



Crème Brûlée

Ingredients:

Makes 8 six-ounce servings

4 cups heavy cream
1 tablespoon vanilla bean paste
8 egg yolks
3/4 cup sugar, divided
1/4 teaspoon salt

For the Topping:

1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup brown sugar
Raspberries (optional garnish)

Directions:

1. PREHEAT the oven to 325°F. Prepare ramekins by placing them on a rimmed baking sheet.
2. HEAT the cream and 1/2 cup sugar in a small saucepan until warm and the sugar dissolved -- just short of a simmer. Remove from heat, add the vanilla bean paste, and stir until evenly distributed.
3. PLACE in the bowl of a stand mixer, the egg yolks, remaining 1/4 cup sugar and salt. Mix on a low speed until well mixed and the sugar dissolved. The graininess of the sugar and salt help to break up the egg yolks while the beaters are mixing.
4. DRIZZLE in 1/2 cup of the warm cream into the egg yolk mixture while the mixer is running. Add very slowly directly into the center of the mixing action. Continue adding the cream to the eggs in this drizzle fashion until all is incorporated. (If some minor curdling of the eggs has occurred during the tempering process, you may wish to strain the mixture before placing in baking dishes.)
5. POUR the warm custard base into individual ramekins, or another very shallow baking dish. The custard will shrink as it bakes, so the dishes may be filled to the brim (so long as you can transfer the dishes to the oven with out spilling!).
6. INSERT the baking sheet with the filled ramekins into the preheated oven on the center rack.
7. FILL the baking sheet with warm tap water until the water level rises to halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Use a reliable pouring vessel to add the water, and do so slowly to avoid splashes, waves, or otherwise spill water into the custard.

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8. BAKE for 25-30 minutes, or until the custard is set. The center will still be somewhat wiggly and will continue to set as it cools.

9. COOL the baked custard ramekins by placing the entire baking sheet with water bath on a cooling rack. Once cool, remove the ramekins from the water bath, dry the outside with a kitchen towel. Drain and dry the baking sheet, and place the cooled ramekins back on the baking sheet. Wrap the baking sheet holding the ramekins well with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator until ready to serve. (Custards easily pick up refrigerator odors, so wrap well.) Store refrigerated for at least an hour, or up to 2 days.

10. MIX together the brown and white sugar in a small bowl. Sprinkle a tablespoon of the sugar on the surface of each ramekin. Distribute evenly.

11. CAMELIZE the sugar by applying heat with the flame of a culinary torch. The flame should burn with a bluish color. Move the flame around continuously until the sugar liquefies in the heat and then eventually turns to an amber color. This color change indicates that the sugar has been transformed and has reached the hard crack stage. The layer will cool quickly to a thin hard shell and be ready to serve.