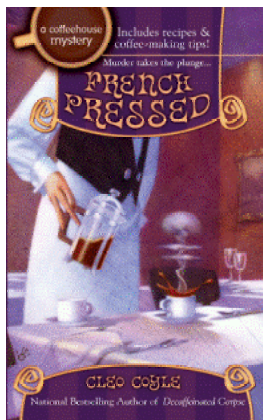


Cleo Coyle's Chocolate Pots de Crème

A classic French dessert that's elegant and easy to make.



“Sinfully rich chocolate custard. Oh, baby!”



This dessert was mentioned in
Cleo Coyle's
French Pressed
(A Coffeehouse Mystery)

For many American kids, pudding is something pre-made in a plastic cup. If you're really lucky, you'll have it "homemade" for you from a cardboard Jell-O pudding box. This was my experience growing up. Sure, I enjoyed plenty of homemade Italian foods (my mom was born in Italy), but pudding was an American thing; and American things were found in boxes and cans, or wrapped in plastic.

When I finally discovered pots de crème, the clouds parted; the sun appeared. I'd found pudding nirvana! This classic dessert, which translates from French to English as "pots of cream," is not your grade school cafeteria's chocolate custard. It's a rich, smooth, sinfully chocolaty experience. It's also easy to make. No special culinary skills needed. If you can follow directions, you can make pots de crème....

Cleo Coyle's Chocolate Pots de Crème

Recipe (c) 2008 by Alice Alfonsi who writes as Cleo Coyle with her husband Marc Cerasini

My version of this classic French recipe makes approximately six 6-oz servings. This is a generous portion size for the typical pots de crème, but let's be real. In America, the home cooks' main concern is: *Did you have enough? Would you like seconds?* Which is one reason "palate fatigue" is (happily) a non-starter in most American homes. If you'd like

to learn more about the modern gourmet philosophy of "palate fatigue," read my latest *Coffeehouse Mystery: French Pressed*. You'll see I have a strong opinion about it! —Cleo



Servings: This recipe will produce 4 cups of liquid to divide among your ramekins, custard cups, or ovenproof coffee cups. See "Notes from Cleo" at the end of this recipe for more container suggestions.

Ingredients:

12 ounces of good quality semisweet chocolate chopped (or chips)
2 cups heavy cream
3/4 cup milk
6 egg yolks (extra large or jumbo size)
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon salt

Step 1: Melt the chocolate

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. Put your chopped chocolate (or chips) in a metal or glass bowl. In a medium saucepan, heat the cream and milk until it's just about to boil, but not yet boiling. Pour this hot liquid over your chocolate and let it sit for about a minute until the chocolate is softened. Then stir this mixture until it's smooth. The stirring will take 1 - 2 minutes.



Step 2: Beat the eggs

Using an electric mixer, beat the eggs well, for about 1 minute. Gradually mix in sugar until smooth. Add vanilla and salt. Now gradually beat the chocolate mixture you made (in Step 1) into these egg yolks.

Step 3: Strain and pour into containers

Strain this custard through a fine-meshed sieve (I use a small metal colander). Pour the strained liquid into a container with a spout. This will make it easier to evenly divide the mixture among containers.



Step 4: Prepare for Baking

Place the cups in a shallow baking pan. Carefully fill the pan with boiling water until it reaches about halfway up the sides of the custard cups (or ramekins or ovenproof coffee cups).

Step 5: Cover and Bake

Cover pan with foil, seal ends, and pierce in several places so that steam can escape. Bake for about 25 - 35 minutes in the center of your 300 degree F. oven until the tops of the pots de crème look solid, but the custard still jiggles slightly when you shake it. Don't worry; the custard will firm up as it cools.

Note: The smaller your cups, the quicker your custard will set. The deeper your cups, however, the longer your custard will take to set. If your custard still has a liquid top after 35 minutes, then turn up the oven temperature to 325 degrees F. and bake another 10 minutes. (If you use cool or room temperature water, rather than boiling water for the water bath, the cooking process may take longer, as well.)

Step 6: Chill, baby!

Now carefully remove the hot pots from the oven and the hot pan and let them cool to room temperature before placing in the fridge. After they come to room temperature, make sure to cover these with plastic wrap to prevent a skin from forming. The custards should be chilled at least 3 hours before serving.

* NOTES FROM CLEO:

Before this recipe is baked into custard, it will give you about 4 cups of liquid to divide evenly among your containers. Authentic French pots de crème cups include tiny lids for each individual cup. The French cups are on the small side. My cups are on the large size! I use six stoneware coffee cups when I make this recipe. To serve, I set the coffee cups on a saucer, place raspberries on the side, and whipped cream on top.

You can also use custard cups or ramekins for this recipe. If your cups or ramekins are on the large side, too, (7-8 oz), I'd advise you to divide the liquid custard mixture into no less than six servings and just use the extra space at the top of your containers for a big dollop of whipped cream or shaved chocolate curls. You can certainly use smaller ramekins or custard cups, as well. If you have 4-oz cups, for instance, then you can divide the mixture into 8 servings. A special dinner might be concluded with pots de crème served in espresso cups (these are usually 4-oz cups, so you'll need eight for service). Place the espresso cups on their saucers and a bit of whipped cream on top!

VARIATIONS:

Because this is a classic French dessert, many versions exist in cookbooks and on the Internet. For variations on this basic recipe, reduce the vanilla to 2 teaspoons and add 2 tablespoons Kahlúa (or try dark rum, Grand Marnier, or coffee syrup*). Coffee syrup can be bought pre-made. It can also be made from scratch. My recipe can be found in the back of the *Coffeehouse Mystery: Decaffeinated Corpse*.

For many more ideas on variations for French pots de crème, check out this web address:

http://www.gourmetsleuth.com/recipes_pdc.asp

