Crème Brûlée

Make-ahead · Serves 6

Ken's note: TBD

Silky vanilla custard under a thin, crackling layer of burnt sugar. Bake it gently in a water bath until it is set at the edges and still trembling in the center. The custard can be made up to 3 days ahead; torch the sugar just before serving. You need a kitchen torch.

Ingredients

- 1 quart heavy cream
- 1 vanilla bean, split and scraped (or 1 Tbsp vanilla extract, added after the cream is heated)
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 6 large egg yolks
- 3 Tbsp sugar, for the tops
- Hot water, for the water bath

Method

1. Heat the oven to 325°F. Bring the cream and the vanilla bean and its seeds to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Remove from the heat, cover, and let steep 15 minutes. Remove the pod (rinse and dry it for another use).
2. Whisk the ⅓ cup sugar and the egg yolks until well blended and just beginning to lighten. Pour in the cream a little at a time, stirring constantly. Divide among six 7–8-oz ramekins set in a large roasting pan, and pour hot water into the pan to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins.
3. Bake 40–45 minutes, just until the custards are set but still tremble in the center. Remove the ramekins from the water and refrigerate at least 2 hours (up to 3 days).
4. Take the custards out of the refrigerator at least 30 minutes before serving. Spread ½ Tbsp of sugar evenly over each and melt it with a torch until it forms a crisp, amber top. Let sit 5 minutes before serving.
5. Torches are flammable and hot. Use one in a well-ventilated space and follow the manufacturer's instructions.