

Caramel Crème Brûlée

Serves 10

Ingredients

- 3 cups heavy cream
- 1 fresh vanilla pod
- 1/2 cup white sugar, plus additional sugar for torching
- water
- 8 large egg yolks

Special Equipment

- 10 ramekins
- A baking dish large enough to house 10 ramekins
- Blowtorch

Cooking Instructions

Preheat the oven to 350F.

Line a large baking dish with small dish-towels or non-stick drawer liners. This helps insulate and hold the ramekins in place while you transport them to and from the oven.

Pour the cream into a saucepan.

Split the vanilla pod in half lengthwise with a sharp knife. Remove the tiny seeds from each side of the pod with the tip of the knife, and add them to the cream. (Do not discard the split halves of the vanilla pods. Instead, place them in a container with sugar and infuse with authentic flavour.)

Heat the cream and vanilla mixture until it just begins to boil. Remove from the heat and set aside.

In a LARGE saucepan (trust me on this), add the sugar and just enough water to moisten the sugar. Cook the sugar on medium-high heat until it melts and turns a light amber color, approximately 7 to

10 minutes. Once the sugar starts changing colour you must be attentive – the sugar can turn into smoking black mess in a heartbeat.

Slowly stir the warm cream mixture into the hot, melted sugar. The melted sugar will bubble madly. In a large bowl, whisk the egg yolks with a small amount of the hot caramel cream. Add the rest of the cream in a slow stream, whisking until combined. Do not rush this process or you run the risk of scrambling the eggs.

Strain the custard through a fine sieve into a one-litre spouted container (pictured), for easy pouring.

Bring a kettle of water to a boil.

Place the ramekins on the lined baking dish and move to a counter space that is close to the stove. Pour the custard into the ramekins, filling close to the top. Add the boiling water to the baking dish, being careful not to pour water into the custard. The water should come half way up the sides of the ramekins. Poke a couple of holes into a sheet of tin foil or parchment and loosely cover the baking dish. Carefully transfer the baking dish into the oven.

Baking time will depend on the size of your ramekins and your oven's temperament. Plan on about 25 minutes for small or shallow ramekins and about 45 minutes for larger containers. The custards should be removed from the oven when they're barely set – with the centers ever-so-slightly wobbly. It's best to check the custards after 20 minutes to gauge the timing.

Refrigerate the custards until completely cool, at least three hours. (They can also be refrigerated up to three days in advance).

Just before serving, generously dust each custard with white sugar. Tilt the ramekin from side to side to disperse the sugar. Using the blowtorch, carefully burn (brûlée) the sugar with the flame until the top of each custard is nicely browned.