

Salted Caramel Custard (Crème Caramel)

Prep: 20m

Cook: 45m

Rest: 4h

Total: 305m

6 servings



Video ref: Food Wishes (Chef John)

MISE EN PLACE / INGREDIENTS

[8]

- ☐ 0.75 cup Granulated white sugar, divided (1/2 cup for caramel, 1/4 cup for custard)
- ☐ 2 tbsp Water (2 tbsp for caramel plus hot water for water bath)
- ☐ 0.5 tsp Fine sea salt or kosher salt for the salted caramel
- ☐ 1.5 cups Fresh whole milk
- ☐ 0.5 cup Heavy whipping cream
- ☐ 3 units Large whole eggs
- ☐ 2 yolks Additional egg yolks
- ☐ 1 tsp Pure vanilla extract

US SUPERMARKET BRAND GUIDE

Pure Vanilla Extract: Nielsen–Massey Madagascar Bourbon Vanilla

Cold-extracted real vanilla beans that perfume subtle milk custards without alcohol harshness. • 📍 Baking aisle.

COOKING SEQUENCE & CHECKPOINTS

1

Cook Salted Caramel

8 min

Simmer 1/2 cup sugar and 2 tbsp water in a saucepan over medium without stirring until it turns a deep copper amber (6 minutes). Remove, stir in sea salt, and divide among 6 ramekins.
✓ Checkpoint: Hardening copper caramel lining the ramekin bases.

2

Scald Milk & Cream

5 min

Warm milk, cream, remaining 1/4 cup sugar, and 1 tsp vanilla extract in a saucepan over low heat until steaming, without boiling. Remove from heat.
✓ Checkpoint: Aromatic steaming milk mixture.

3

Whisk & Sieve the Custard

5 min

Whisk eggs and yolks gently without whipping in air. Slowly stream in warm milk mixture while whisking. Pour through a fine-mesh sieve to eliminate chalazae and bubbles.
✓ Checkpoint: Pristine, smooth liquid custard.

4

Bake in Bain-Marie

40 min

Ladle into ramekins. Place ramekins in roasting pan and fill pan with hot water halfway up ramekin sides. Bake at 325°F (163°C) for 35 to 40 minutes until centers gently wobble. Chill 4 hours.
✓ Checkpoint: Delicate set custard with slight center quiver.

FOOD SAFETY & INTERNAL TEMPERATURE: 160°F (71°C) USDA EGG CUSTARD SAFETY MINIMUM

USDA Food Safety Minimum (≥160°F / 71°C) vs Culinary Texture Target (170°F–175°F / 77°C–79°C): Egg custards are pathogen-safe at 160°F (71°C), while baking in a water bath to 170°F–175°F (77°C–79°C) sets a silky, sliceable gel without curdling (which occurs above 185°F / 85°C). Chill at ≤40°F (4°C).

MASTER DONENESS CHECKPOINT:

Delicately wobbly custard that unmolds cleanly onto a dessert plate, drenched in glossy golden salted caramel sauce.

WHY IT WORKS:

Salt Balancing Sugar Caramelization:
Adding salt directly into the dark caramelized sugar cuts cloying sweetness and magnifies complex toffee and butterscotch notes.

TROUBLESHOOTING:

The custard turned spongy with bubbles throughout: Bake at a low 325°F (163°C) and use hot tap water in the water bath so the eggs set gently without boiling.