

Vanilla Custard
From The Cook's Life
Makes 4-6 servings

Use any kind of milk you have on hand – the richer the milk, the richer the custard. This is not a sweet dessert. You can increase the sugar to ½ cup if you like, with no other changes to the recipe. Or sprinkle sugar on top when serving for added sweetness and crunch.

2 cups milk
4 eggs
⅓ cup sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla
dash salt
nutmeg or cinnamon
sugar, for serving (optional)

Equipment:

Custard cups or ramekins
9 by 13 inch baking pan, or equivalent
boiling water for a water bath

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bring a large pot or teakettle of water to a boil and keep hot. Lightly grease 4-6 custard cups or small ramekins. I used 6 ounce custard cups and needed five of them. Set ramekins in a 9 by 13 inch baking pan or other pan large enough to hold them without crowding. Set aside, preferably near the oven.

Heat milk in a 2-3 quart saucepan over medium heat until very hot. Milk will be steaming and there will be bubbles all around the edges when it is hot enough. Don't let it boil. Stir occasionally at the beginning and more often as it gets hotter. It should take 5-7 minutes to get hot enough, depending on your stove and the size of your pan. The larger the pan, the faster the milk will heat (and the closer you need to watch it).

While milk heats, beat eggs, sugar, vanilla and salt together in a large bowl until sugar is no longer gritty.

When milk is hot, beat it gradually into the egg mixture. Start very slowly so you don't scramble the eggs. When all the milk is mixed in, pour the custard into the prepared ramekins, filling them almost full. Sprinkle tops with nutmeg or cinnamon.

Set ramekins, in the larger baking pan, as near to the oven as possible. Pour boiling water into the larger pan, trying to get the water to the same level as the custard in the cups. Carefully transfer the filled pan to the oven.

Bake custard 25-30 minutes, or until the centers barely jiggle when you move the pan. Remove the pan from the oven. Remove ramekins from the hot water and place on a rack to cool. When cool, cover and refrigerate. Let custards come to room temperature for a few minutes before serving. Store leftovers in the fridge for two or three days, covered.