

Beet and Mint Crème Brûlée—a Market Inspiration

I developed this dessert at Payard for a chef's tasting menu that revolved around beets. Most people don't think of using beets in dessert, but beets, like tomatoes, are very versatile because they are sweet. Here I use beet juice, not the pulp, which I get by passing the beets through a juicer. Try to use small beets, as they are sweeter than the large ones and don't require peeling. If you can only find large ones, peel them before juicing.

Makes 10 servings

Special Equipment

Pepper mill; ten 4-ounce ramekins; blowtorch

Perfect Match

2011 Jean-Luc Colombo Cape Bleue Rose, Provence, France

8 large (149 g/5.24 oz) egg yolks
3/4 cup plus 2 1/2 Tbsp (180 g/6.3 oz) granulated sugar
3 1/3 cups (773 g/27.26 oz) heavy cream
2/3 cup (166 g/5.8 oz) beet juice, preferably from small beets
12 fresh mint leaves
1 to 2 turns of freshly ground pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 250°F (121°C). Place 10 ramekins in a hotel or roasting pan.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the egg yolks and 3/8 cup (90 g/3.15 oz) of the sugar until well blended.
3. In a small saucepan, combine the cream, the remaining 3/8 cup (90 g/3.15 oz) sugar, and the beet juice and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Whisk about 1/2 cup (120 g/4.2 oz) of the hot cream mixture into the yolk mixture, then whisk this mixture into the remaining cream mixture in the saucepan. Add the mint leaves and ground pepper and let the mixture stand off the heat, covered, for 15 minutes to infuse.
4. Strain the mixture and divide it equally among the ramekins. Place the pan with the ramekins in the oven and pour enough hot water into the pan so that it comes 1/2 inch up the sides of the ramekins. Bake the custards for about 45 minutes, or until just set. Remove the ramekins from the water bath and set aside to cool.
5. Refrigerate the custards for at least 2 hours, or until chilled.

Assembly

1 cup packed (217 g/7.6 oz) light brown sugar, sifted

Sprinkle the top of each chilled custard evenly with about 2 tablespoons (28 g/1 oz) of the brown sugar. Using a propane or butane blowtorch, caramelize the tops of the custards. Serve immediately.