



Apricot Ginger Flan

Flan can be tricky – or not. But this recipe is worth your time to try. The soft silky texture of the sweet custard melting on the tongue with a bewitching hint of bitterness from the caramelized sugar, and then the fullness of the ginger perfuming the mouth, is worth the exercising of mastering the heat of your stove and oven.

Makes (4) six-ounce ramekins or (6) four-ounce ramekins

Ingredients

For flan:

1 ¼ cup whole milk
1 ¼ cup half and half
1 1" x 1" piece of fresh ginger, through garlic press (including juices)
3 large eggs
4 large egg yolks
2/3 cup sugar
1 ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

For caramelizing the molds:

1 generous tablespoon apricot preserves
2/3 cup sugar
¼ cup water

Preparation

Infuse the milk and cream:

Combine the milk, half and half, and ginger in a medium-sized heavy saucepan and place over medium-low heat. Warm the milk just until steam is rising from the liquid and small bubbles appear around the edges. Immediately remove from heat and allow the ginger to steep in the cream for 30 minutes. The mixture will thicken. *[Chef's Note: Take care to just warm the milk and cream. Having already been heat-treated under the process of pasteurization (or ultra pasteurization) the heat is only used here as a catalyst for flavor infusion. Any aggressive heating will result in the milk and cream curdling or breaking.]*

Caramelize the molds:

In a small, heavy-bottomed sauce pan, melt the apricot preserves over medium-low heat. Pour through a mesh sieve into a small glass bowl. Reserve the syrup.

Combine the sugar, water, and ½ teaspoon of the apricot preserves syrup in a heavy-bottomed sauce pan over medium heat. Stir until the sugar is dissolved. Once the sugar is dissolved, refrain from any further stirring. Cook the sugared syrup mixture until it begins to turn a light amber color, about 5 to 7 minutes. Swirl the pan as the mixture begins to color, to ensure even caramelization.

Immediately remove the caramelized sugar from the heat and pour into ramekins. Working quickly (and with a kitchen towel to protect your hands from the heat of the caramelized sugar), tilt the ramekins to coat the bottom and about 1/3 up the side of each ramekin. Place in a shallow baking pan and set aside. The caramel will harden.

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Prepare the custard:

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the eggs and egg yolks and whisk until blended. Add the sugar and whisk vigorously until the sugar is dissolved and thick ribbons of the mixture fall from the whisk.

Slowly add the infused milk-and-cream mixture while whisking continuously. Add the vanilla extract and whisk to combine. Pour the mixture through a fine mesh sieve into a clean bowl. Using a ladle, divide the mixture between the prepared ramekins.

Place the baking pan in the oven, and pour hot water into the pan to reach halfway up the side of the ramekins. Bake until the custard is just set and the center slightly jiggles when the ramekin is shaken (*about 40 minutes for the four-ounce ramekins, or 45 to 50 minutes for the six-ounce ones*). Carefully remove the pan from the oven and transfer the entire pan to a baking rack. Allow the custards to completely cool in the water bath, about 1 hour. When cool, remove from the water bath, cover with cling film and refrigerate for at least 3 hours (allowing the flan to become well-chilled) before serving.

Service

Run a thin, sharp knife around the upper edge of each ramekin. Do not slide the knife down the side of the ramekin mold. Invert a chilled serving plate over each ramekin and then flip the ramekin and plate together, allowing the flan to gently fall from the mold. Gently lift the ramekin to expose the flan, and serve immediately.

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