

Smoked Maple Bourbon Crème Brûlée – Comfort du Jour

I have made crème brûlée before, using the incomparable Ina Garten's recipe as a guide, but I have never added bourbon to it before now. My husband and I have recently discovered the beauty of Knob Creek smoked maple bourbon, and let me tell you what—the warmth of that spirit married perfectly to the creamy silkiness of our individual little custards, and the maple sugar that I torched on top was exactly what it should have been; crunchy, sweet and toffee-like. The custard inside was silky, sweet and creamy, with hints of the smoked maple bourbon.

Yes, it was *divine*, as you'd expect from a French-born dessert that is made almost entirely of egg yolks, cream and sugar.

ADAPTED FROM [Barefoot Contessa | Crème Brûlée | Recipes](#)

Recipe yields ~32 ounces, good for 6 to 8 ramekins, depending on their size

INGREDIENTS

3 cups heavy cream
1 small pinch kosher salt*
5 large egg yolks + 1 large egg (at room temperature)
1/2 cup maple sugar* + extra for torching (see notes)
1/2 tsp. real vanilla extract
2 Tbsp. Knob Creek smoked maple bourbon

*NOTES

I purchase maple sugar online from [Big Tree Maple](#), a company that is based near my hometown in upstate New York. You might also find it in the baking aisle of a specialty market, or substitute caster sugar, which does not have the maple flavor but is also finely textured for easy dissolving.

Ina's recipe does not call for salt, but I like to put a pinch in most dessert recipes because it highlights the flavors and balances the sweet.

If you use a stand mixer to make the crème brûlée, keep it fitted with the mixing paddle rather than the whisk, and work on the slowest speed so you don't create a lot of bubbles. If you mix by hand, use a whisk but keep a gentle touch when adding the hot cream to the eggs.

A kitchen torch is the easiest way to caramelize the sugar on top, but you can also put them under the broiler for a few minutes, but watch them closely!

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INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 300° F. Heat about 2 cups of water in a tea kettle for a water bath. Prepare your ramekins by arranging them in a handled pan with sides at least as high as the ramekins.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat heavy cream over medium-low heat until hot *but not boiling*. Stir in a pinch of salt. Transfer the hot cream to a measuring cup with a spout for easier blending in the next steps.
3. Combine the egg and egg yolks in a mixing bowl, and gradually stir in the maple sugar until the mixture is smooth and even, and the sugar appears somewhat dissolved.
4. Very gradually pour the hot cream into the egg mixture, stirring constantly to prevent curdling. This is easiest with a stand mixer, but you can do it by hand as well. I recommend placing your mixing bowl on something that will prevent it from slipping while you stir or whisk.
5. Strain the custard mixture through a mesh strainer over a pitcher bowl or large measuring cup. This is not absolutely necessary, but it will help strain out any curdled bits of egg.
6. Stir vanilla and bourbon into the custard. Slowly pour the custard into the ramekins. I did this by filling each of them halfway, then “topping them off” around the pan until all were filled equally.
7. Carefully pour hot water into the pan, taking care to not splash it into the ramekins. The water bath should be about halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Transfer the water bath pan to the preheated oven and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until custards are just *barely* jiggly. They will continue to cook when you remove the pan from the oven. Allow the pan to cool until you’re comfortable handling them. Remove the ramekins and cool on a rack, then cover and transfer them to the refrigerator for several hours to overnight.
8. To finish the crème brûlée, remove ramekins from the fridge about 20 minutes before you’re ready to serve. Sprinkle about two teaspoons of maple sugar over the entire surface of each custard. Use a kitchen torch to caramelize the sugar evenly. Sprinkle an additional teaspoon onto each, and torch again. Allow the crème brûlées to cool for at least a minute so the melted sugar will harden and create the beautiful, shiny crust.