

My all time favourite restaurant dessert is Crème Brûlée. In many restaurants it is the only dessert made “in house”. The reasons for this are simple enough, this is a very simple dish, keeps well, and only needs to have the sugar burnt before serving. Many other desserts require a baker or pastry chef, and have short shelf lives.

Crème Brûlée is a simple custard of cream, sugar and egg yolks with a thin layer of cooked sugar that becomes hard enough to crack, so that you can scoop out the custard beneath. The custard can be flavoured with different spices, but traditionally is made with vanilla. If you have vanilla beans, simply store one in a couple of cups of white sugar for a couple of weeks. This will give a lovely fragrance and taste to anything you use the sugar for. It's okay to use pure vanilla extract, just don't add too much.

The desserts in the photos are a bright creamy yellow because I use free-range eggs. Store bought eggs will make a much paler custard.

Crème Brûlée

6 servings

Ingredients

6 egg yolks

2 c cream (full-fat, 33-36%)

⅓ c sugar

¼ t vanilla

Dash of salt

Sugar for Brûlée

Directions

Heat the cream over medium low heat until hot, but not simmering.

Using the whisk attachment on a mixer, whisk the egg yolks until smooth.

Add in the sugar & salt and continue whisking until pale and thick, about 3 minutes.

Whisk in the vanilla.

With the mixer running, add in the cream in a slow, steady stream.

Strain the custard into a large measuring cup, and cover

Refrigerate until chilled completely. At this point, the custard can be made in advance up to two days.

To cook:

Preheat oven to 350°

Boil enough water to surround the Crème Brûlée dishes half way up the sides of the dishes when they're in the baking pan.

Pour custard into 6 oz. Crème Brûlée dishes or ramekins. The dishes do not need to be greased.

Each dish will get about ½ a cup of custard.

Place the dishes in a large pan with sides at least 2½ “ high.

Place in the center of the oven.

Carefully pour boiling water into the pan until it comes half way up the dishes.

Cook for 45 – 55 minutes, until the centers are set. They shouldn't look jiggly.

Remove from water bath using a rigid lifter. Carefully move them to a board or rack for cooling. When they're at room temperature, place them in the refrigerator and leave them until they are completely chilled, about 3 hours.

To make the sugar crust:

Sprinkle about a teaspoon of sugar over the top of each custard.

Using a kitchen torch, cook the sugar until deep amber.

Alternatively, place the custards on a baking pan and use the broiler to cook the sugar. Keep an eye on them, as the caramelization happens very quickly. Serve immediately.

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