

Crème Caramel

Alliance Française DuPage Baking Demonstration

Saturday, September 4, 2021 at 11:00 am

Presented by Chef Chris Thielman & Karen Thielman

Servings: 4 servings

Special baking equipment: 4 four ounce ramekins, large roasting pan, saucepans, high heat spatula or wooden spoon, large paper clips, string, parchment paper or aluminum foil, mixing bowl, ladle, sieve

Caramel

Ingredients:

2 Tablespoons water for the caramel

1/2 cup granulated sugar for the caramel

1 Tablespoon light corn syrup for the caramel

Custard

Ingredients:

8 ounces whole milk

4 ounces heavy cream

1 large egg

2 large egg yolks

A good pinch of table salt

1/4 cup granulated sugar for the custard

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Additional water for water bath (boiling)

2 ounces whole hazelnuts for garnish (available on Amazon)

Method:

Preheat oven to 325°. Place four 4-ounce ramekins in a large roasting pan.

Using a small saucepan, add 2 Tablespoons water, sugar and corn syrup. Stir to dissolve, using a high heat spatula or wooden spoon.

Cook over medium-high heat, swirling occasionally, until caramel begins to turn amber (about 4 to 6 minutes).

When the caramel is done, work quickly by pouring most of the caramel into the ramekins, dividing the amount evenly. Be sure to leave some caramel in the pan for the hazelnut garnish.

Swirl the ramekins to coat the bottoms evenly. Set aside.

Tilt the saucepan so the remaining caramel can cool and be used to make the hazelnut spike garnishes.

Garnish Method

Unbend a paper clip to create a hook shape. Wash the long end of the paper clip. Take whole, peeled hazelnuts and insert the long end of the paper clip into the side of the hazelnut.

Create a small station with taut string where you can dip the hazelnut into the thick caramel, hanging the hazelnuts on the string, allowing the excess caramel to drip onto parchment paper or aluminum foil to create a long spike. The caramel for the garnish must be **cool and very thick** – the consistency of cold maple syrup. If necessary, you can submerge the saucepan in cool water to accelerate the cooling process.

Dip the hazelnut, trying not to cover the connection between the paper clip and the nut. Immediately hang the paper clip on the string, allowing a long spike or trail to form as the caramel drips slowly down. After the candied hazelnut spikes cool, they must be used immediately or placed in an airtight container, or they will turn soft and liquify from the ambient humidity. This technique works best when the hazelnut spikes are made and used quickly.

Resume the method for the Crème Caramel

In a medium saucepan, heat the milk and cream over medium heat until hot, but not quite boiling.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the whole egg and two additional yolks, salt, and 1/4 cup sugar. While whisking, ladle some of the milk mixture slowly into the egg mixture. Whisk in remaining milk mixture, one ladle at a time. Mix extremely well until homogenous.

Strain through a fine sieve into a large liquid measuring cup and stir in the vanilla extract. Pour the custard into the ramekins, dividing it evenly. (4 ounces per ramekin)

Transfer the roasting pan with the ramekins to the oven. Add enough boiling water to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins.

Bake until custards are just set, about 35 minutes. Test with a metal skewer. When the skewer comes out clean, they are done.

Allow the crème caramel to cool and then remove ramekins from hot water. Cover the ramekins and refrigerate until cold, at least overnight or up to 3 days. This allows the hard caramel on the bottom to liquify.

To unmold, run a sharp knife around inside of each ramekin and invert onto a serving plate, gently shaking to release.

Garnish with the hazelnut spike and serve.

Optional Step:

Whip some additional heavy cream to stiff peak consistency. Use a small dollop of whipped cream as a base to hold the hazelnut garnish upright and in place.

Variations:

Orange - Add the zest of 1 orange to the milk before heating.

Mocha - Add 1 Tablespoon instant coffee to the milk before heating.