Crème Brûlée

A spoon cracks through caramelised sugar into a cool vanilla custard.



SERVES 4 / OVEN 160°C

Prep 15 min · Bake about 30 min · Chill fully

Ingredients

FOR THE CUSTARD

600 ml thick cream or double cream
1 vanilla pod
8 egg yolks
100 g caster sugar

TO FINISH

Extra caster sugar, for a thin layer
Fresh berries, to serve (optional)

At the oven

1. Infuse the cream
Heat oven to 160°C. Split the pod, scrape out the seeds and add seeds and pod to the cream. Bring just to a simmer.

2. Mix the custard
Stir yolks and sugar together. Gradually whisk in the warm cream and lift out the pod.

3. Bake in water
Divide between four dishes. Stand them in a tin of warm water, halfway up the sides. Bake about 30 minutes.

4. Chill and caramelise
Rest 10 minutes, lift from the bath and chill fully. Add a thin layer of sugar and torch until amber.

KOOK'S SECRET

Gently nudge one dish. You want a small wobble in the centre and a set edge. The custard continues to firm as it cools.

Crème Brûlée

The full method

01 **Infuse the vanilla**

Heat the oven to 160°C. Split the vanilla pod and scrape out the seeds. Add both pod and seeds to the cream. Warm gently to a simmer.

02 **Combine without whipping**

Mix the yolks and sugar in a bowl until combined. Pour a little hot cream into the yolks and gently whisk. Gradually add the rest, keeping the whisk below the surface to avoid foaming. Remove the pod.

03 **Set up the water bath**

Put four ovenproof dishes in a deep roasting tin near the oven. Divide the custard between them, leaving room at the top. Carefully pour warm water into the tin until it comes just over halfway up the sides.

04 **Bake and cool**

Bake for about 30 minutes. The edges should be set and the centre should wobble gently. Stand in the tin for 10 minutes. Lift the dishes out with a cloth, cool briefly and refrigerate until completely chilled.

05 **Make the crisp lid**

Just before serving, cover each custard with an even, thin layer of caster sugar. Move a kitchen blowtorch steadily over the sugar until it melts and turns amber. Let the caramel harden before serving.

AT THE TABLE

Carry the dishes to the table soon after the caramel sets. The first tap of the spoon should break it into little amber shards.