

Indian-Inspired Crème Caramels

Recipe 313 of 365

When our friend Munira's mother, makes her cardamom-studded flan, she steams it in a pie plate and serves it in wiggly slices. Here's a slightly simpler version, made just with cream, that makes it easier to eat bit by bit, over the course of multiple nights.

Mumtaz also taught me that flan can be steamed on a rack, over water in a sealed pan, rather than half-submerged in a hot water bath, as I'd always done in the past. It takes a little longer, but the whole process seems easier to me this way.

TIME: 30 minutes active time

MAKES: 6 (very rich) servings

2 cups heavy cream

1/2 nutmeg, grated

4 cardamom pods, cracked and seeds removed, shells discarded

Small pinch saffron

3/4 cup plus 1/3 cup sugar

2 whole large eggs

4 large egg yolks

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Place a roasting rack in a roasting pan, and cover the rack with a clean tea towel. Fill the pan with boiling water until it comes up to the level of the towel. Place six (1/2 cup) ramekins on the towel, and set aside.

Heat the cream, nutmeg, cardamom seeds, and saffron in a saucepan over medium-high heat until it just begins to simmer, and set aside.

In another clean saucepan, melt 3/4 cup sugar over high heat until it caramelizes, turning the pan to mix the sugar as it darkens. (Do not stir sugar with a spoon.) When the sugar is uniformly brown in color, divide the caramel between the six ramekins.

In a mixing bowl, whisk the eggs and egg yolks with the remaining 1/3 cup sugar until blended (but not until thick). While stirring, pour the scented cream into the egg/sugar mixture in a slow, steady stream. Strain the mixture into another bowl through a fine-mesh strainer, then divide it evenly between the ramekins. (If you'd like, you can pick a some cardamom seeds out of the strainer and add a few of them to each ramekin; they'll fall to the bottom and decorate the end product.)

Cover the roasting pan with a sheet of wide heavy-duty foil, crimping the edges to seal. Bake on the center rack for 50 to 60 minutes, or until the custard is just set in the center.

Let crème caramels cool to room temperature, then slide a small knife around the edges, and invert onto dessert plates. They can also be chilled up to 3 days before serving. (In that case, dipping the ramekins in hot water before unmolding makes it easier.)