



db Group
Portugal

International Food Broker
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It is believed that pastéis de nata were created before the 18th century by Catholic monks at the [Jerónimos Monastery](#) ([Portuguese](#): *Mosteiro dos Jerónimos*) in the [civil parish](#) of [Santa Maria de Belém](#), in Lisbon: for this reason, they are alternately known as **Pastéis de Belém**. During Portuguese medieval history, the convents and monasteries of Portugal produced large quantities of eggs, whose egg-whites were in demand for starching of clothes (such as nuns' habits) and also in wineries (where they were used in the clearing of wines, such as [Porto](#)). It was quite common for these Portuguese monasteries and convents to produce many confections with the leftover egg yolks, resulting in a proliferation of sweet pastry recipes throughout the country.

Following the expulsion of the religious orders, and later the closing of many of the convents and monasteries in the aftermath of the [Liberal Revolution of 1820](#), the production of *pastéis de nata* passed to the *Casa Pastéis de Belém* nearby.^[2] It was this association, with the parish of Santa Maria de Belém that resulted in its popular name: *Pastéis de Belém*, after the name of the area and its bakery.^[2] The former religious clerics, in order to keep producing the *secret and distinct* recipe, therefore patented and registered the confection, while contracting the *Antiga Confeiteira de Belém, Lda.* to produce a recipe based on their original recipe.^[2] The secret was transmitted to five master pastry chefs who guarded this original recipe, under the *Oficina do Segredo*, which later passed into the hands of familial descendants.^[2]

Since 1837, locals and visitors to Lisbon have visited the bakery to purchase fresh from the oven *pastéis*, sprinkled with [cinnamon](#) and [powdered sugar](#). Their popularity normally results in long lines at the [take-away](#) counters, in addition to waiting lines for sit-down service.

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Characteristics



The simple recipe has had various alterations in the Portuguese *pastelarias* (pastry shops) and *padarias* (bakeries), in the shape of the pastry cup and the filling. One of these methods includes making the [custard](#) in a [bain-marie](#) (a bowl over boiling water) rather than combining all the ingredients at once in a saucepan. Some prefer the cream slightly "curdled" to give it a rustic appearance and unusual texture.

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