Strawberry French Toast Sticks with Chocolate Ganache

The following recipe and photography is courtesy of Bread Over Heels, a food scientist and blogger. For more of her recipes and baking tips, visit her website or her Instagram @breadoverheels.

Ingredients:

- 1 loaf day-old Italian bread
- 4 eggs
- 1 egg yolk
- ¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar, divided
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup whole milk
- 1 cup freeze-dried strawberries
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- 2 ounces dark chocolate

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 275F. Cut bread into 1 ½ inch thick slices. Remove crusts. Cut slices in half or thirds to form long sticks. Place on a baking sheet. Bake for 25 minutes to dry out. Remove from oven and let stand on counter for at least 30 minutes to cool and continue drying.
2. Prepare strawberry sugar. Add freeze-dried strawberries to a food processor and grind until fine. Add ¾ cup sugar and pulse a few times to combine. Transfer to a shallow baking dish.
3. Prepare chocolate ganache. Add dark chocolate to a medium bowl. If using a dark chocolate bar, break into small pieces. Heat heavy cream on low until just starting to simmer. Pour over bowl of dark chocolate. Let sit for 1-2 minutes, then whisk until smooth. Cover with saran wrap to keep warm until serving.
4. In a medium bowl, combine eggs and egg yolk. Whisk thoroughly. Add 1 tablespoon sugar, vanilla extract, and whole milk. Whisk to combine. Transfer to another shallow baking dish.
5. Dip bread into egg mixture. Turn to make sure bread is evenly coated. Let sit for about 30 seconds on each side for egg mixture to absorb.
6. Add canola oil and butter to a large skillet over medium heat. Add bread to pan and cook about 1 minute on each side or until browned. Work in batches to avoid overcrowding pan.
7. Transfer bread to strawberry sugar baking dish. Toss to evenly coat.
8. Serve warm with chocolate ganache for dipping.