

The image shows two white ceramic ramekins filled with a golden-yellow custard. The top surface of the custard is covered in a thick, dark brown, caramelized sugar crust that has been broiled or torched, creating a cracked and slightly charred texture. The ramekins are set on a light-colored, possibly marble, surface.

Creme Brulee

The Ingredients

- 2 cups Half and Half
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, or 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 5 egg yolks
- ½ cup sugar, more for topping

The Method

Heat oven to 325 degrees. In a saucepan, combine half and half, vanilla bean and salt and cook over low heat just until hot. Let sit for a few minutes, then discard the vanilla bean. (If using vanilla extract, add it now.)

In a bowl, beat yolks and sugar together until light. Stir about a quarter of the cream into this mixture, then pour sugar-egg mixture into cream and stir. Pour into four 6-ounce ramekins and place ramekins in a baking dish; fill the dish with boiling water halfway up the sides of the dishes. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until centers are barely set. Cool completely. Refrigerate for several hours and up to a couple of days.

When ready to serve, top each custard with about a teaspoon of sugar in a thin layer. Place ramekins in a broiler 2 to 3 inches from the heat source. Turn on broiler or use a torch to cook until sugar melts and browns or even blackens a bit, about 5 minutes. Serve within two hours.

Serves 4