

## **MASCARPONE CRÈME AU FOUR/BAKED MASCARPONE CUSTARD**

Yield varies depending on the size of ramekins or molds used. E.g. using 3.5 ounce ramekins the yield is about 10 servings; 6 ounce ramekins about 7; using 8-well muffin shaped silicone molds filled ~half full, yield is ~14 portions and filled to the top ~8.

I give instructions for baking in ramekins and add tips at the end for using silicone molds. The recipe is easily doubled. If doing so, you can use 2 large eggs + 2 large whites OR use three large eggs - the volume is pretty close.

I strongly encourage using gram weights. Once you've started, you won't go back!

- 160 g / 5.5 ounces mascarpone cheese, room temperature
  - 227 g / 8 ounces Philadelphia cream cheese, room temperature
  - 74 g / 1/3 cup cane sugar
  - seeds of half a vanilla bean OR 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
  - 1 large egg + 1 large egg white
  - 120 ml / 1/2 cup heavy cream
  - OPT: 45 g / 3 tablespoons fruit purée of choice e.g roasted strawberry purée
1. Heat the oven to 275°F. Have desired ramekins on hand along with hot water to partially fill a Pyrex type rectangular casserole dish to hold the ramekins.
  2. Place the mascarpone, cream cheese, sugar and vanilla in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle. Blend on medium until smooth.
  3. Add egg and white and blend until smooth.
  4. Add the cream and blend until incorporated.
  5. Blend in fruit purée of choice, if using.
  6. Fill the ramekins to about 1/4" below the top rim, place them in the casserole dish and fill the dish with hot water about half way up the sides of the ramekins.  
NOTE: I leave one ramekin out to allow room to pour in the hot water and avoid splashing it into the custards; then just put the ramekin in along with the others.
  7. Cover loosely with foil, carefully place into the heated oven (no splashing!) and bake until just set with a slight jiggle remaining in the center. Baking time will

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- vary depending on size but will typically be 25-30 minutes. Check early! If baked custards go too long they can become grainy and lose that lovely creamy texture.
8. Remove from oven, uncover, gently lift ramekins out, place on a cooling grid and cool to room temperature. Then place in the fridge for several hours to chill thoroughly. Once chilled, if not enjoying that day, cover with plastic wrap. These can be made 2-3 days ahead.
  9. To serve, top with a dollop of whipped cream, fresh berries, some graham crumbs and a drizzle of caramel. Yum!

When baking the custard as a layer to build individual desserts, use muffin style silicone molds with individual wells (also available in many other shapes and sizes) which offer the ability to bake, cool and freeze the custard(s) right in the molds. How about two complementary flavors to create stacks? Yes!

I prefer the Silikomart brand orange molds which measure ~7"x12". One half sheet pan will hold 2 molds comfortably.

Set the molds on the sheet pan and fill them with the custard mixture either partially (good for stacking different flavors) or all the way to the top, depending on what you have in mind.

Carefully pour hot water into the sheet pan so as to cover the lower third of the mold wells and then very carefully, keeping the sheet pan level, slide onto the oven rack. Steady hands! I don't cover the custards when baking in the silicone molds.

Bake until just set - about 25 minutes or so. Once out of the oven gently lift the molds out of the sheet pan and set on a cooling grid. Once cool, place in the freezer until solid. At this point you can hold them in the molds covered with parchment or waxed paper (to reduce ice crystal formation) topped with plastic wrap OR you can pop the frozen custards out of the mold and store in a closed container until use.

A few hours before serving, place each frozen custard on a cookie, meringue or cake base. If layering, add a drizzle of caramel and some graham or chocolate cookie crumbs then follow with a second frozen layer of another flavored custard or a citrus cream.

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Once assembled, hold in the fridge until serving - this allows the custard(s) to thaw and be perfectly cool and creamy when ready to eat.

Right before serving, as you might with the simpler ramekin approach, you can add a dollop of whipped cream, some fresh berries, berry sauce or *coulis* and perhaps some toasted chopped nuts for the *pièce de resistance*. Enjoy!

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