Spanish Flan

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup sugar, divided
- 2 cups whipping cream
- 3 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup blanched almonds
- 1 sprig mint, for garnish

Instructions

- Set ramekins in a 9- by 13-inch glass baking dish, which will be used for a boiling water bath while baking.
- Heat 4 to 5 cups of water in a pot on the stove.
- Heat a heavy skillet or saucepan over medium heat for 30 seconds.
- Add 1/2 cup sugar.
- With the back of a wooden spoon, keep the sugar moving constantly in the skillet until the sugar is completely melted & caramelized to a rich medium-brown color.
- Carefully spoon caramelized sugar into each of the 6 ramekins or a large baking dish.

Preheat oven to 325 F (162 C).

- In a saucepan, scald the cream. Keep a close eye on the pan, so the cream does not boil over. Remove immediately.
- Meanwhile, in a mixing bowl, slightly beat 3 eggs. Mix in the remaining 1/4 cup sugar.
- Stirring constantly, gradually add the hot cream to the egg mixture.
- Stir until the sugar is dissolved and then blend in the vanilla extract. Ladle the mixture into ramekins.
- Carefully remove 1 or 2 ramekins to provide some extra room in the larger dish. Pour hot water until there is about 1/2-inch of water in the 9- by 13-inch baking dish for the water bath.
- Replace ramekins. If the water level does not reach 3/4 of the way up the sides of the ramekins, carefully add more water.
- Bake uncovered in the water bath for 50 to 60 minutes, or until a knife comes out clean when inserted halfway between the center and the edge of the dish. To ensure the custard does not over-cook, check for doneness after 45 minutes, then every 3 to 5 minutes.
- Carefully remove each ramekin from the water bath. Set on a cooling rack until lukewarm, then chill thoroughly in the refrigerator. This usually takes at least 1 hour.
- Tap the ramekin and the flan should drop onto the plate. If it does not, carefully "prod" the flan out of the ramekin with a small paring knife. It should slide out and onto the plate.