

CREME BRULEE

Serves 8

Ingredients

4 cups heavy cream, chilled

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup granulated sugar

Pinch table salt

1 vanilla bean, halved lengthwise (or vanilla paste or extract, see notes)

12 large egg yolks

8-12 teaspoons turbinado sugar or demerara sugar

Method

1. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 300°F.
2. Combine 2 cups cream, sugar, and salt in medium saucepan. If using a vanilla bean, scrape the seeds with a paring knife into the pan, along with the pod in cream. Bring mixture to boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally to ensure that sugar dissolves. Take pan off heat and let steep 15 minutes to infuse flavors.
3. Meanwhile, place a kitchen towel in bottom of large baking dish or roasting pan and arrange eight 4- to 5-ounce ramekins (or shallow fluted dishes) on towel. Bring kettle or large saucepan of water to boil over high heat.
4. After cream has steeped, stir in remaining 2 cups cream to cool down mixture. Whisk yolks in large bowl until broken up and combined. Whisk about 1 cup cream mixture into yolks until loosened and combined; repeat with another 1 cup cream. Add remaining cream and whisk until evenly colored and thoroughly combined. Strain through fine-mesh strainer into 2-quart measuring cup or pitcher (or clean medium bowl); discard solids in strainer. Pour or ladle mixture into ramekins, dividing it evenly among them.
5. Carefully place baking dish with ramekins on oven rack; pour boiling water into dish, taking care not to splash water into ramekins, until water reaches two-thirds the height of the ramekins. Bake until centers of custards are just barely set and are no longer sloshy and thermometer inserted in centers registers 170 to 175 degrees, 30 to 35 minutes (25 to 30 minutes for shallow fluted dishes). Begin checking temperature about 5 minutes before recommended time.
6. Transfer ramekins to wire rack; cool to room temperature, about 2 hours. Set ramekins on rimmed baking sheet, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate until cold, at least 4 hours or up to 4 days.
7. Uncover ramekins; if condensation has collected on custards, place paper towel on surface to soak up moisture. Sprinkle each with about 1 teaspoon turbinado or demerara sugar ($1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons for shallow fluted dishes); tilt and tap ramekin for even coverage. Ignite torch and caramelize sugar. Refrigerate ramekins, uncovered, to re-chill, 30 to 45 minutes (but no longer); serve.

Notes

- Separate the eggs and whisk the yolks after the cream has finished steeping. If left to sit, the surface of the yolks will dry and form a film.
- A vanilla bean gives custard the deepest flavor, but 2 teaspoons of extract or vanilla paste, whisked into the yolks in step 4, can be used instead.
- The best way to judge doneness is with a digital instant-read thermometer
- For the caramelized sugar crust, we recommend turbinado or demerara sugar. Regular granulated sugar will work, too, but use only 1 scant teaspoon on each dish.

