

Cannelés de Bordeaux

Make them at home



Scott R. Davis

New Edition

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*For Cathy,
who started this whole thing with an Instagram post and for her support.*

*For Jenny,
who suggested I write this book*

*For Howard,
who is my rock and ate all those test cannelés with me.*

Prepare to Fall in Love

The first bite you take of a cannelé may have you wondering, “what’s the big deal?” But, that second bite will win you over. I’ve witnessed it over and over with friends and family members. The OMG moment is almost universal. The glorious contrast of crunchy and custardy all wrapped in a blanket of caramelization is heavenly.

The simple batter is easy to make, but the baking process is a bit fickle. And rarely will there be 100% perfection in a batch. It won’t matter, I promise you. These delicious pastries will disappear in a flash whenever you make them. For me, the mini ones are particularly dangerous to have in the house. That “just one more” mentality kicks in until I’ve had 6 or 7.

I will steer you in the right direction and get you on the track to finding out what exactly works for your oven and molds, but do expect to do some experimentation. The recipe and techniques here have proven to create consistent results. I hope that it does in your kitchen too.



My first batch of cannelés. They’re burnt on the bottom and have the dreaded ‘cul blanc.’ They tasted pretty good. That is until I got my copper molds and settled on my favorite recipe. Now I’m a cannelé snob.

The History and Mystique of the Cannelé de Bordeaux

There are so many stories and histories of the cannelé that I'm not sure which to believe. The colorful one I like best is that nuns of the Annunciation Monastery were collecting spilled flour from the docks and holds of ships at the port of Bordeaux and using egg yolks that were not needed by winemakers who were using the whites to purify wine. They distributed the cakes to feed the poor and sold them to make money for the convent. In 1790 they were driven from their convent. Back then they were known as *canaule*. However, that conflicts with the story that the makers of the cannelé, called *canauliers*, won their fight with the Pastry Guild in 1755. Or maybe both were happening?




What seems to be agreed upon is that in the early 20th Century these little pastries were re-introduced and became popular in the Bordeaux region of France. It's believed that vanilla and rum were added to the recipe at this time.

In 1985 the Brotherhood of the Canelé of Bordeaux (Confrerie du Canelé du Bordeaux) removed the second "n" and registered the collective brand as the *canelé*. Since we're not in the Brotherhood I think it wise to use two "n"s. This is just like no longer saying American bubbly wine is Champagne. The U.S. has at least one product that does this too: it can only be called Bourbon if it's made in Kentucky.

The translation for either word to English means "fluted", referring to the distinctive shape of the molds and resulting product.

The Molds



The complete perfectionist will want to invest in copper and tin molds. To get consistent fully caramelized cannelés only copper will do. However, if you're on a budget carbon steel molds will make excellent cannelés. Silicone molds are my least favorite, but also the most budget conscious option.

Copper vs. Other Molds

Copper and tin cannelé molds are expensive. The least expensive way to get them is to pick them up when you're in France or have a friend do it. But I've found a good price via mail order too. Amazon now lists some for sale at about the same price as mail order from France. More about that later.

After I got the copper molds and figured out the best recipe for me, my cannelés started turning out very consistently excellent. No, not every single one was perfect, but the number of imperfections dropped dramatically. In silicone molds I couldn't get rid of the dreaded 'cul blanc' as the French say. That's when the dimple in the top of the cannelé stays light colored. A polite translation would be white butt. I'll leave the literal for you to look up.

I tried the reasonably priced individual metal non-stick molds also and found to perform worse than silicone. I would not recommend them.

Now in 2019 there are carbon steel non-stick pans of twelve molds available for around \$26. See the picture below. They are very close to copper in performance and a really excellent option.

At this point, I wouldn't recommend silicone at all.



Carbon Steel molds.



Look at these beauties, fresh from France. They won't ever be this pretty again.

Buying Tinned Copper Molds

Amazon.com has some reasonably priced copper molds. The full sized ones run about \$12.50 each with free Amazon Prime Shipping if you're a member.

You can also order them from Bordeaux, France easily. Order cannelé molds from Labo & Gato in Bordeaux, France: <https://www.laboetgato.fr/en/83-moules-a-canneles>. Their site is now available in English.

I prefer the 055mm/2 inch molds, which as of this writing are about 99 Euros for 12. The order process is the same as just about any other website. However, shipping from France will take the price up considerably.

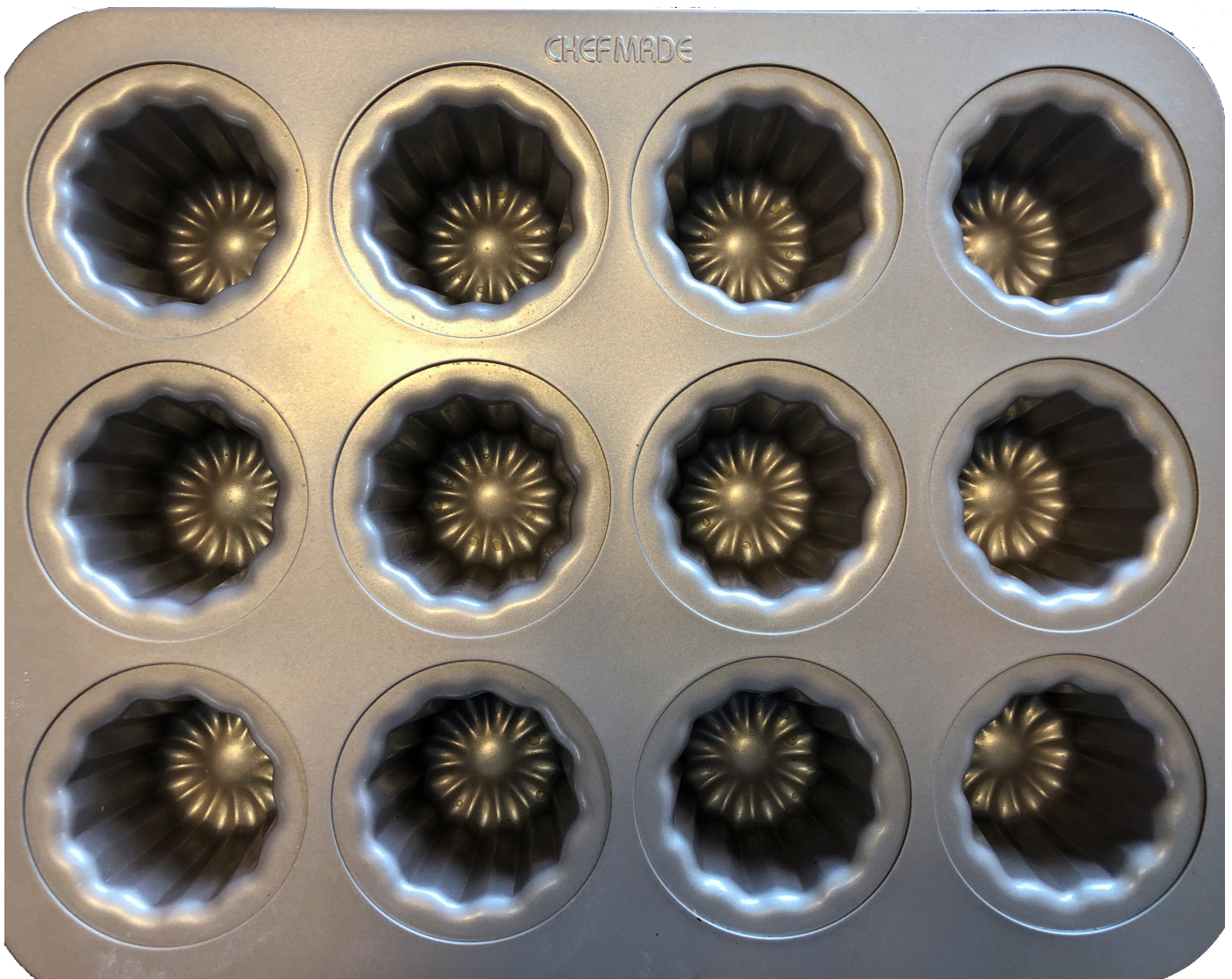
If you're going to Paris or have a friend that is, you can buy molds to bring back. The best kitchen stores are in the Les Halles area and have varying prices for cannelé molds. Have fun shopping around. The best prices my friend Tim found were at Mora, 13 Rue Montmartre. If you purchase 24 you'll be spending enough to get back the VAT tax when you leave France, thus bringing down the price. So, ask friends if they want molds before you go. The sales clerks are very helpful and will provide you with the right paperwork.

The lowest prices will be in Bordeaux. If you're lucky enough to go there visit the kitchen shops. Labo & Gato is at 61, Cours Pasteur, Bordeaux. They are open: Open Monday from 2 pm to 7 pm & from Tuesday to Saturday from 9 am to 7 pm.



Carbon Steel Molds

The new molds are excellent performers. I was skeptical, but even from the first batch I was happily surprised. They are truly non-stick and don't need to be coated at all to get nice results. I would say buy these over copper unless you're a big perfectionist. You can still coat them and get that subtle beeswax flavor if you like.



Preparing the Molds



Properly prepared molds will insure good results. The molds won't stick if properly seasoned and prepared. The beeswax/butter coating is essential to the flavor of a great cannelé.

Seasoning copper molds

New copper molds or freshly washed and scrubbed molds need to be seasoned before use.

- ❖ Pre-heat the oven to 350°F
- ❖ Wash new or heavily encrusted molds in soapy water. Rinse and dry them.
- ❖ Heavily coat the interiors with vegetable shortening
- ❖ Place them on a sheet tray lined with parchment paper
- ❖ Bake in the oven 1 hour
- ❖ Remove the molds from oven; place upside down on a rack on the same pan.
- ❖ Return them to oven, baking an additional 15 minutes
- ❖ Turn off the oven and leave them in the oven until they have cooled to room temperature.



Coating copper molds

It's traditional to coat the cannelé molds with a mixture of food grade organic beeswax & butter in a 50-50 ratio. If you plan on making cannelés often, you'll want to dedicate a small butter warmer pan to this task. Although, you could also use a small jar and the microwave to melt the combination. A silicone brush also works well and dedicating one to this task alone is wise. To achieve a thin coating it's best if the molds are warm. I use a stovetop heat diffuser to warm the butter warmer pan of beeswax and butter. Once they are melted together Place a few of copper molds around the perimeter of the heat diffuser and work coating them one at a time with the brush and immediately turning them upside down on rack. Then put them in the freezer until thoroughly cold. You may store them in the freezer pre-coated in a plastic container. *Be sure to remove any dot of coating that forms on the top of the dimple.* Left there it will cause 'cul blanc.' Don't sugar them at this time, do that just before filling.



Coating other molds

This is a bit trickier, but again warm molds will yield a thinner coating and better results. Put the molds in a warm oven for a couple of minutes while you melt the butter and beeswax. When the molds are warm pull them out of the oven and work as quickly as you can to coat each hole. Invert the molds onto a rack. Concentrate your brush on the sides to avoid pooling at the bottom. Excess coating seems to cause ‘cul blanc.’ Put the molds in the freezer once they are all coated.



The mold on the left is coated with too much beeswax/butter mixture. This can lead to ‘cul blanc’. The one on the right is more what you

Coated or uncoated, pop them into the freezer so they are very cold for baking.

Sugaring the molds

Your molds need to be coated with beeswax & butter before sugaring them.

For copper molds I like to set a mold in a bowl, then take a second and put a tablespoon of the granulated sugar in it. Twirl it slowly at an angle above the one in the bowl, tipping the sugar into the one below. Do this slowly enough so that the sugar coats the entire mold. Then give the bottom a gentle tap to shake out excess. Then pick up the one in the bowl, replacing it with the next one to be sugared.

For other molds this becomes a messier prospect. I put a little sugar into each hole of the mold and then roll the whole thing around over my sink.

You may omit sugaring without a huge difference. I've found that they are crunchier and stay that way longer when you sugar the molds.



Cleaning copper molds

Like cast iron, your copper molds will become more non-stick over time. With proper seasoning they should never stick. The sugaring of the molds prior to cooking does mean that you will have a bit more maintenance of your molds.

If the molds hang on to some crystalized sugar you can gently pick it off with a pointed wooden skewer.

For more stuck on remnants you may choose to use some warm water and brush. A toothbrush works well for this. Don't use soap. Be gentle or you'll have to re-season the mold.



Cleaning other molds

A slight buildup of the beeswax and butter seems make the silicone molds perform better. But clean the molds as you see fit: from a thorough scrubbing with soap and water to just a rinse of water to get out any stuck bits off.

The carbon steel non-stick molds are really easy to clean. Another benefit of these new molds.





The Recipes

This is the recipe with a few plain and simple steps. It's not that difficult at all. Baking them is where it becomes problematic. On the other hand, I've seen pictures of a person's first batch and they looked as nice as the one here.

Cannelés de Bordeaux

makes six 2"/55mm or nine 1.75"/45mm or eighteen 1.37"/35mm

*There are a couple of factors that you may vary according to how much caramelization you like. I prefer them fairly dark, but not burnt. First is using different sugars read about that on page 21. Second is baking time. You may stop baking them when they're a medium brown caramel color all over or bake them until they have a deep mahogany color. The cannelés will start out and stay crunchy longer with darker caramelization. **Be sure to measure the flour & sugar by weight.***

1 cup whole milk

1 1/2 tablespoons butter

1/2 vanilla pod, split lengthwise and scraped, beans reserved
(substitute 1 teaspoon vanilla paste or 2 teaspoons vanilla extract)

3.5 oz. sugar

2.25 oz. organic flour

1 large egg yolk, beaten

2 tablespoons dark rum

a few drops of orange flower water
(optional)

a pinch of Maldon salt or sea salt

15g food grade beeswax

15g clarified butter (Ghee)

2 Tablespoons granulated sugar for
dusting molds

In the microwave, heat milk in a 1 cup glass measuring cup to a simmer with butter, vanilla pod and seeds.

Approximately 2 minutes. Let the vanilla steep in the warm milk for 10 minutes.

In a 4 cup glass measuring cup or medium sized mixing bowl combine sugar & flour. Pour in roughly 1/3 of the vanilla, milk and melted butter. Mix well with a whisk. Add the egg yolk, rum, and orange flower water. When smooth, add the remaining milk mixture. Switch to a rubber spatula and mix well without incorporating a lot of air by gently stirring. Continue gently stirring until everything is incorporated.

Strain the batter through a fine mesh strainer. Stir in the Maldon salt.

You may choose to age the batter at

this point. Refer to page 20. If you do age the batter, take the container out and stir gently with a rubber spatula to recombine everything before continuing.

Place an oven rack in the topmost position of your oven. On a lower rack place a baking sheet lined with parchment to collect any drips. This will help prevent overflowing beeswax/butter coating or batter from burning on the bottom of the oven and smoking: always turn on the exhaust fan when baking cannelé.

Preheat the oven to 400°F (convection) or 425°F (conventional.) Ovens vary so you may have to bake at 25°F higher or lower. My newer conventional electric oven does well at 400°F. See Troubleshooting.

Retrieve your molds from the freezer.

If you've coated the molds then you can sugar them with granular sugar by pouring sugar in, rolling it around and pouring out the excess. Tap lightly on the mold to dislodge excess. Make sure there's just a light coating of sugar.

If using individual copper molds, invert a wire cooling rack and place the coated molds on it. The inversion makes sliding the rack in and out easier. Fill the molds $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{7}{8}$ full, which is 2 oz. for the 2 inch/55mm copper molds. This will use up all the batter.

Slide the prepared molds (and rack if individual molds) on top of the uppermost rack in the oven. Bake until your desired level of caramelization, about 1 hour and 15 minutes for the large sized molds (2 inch/55mm). For about 60 minutes when using the medium sized molds (1.75 inch/45mm). The mini sized molds take about 45 minutes.

As the cannelés bake, watch for puffing, this is usually around 15 minutes into baking. A small amount of puffing is fine, but if they puff up more than just a little, stop your timer, pull the wire rack out and let them settle back down into the molds, when you can return the molds to the oven and restart the timer.

Rotate the rack twice during baking to ensure all the cannelé bake evenly.

Watch the cannelés carefully near the end of the baking time as just a couple of minutes can make them go from dark to lightly burnt. Check the doneness by pulling the whole rack out and inverting a couple of the cannelés from different areas. Even with rotating they may not all bake at the same rate. There should be an even caramelization over the whole cannelé. If the tops are still blonde they need a few more minutes baking. Put them back in the molds and slide the wire rack back into the oven. Bake for 5 more minutes and check again. Repeat as necessary. Over cooking will dry out the custardy center of a cannelé. When checking for doneness you can give them a gentle squeeze with kitchen tongs. If they're still kind of squishy, then there's still a custardy center.

When they are done, invert them onto a rack and let them cool completely before eating. When cool they will be crisp on the outside and custardy on the inside. They take a good hour to cool. The wait is worth it. Although a French friend said his mother always let him eat them warm.

Cannelés are best eaten within a few hours. They start to lose their crispy interior after that. A soft cannelé with your coffee the next morning is nice, but you can also re-crisp them:

Pre-heat your oven or toaster oven to 400°F.

Put the cannelés in the oven for around 10 - 15 minutes. Keep a watchful eye on them as they will burn quickly.

Gluten Free Cannelés de Bordeaux

makes six 2¹/₅”/55mm or nine 1.75¹/₄”/45mm or eighteen 1.37¹/₃”/35mm

1 cup whole milk
1 1/2 tablespoons butter
1/2 vanilla pod, split lengthwise and scraped, beans reserved (substitute 1 teaspoon vanilla paste or 2 teaspoons vanilla extract)
3.5 oz. sugar
1.2 oz. white rice flour
0.5 oz. brown rice flour
0.35 oz. potato starch
0.20 oz. tapioca starch
1/4 teaspoon xanthum gum
1 large egg yolk, beaten
2 tablespoons dark rum
a few drops of orange flower water (optional)
a pinch of Maldon salt or sea salt
15g food grade beeswax
15g clarified butter (Ghee)
2 Tablespoons granulated sugar for dusting molds

*This recipe produces Cannelés de Bordeaux almost indistinguishable from the ones with gluten. You may experiment with gluten free flour mixes. Some I tried worked well in this recipe, some were less successful. Trader Joe's Gluten Free Flour mix worked well. Use 2.25 oz. by weight in place of the flour, starches and xanthum gum listed. The sugar, flours, starches and xanthum gum are all **measured by weight.***

This batter must be refrigerated until cold before baking. The batter it will thicken more than the batter with gluten.

Follow the instructions in the previous recipe.

Resting the batter

Almost all recipes suggesting resting the cannellê batter in the refrigerator for at least 12 hours. Some say 24 hours and other go as long as 48 hours. With my recipe I haven't found that to be required. It is often convenient to make the batter ahead. So, by all means do so if it fits your schedule. In my side by side taste testing it was hard to taste a difference. Cold batter puffs up less and caramelizes more evenly. I always refrigerate the batter at least until cold. If you're making the gluten free version you *must* chill and rest the batter.

When you rest the batter it will separate, with a floating layer and a settled layer at the bottom. You need to stir this all back together with a rubber spatula. Do so gently to avoid adding air which will cause puffing.



Choice of sugar

You may use a variety of sugars. Dark Muscovado sugar will yield very dark caramelized cannelés. A number of friends love this version. I prefer lightly brown organic granulated sugar. If you use the darker sugar, the cannelés will have a more molasses flavor. You won't be able to coat the molds with Muscovado, you'll need a more granular sugar. Demerara sugar could be used in both the recipe and the coating. Here again I use organic sugar with it's light brown color. No matter which sugar you use, **measure it by weight**.

The cannelés in these pictures were made with Dark Muscovado sugar.



Cannelés with other Molds

Baking cannelés in non-copper molds is fine. Really. You're going to amaze all but the most discriminating of palates. If they have any couth at all they wont say a word. The cannelés will be likely better than many bakery versions. The ones baked in carbon steel molds are almost indistinguishable from ones baked in copper.

Some hints for using other molds:

- ❖ Buy the carbon steel molds.
- ❖ Consider still using the beeswax & butter coating. The very subtle taste of beeswax is lovely.
- ❖ Check their progress 10-15 minutes before the end of the baking time, which should be similar to the copper times, by taking the rack of cannelés out and insert a wooden skewer or toothpick to pry one or two up and out.
- ❖ It's especially important in silicone to take them out and stop the timer when they puff. Let them settle back down before proceeding. Don't forget to start the timer back up.
- ❖ I didn't experience much puffing in the carbon steel molds. Starting with cold batter and cold molds helps.



Variations

- ❖ Use the very dark Muscovado sugar and add 1 teaspoon powdered ginger and you have Gingerbread Cannelés.
- ❖ Instead of Rum, use a different liquor: Grand Marnier, Chambord, Kahlua, Amaretto or Bourbon .
- ❖ Cannelés are popular in Japan. They love ones made with Matcha tea. A teaspoon or two of Matcha powder added is all that's needed.
- ❖ Lemon Poppy seed is very nice, but the poppy seeds float and end up all on the bottom. Substitute 1 tsp of lemon extract for the vanilla, leave out the rum and add 1 teaspoon of poppy seeds.
- ❖ Lemon Pistachio: substitute 2 teaspoons pistachio oil for 2 teaspoons of the butter. Reduce the flour to 1.75 ounces adding it to a blender or food processor with 1/2 ounce of pistachios; blend until the pistachios are ground into a powder. Sift before proceeding. Add 1/4 teaspoon lemon extract instead of the vanilla.
- ❖ Experiment and come up with your own flavors




Uses

- ❖ The minis make a nice garnish for ice cream. But so do the large ones. Last time I served 12 large ones to 6 people with ice cream there was only one left at the end of evening.
- ❖ Serve cannelés with coffee or tea. First time tasters often say “these would be good with coffee.” They make a decadent morning sweet.
- ❖ Give them as a host/hostess gift when going to a dinner party. You will be invited back. Insert instructions for re-crisping in the box.



Troubleshooting



Something not working out? Check here for some common mistakes and hints.

Troubleshooting

- ❖ Puffing up can be caused by air worked into the batter. Cold batter and cold molds seem to help. Rested batter seems to puff less too, but I've experienced exceptions to all those rules. If they puff more than a little, stop the timer, pull them out and let them settle for a few minutes before putting them back in and starting the timer again.
- ❖ “Cul Blanc”: puffing can cause the edges to harden which stop the cannelé from sinking all the way back down in the mold. The batter won't be in contact with the mold at the bottom and the white spots can be a result. Excessive coating can also cause “cul blanc.”
- ❖ Uneven browning can be caused by under mixing. The batter should be fully homogenous. This is even more important with rested batter as it separates. Be sure to fully combine everything, but avoid whipping air into the batter.
- ❖ Not being crunchy on the outside or too wet on the inside are both indications of under baking. The best crunch comes when the outsides are dark mahogany. The insides stay custardy quite a bit longer than you might expect. Still you can over bake and dry out the insides.
- ❖ If they cannelés are a bit chewy or take significantly longer than the times in the recipe, you may need to increase the oven temperature. Ovens vary so on your next batch increase the baking temperature by 25°F.



Sources

Copper Molds

Amazon.com has a decent price on a set of 4 copper 2” molds, with free Prime Shipping they’re comparable to the price shipped from France.

Labo & Gato in Bordeaux, France has good prices for copper molds. See [Buying Tinned Copper Molds](#) for ordering instructions.

You’ll find them on Amazon & eBay too. Around \$10 each for the large size is about the best price you can find.

Carbon Steel Molds

I bought and tested the Ezeso 12-Cup Canele Mold from Amazon.com for around \$26. But it has the Chefmade logo on it. There are several brands at the same price.

Beeswax

Amazon has the best price I’ve found for 100% organic beeswax. The pastilles are convenient for measuring. Search for “organic beeswax pastilles”. Of course, your local beekeeper may also be able to provide you beeswax.

