

## **Tahitian Vanilla Crème Brulee**

*Few eating pleasures are greater than a mouthful of this creamy custard with its crackling caramel topping. Everyone loves the combo. Try to use Tahitian beans; they're particularly plump and fragrant, but any fresh vanilla beans will do.*

Makes 8 servings.

### **INGREDIENTS:**

1 cup half-and half  
1 Vanilla King Vanilla Bean, preferably Tahitian (seeds scraped from pod)  
1/2 teaspoon Vanilla King vanilla extract  
1 egg plus 8 egg yolks  
2/3 cup granulated sugar  
1 1/2 cups heavy cream, cold  
4 tablespoons superfine sugar (Vanilla King Gourmet Vanilla Sugar)

Note: Vanilla King's Natural Vanilla Sugar is great for caramelizing.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. In a small saucepan, combine the half-and-half, vanilla seeds, and vanilla extract. Heat over medium heat just until scalded; do not allow the mixture to boil. Fill a large bowl with water and add ice. In a medium mixing bowl, combine the egg, egg yolks, and granulated sugar; mix well. Gradually stir in the scalded half-and-half mixture and place the smaller bowl in the bowl of ice water to cool completely. Stir in the heavy cream and divide among eight 4-ounce ramekins. Place the ramekins in a baking dish just large enough to hold them and add enough hot water to the pan to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Cover the baking dish tightly with foil and bake until the custard is set but still quivers in the center, about 35 minutes. Remove the ramekins from the water and refrigerate to cool completely.

Preheat the broiler, if using. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of the superfine sugar on top of each custard, spread over the surface, and tap out any excess. Place the ramekins on a broiling tray and broil until the top is melted and caramelized, about 30 seconds. Watch carefully; the sugar can burn easily. If using a torch, pass the flame about 2 inches over the surface of the custards until the sugar is completely caramelized. Serve while still warm.

Tip: To caramelize the sugar coating, use either a broiler or propane torch. Working with the latter may seem scary, but torches are easily handled and are beautifully efficient. Look for a small version, often called a kitchen torch. If using a torch, replace the superfine sugar with Vanilla King's Natural Vanilla Sugar. Vanilla King's Natural Vanilla Sugar caramelizes more successfully under a torch flame.