROOTS, FRENCH PERFECTION



A LOVE FRANCE PUBLICATION ·
INLOVEWITHFRANCE.COM

Nº 001 — The Croissant

The Austrian pastry the world calls French

The Love France Guide Nº 001: The Croissant

First digital edition, 2026.

Published by Love To Visit LLC · inlovewithfrance.com

From the team behind Love France — weekly French travel and culture stories, read by 7,000+ subscribers.

© 2026 Love To Visit LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form without prior written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations in reviews.

Photography by Olga Petnyunene, licensed via Unsplash. While every effort has been made to verify facts and figures, historical detail evolves with new research — corrections are welcome via inlovewithfrance.com.

Contents

Welcome	1
Not French — Austrian	2
Straight or Curved: A Real Legal Distinction	3
Lamination: Why It Takes Three Days	4
How the French Actually Eat One	5
Myths Worth Retiring	6
A Short Glossary	7
Frequently Asked Questions	8
More Love France Guides	9



Welcome

The croissant looks like the most French thing imaginable — but it did not start in France, and the way one is made and shaped tells you more about a bakery than almost anything else on the counter.

| *“An Austrian idea, perfected in France.”*

This is Guide № 001: the real Austrian origin story, the butter-versus-margarine shape law, how lamination actually works, and how the French really eat one.

01

Not French — Austrian

The croissant's real ancestor is the kipferl, a crescent-shaped Austrian pastry documented in Vienna long before it ever reached Paris. The popular story crediting Marie Antoinette with bringing it to France is treated by food historians as legend rather than documented fact.

The far better-attested origin: a Viennese bakery on rue de Richelieu, 1839.

August Zang, an Austrian, opened a boulangerie viennoise in Paris that year, introducing Parisians to Austrian breads and pastries — kipferl included. What French bakers did afterward, over the following decades, is what actually created the modern croissant. An Austrian idea, perfected in France.

02

Straight or Curved: A Real Legal Distinction

In French bakeries, the shape is not decoration — it is a signal. By long-standing baking convention, a straight croissant is made with pure butter (croissant au beurre), while a curved, crescent-shaped one is typically made with margarine.

Butter dough is stiffer and easier to shape straight; margarine dough is more pliable and holds a curve.

It is a small detail, but a genuinely useful one — glance at the shape before you order, and you already know which one you are getting.

03

Lamination: Why It Takes Three Days

A proper croissant is built from lamination — folding a slab of butter into yeasted dough, then repeatedly rolling and folding it in a series of "turns" to create dozens of alternating layers of dough and butter.

In the oven, the butter's water content turns to steam, forcing the layers apart, which is what produces the shatteringly flaky, honeycombed interior. Done properly, the process spans two to three days between mixing, resting, folding, and proofing — which is why a genuinely good croissant from a serious bakery costs more than a supermarket one made on a same-day shortcut.

04

How the French Actually Eat One

Dunking a croissant into a café au lait or hot chocolate at breakfast is a genuine, common French habit – not a tourist affectation.

| *Torn by hand, not cut with a knife.*

It is typically eaten plain, torn rather than sliced, and treated as a breakfast food specifically – ordering one in the afternoon is unusual by local convention, though nobody will stop you.

05

Myths Worth Retiring

“Marie Antoinette brought it from Austria.” A popular legend, not a documented fact — the better-attested history points to August Zang’s Parisian bakery in 1839.

“All croissants are shaped the same.” The shape is a real, functional signal of butter versus margarine, not a stylistic choice.

“It’s just bread with butter on top.” The butter is folded inside, in dozens of layers, not spread on top — that is the entire point of lamination.

06

A Short Glossary

Kipferl — The crescent-shaped Austrian pastry that is the croissant's real ancestor.

Boulangerie viennoise — August Zang's 1839 Parisian bakery that introduced Austrian pastries to France.

Croissant au beurre — A pure-butter croissant, conventionally baked in a straight shape.

Lamination — Folding butter into dough in repeated turns to create the pastry's alternating layers.

Turns — Each individual fold-and-roll cycle in the lamination process.

07

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the croissant actually French?

Its origin is Austrian, via the kipferl — but the laminated, butter-based pastry known worldwide today was developed and refined in France.

How do I know if a croissant is made with real butter?

Look at the shape first — straight generally signals pure butter, curved generally signals margarine — then check the label, as “pur beurre” is often stated outright.

Why do fresh croissants taste so different from packaged ones?

Time and butter. A proper multi-day lamination process with real butter cannot be replicated by a same-day shortcut recipe using vegetable fat.

More Love France Guides

The Love France Guide is a numbered series — one tightly focused subject at a time, each with its own downloadable collectible edition.

Join 7,000+ France Lovers

Every week: hidden villages, seasonal guides, and real French food and wine stories.

lovetovisitfrance.substack.com

GUIDE № 001 — THE CROISSANT (THIS EDITION)

GUIDE № 002 — COMING SOON

Sources: croissant and kipferl history, August Zang's 1839 Paris bakery, and French lamination technique per established public record and widely documented culinary history.