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## creme brulee

adapted from Alton Brown

prep time: 20 min  
cook time: 40 min  
ready in: 3 hr

servings: 4

### ingredients:

2 cups heavy cream  
1/2 vanilla bean  
1/4 cup white sugar  
3 large egg yolks  
1 quart hot water  
2 teaspoons turbinado sugar

### directions:

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

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Split the vanilla bean in half, length-wise and scrape out the pulp using a paring knife. Place the cream, vanilla bean and its pulp into a medium saucepan set over medium-high heat and bring to a boil. Remove from the heat, cover and allow to sit for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, whisk together 1/4 cup sugar and the egg yolks until well-blended and mixture becomes thick and pale yellow.

Add the cream in a slow, steady stream, stirring constantly. (To stabilize the bowl so you can pour in the liquid with one hand and stir with the other, wrap the bottom of the bowl with a wet towel or simply place the bowl in the sink over the drain.) Use a spoon to skim off any foam on the top layer of the mixture that resulted from stirring.

Pour the liquid into four (4-ounce) round ramekins until the liquid just reaches the top of the lower rim. (Depending on the size, you may be able to fill up to six ramekins.) Place the ramekins into a large cake pan or roasting pan. Pour enough hot water into the pan to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins.

Bake just until the creme brulee is set, but still trembling in the center, about 40-45 minutes.

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Remove the ramekins from the roasting pan and refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 3 days. Cover each ramekin with plastic wrap or in tupperware if refrigerating overnight.

Remove the creme brulee from the refrigerator and let sit at room temperature for 15-20 minutes prior to browning the sugar on top just before serving. Sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon turbinado sugar onto each ramekin and spread evenly on top. Using a torch, melt the sugar to form a crispy top. Serve plain or with fresh berries on the side.

### notes:

I've tried using various types of sugars to make the burnt topping and Sugar in the Raw turbinado sugar is my winner. The topping comes out perfect everytime... the crispness is there, the taste is there, the sugar burns evenly, and the amber color adds a nice, finishing touch. If you don't feel like purchasing an entire bag of Sugar in the Raw, just stop by your local Starbucks and pick up a few packets... one packet is enough to top two ramekins.

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Another thing I've noticed in my countless trials and errors is that the vanilla bean specks seem to always settle on the bottom. I discovered a remedy for this by accident when I forgot to skim off the top layer of the foam once before pouring in the liquid. The process is actually quite simple and the extra steps required is well worth not having to see specks of vanilla bean gone to waste on the bottom of the ramekin.

After scraping off the top layer of foam from the bowl, stir the liquid mixture once around the bowl to bring up the vanilla bean specks and pour the liquid into each ramekin until halfway full. Empty the liquid from each ramekin back into the mixing bowl and wipe the outer rim of each ramekin clean. There will be black specks of vanilla bean on the bottom of the ramekins. Now, pour the liquid back into the ramekins as you would have, following the rest of the recipe. You will notice that the black specks of vanilla bean from your initial pouring actually float to the top! Now, you will be able to savor the taste of real vanilla bean in every bite!