

Maple-Pumpkin Custards

This recipe requires a few hours of chilling time, so make it early in the day. It comes together very quickly, and the results are wonderful ... a rich, smooth custard with all the flavors of fall. I like this better than pumpkin pie! A nice perk is that it's gluten free and only 200 calories per serving, but tastes like much more. I hope you give it a try! Bon appétit ... Melanie

1 ½ cups lowfat milk

4 large eggs

¾ cup maple syrup (use a high quality product)

¾ cup canned pumpkin puree or pumpkin pie filling

1 tsp. each of cinnamon and nutmeg

½ tsp. salt

Garnishes: all, or a combination of whipped cream, chopped nuts, crystallized ginger

Preheat oven to 325. Put a kettle of water on for the hot water bath. Line a roasting pan with a dish towel.

Heat milk over low heat in a small saucepan until barely steaming, not boiling (watch the milk carefully, it can get hot very quickly!). Whisk eggs and syrup in a large bowl until smooth. Gently whisk in the warm milk (a little at a time so the eggs don't cook). Add pumpkin puree, spices and salt. Whisk until blended.

Divide the mixture among six 6-ounce ramekins or custard cups. Place custard cups in the prepared roasting pan. Pour enough hot water in the roaster to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Use a kettle with a spout so you can easily pour the hot water around the dishes. Place the pan in the oven (carefully, as to not slosh water into the custard). Bake uncovered for 45 – 50 minutes or until the custard is set, but still quivers when shaken.

Transfer custard cups to a baking rack and cool for 45 minutes. Then transfer to the refrigerator for at least 2 hours, or until well chilled. 4 hours is best.

Garnish with a drizzle of maple syrup and finely chopped walnuts or a sprinkling of crystallized ginger. Whipped cream is nice, too.

Wine pairing ... golden dessert wine, such as Dolce from Napa Valley, or Iniskillin Vidal from Ontario. Make sure the ice wine is VERY cold. Dessert wine should also be very chilled. A nice cup of hot coffee or chai tea are also good companions to this dessert.