

Crema Catalana

Preparation time 20 minutes (plus cooling and refrigeration)

Cook time 15 minutes

Makes 3-4 servings



Ingredients

- 500 milliliters (2 cups and 1⅓ tablespoons) whole milk
- 3 yolks
- 30 grams (2 tablespoon) sugar
- 24 grams (3 tablespoons) cornstarch
- ½ cinnamon stick
- 1 long, thick strip of lemon peel
- Sugar for caramelizing

Method

1. Measure the ingredients.
2. Put the milk, cinnamon stick and lemon peel in a saucepan and bring to a slow boil. Remove from heat and allow to infuse for at least 15 minutes. Once cool and infused, strain through a sieve and discard the lemon and cinnamon.
3. Whisk together the eggs and sugar until pale and thick.
4. Mix a little of the infused milk with the cornstarch in a small bowl to make a thin paste (the cornstarch will prevent the egg yolks from curdling). Add the paste to the eggs and whisk well. Then add the rest of the cooled, infused milk to the eggs and whisk gently.
5. Pour the mixture back into the saucepan and cook over a low heat for 10 minutes, stirring constantly, until the custard has thickened – your spoon or whisk will leave faint marks in the custard indicating it has thickened.
6. Remove from the heat and pour into 3 or 4 ramekins or *cazuela* dishes, depending on how large of a portion size you would like to serve. (I used 4 ramekins sized 140 grams/5 ounces which were not filled all the way). Make sure the tops are even as this will affect the caramelization of the sugar in step 8.
7. Immediately cover the tops with plastic wrap to prevent a skin from forming. Once cool, place in the refrigerator for several hours, or overnight, until completely chilled – it will be thick and creamy and will not set like *crème brûlée*.
8. When read to serve, take the custards out of the refrigerator and remove the plastic wrap. Top each custard with a spoonful of sugar. Spread the sugar in a thin layer by tilting the ramekins in all directions. Caramelize the sugar with a small propane kitchen torch until it turns light golden brown (using a hot iron or hot salamander is traditional).
9. Serve immediately as the caramelized sugar with get soggy.

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