

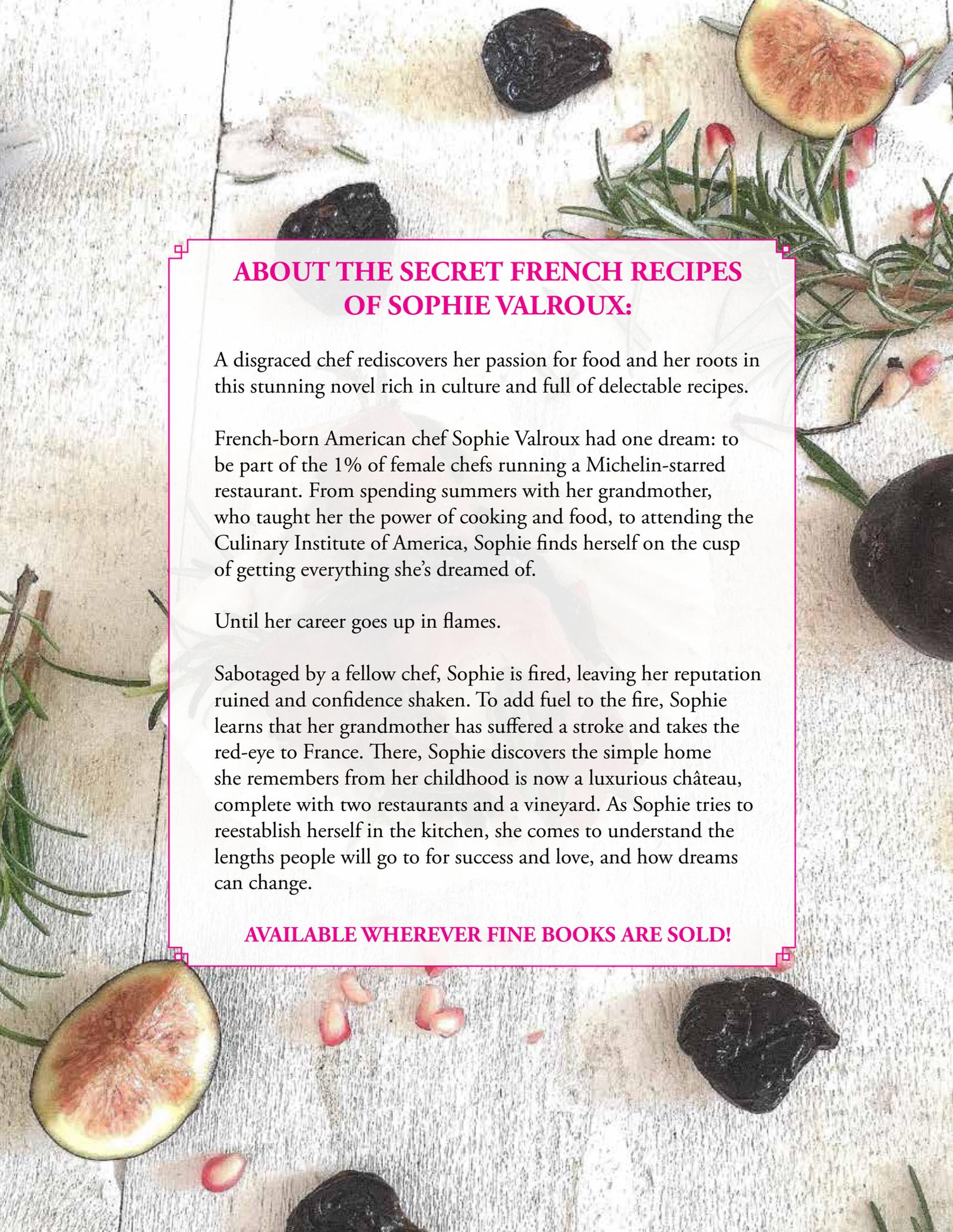
*The
Secret French
Recipes of
Sophie Valroux*

BY SAMANTHA VÉRANT



**LES RECETTES
(PLUS A BOOK GIVE-AWAY!)**





ABOUT THE SECRET FRENCH RECIPES OF SOPHIE VALROUX:

A disgraced chef rediscovers her passion for food and her roots in this stunning novel rich in culture and full of delectable recipes.

French-born American chef Sophie Valroux had one dream: to be part of the 1% of female chefs running a Michelin-starred restaurant. From spending summers with her grandmother, who taught her the power of cooking and food, to attending the Culinary Institute of America, Sophie finds herself on the cusp of getting everything she's dreamed of.

Until her career goes up in flames.

Sabotaged by a fellow chef, Sophie is fired, leaving her reputation ruined and confidence shaken. To add fuel to the fire, Sophie learns that her grandmother has suffered a stroke and takes the red-eye to France. There, Sophie discovers the simple home she remembers from her childhood is now a luxurious château, complete with two restaurants and a vineyard. As Sophie tries to reestablish herself in the kitchen, she comes to understand the lengths people will go to for success and love, and how dreams can change.

AVAILABLE WHEREVER FINE BOOKS ARE SOLD!



Chef's Note:

Grand-mère Odette taught me that recipes are only guidelines. Throughout the years, I've learned to season to taste (and to taste while cooking, never overseasoning), to add or omit ingredients depending on my likes, and to get creative in the kitchen. Please remember that every kitchen is different. One oven may run hotter or cooler than another. Pots and pans may cook differently at the same heat. As Jacques Pépin has said: "Cooking is about the art of adjustment."

When entertaining, the French do follow certain rules for a formal sit-down dinner. Instead of an amuse-bouche, most French serve an apéro, or apéritif—cocktails or champagne along with small appetizers such as canapés, olives, cherry tomatoes, or potato chips, and one or two standout dishes. After the apéro, the host calls the guests to the table. The dinner starts with the entrée (the first small plate), followed by le plat principal (main course), then the cheese and/or salad course, and, finally, dessert.

With that said, I hope you enjoy the recipes I've chosen to share with you. If you'd like to offer your dinner guests a cheese course, I'd suggest Roquefort, a Cantal, goat cheese, Brie, or a Tomme. Throughout the meal, the wine you serve is up to you. Bon appétit!

Many bisous and best wishes for this holiday season,

Chef Sophie

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A COPY OF THE BOOK!**

**EMAIL SAMANTHA VÉRANT at
slverant@gmail.com, mentioning that
you are a member of Paris Writing
Salon...AND tell her what your favorite
go-to meal is. One winner will be chosen
randomly on December 10th, 2020.**



THE AMUSE BOUCHE- APÉRO



Pan-Seared Scallops wrapped in Jambon Sec and Prunes with a Balsamic Glaze

Serves 8 • Prep Time: 20 minutes • Cook Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

16 nice-sized sea scallops, around an inch in circumference, with or without the coral
Juice of 1 lemon
Fresh ground pepper
4-6 slices jambon sec or other dry-cured ham like prosciutto
8 sprigs fresh rosemary
8 dried prunes*
2 cups balsamic vinegar
Extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon butter
16 leaves fresh sage

Technique:

If using scallops with the coral, peel off the coral and set aside. Drizzle the lemon juice on the scallops. Season with fresh ground pepper to taste. Lightly toss and set aside.

Slice the dry-cured ham in half lengthwise.

Take a rosemary sprig and spear one scallop, followed by one prune, and then another scallop. Wrap each scallop with half a slice of dry-cured ham.

Pour the vinegar into a small pot and cook over high heat until it reduces to a syrup-like consistency, approximately 5 to 7 minutes. Lower heat to keep warm.

Combine a dash of olive oil, the butter, and the sage in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Once the pan is hot, add the scallop spears, along with the coral, if using, and cook about 2 to 3 minutes per side until the scallops are cooked through and firm to the touch, and the dry-cured ham is browned.

Place the browned sage on a small dish, topped with the speared scallops and prunes. Drizzle with the balsamic glaze, and garnish with the coral, if using, and fresh ground pepper to taste. Serve immediately, one sprig per plate.

Chef's Note: * In the summer, fresh figs can be substituted for the dried prunes.

THE ENTRÉE



Velouté de Potimarron with Flambéed Lobster Tails and a Parmesan Crisp

Serves 8 to 10 for an entrée (small bowl) or 4 to 6 for a main course

Prep Time: 30 to 45 minutes

Cook Time: 1.5 hours

Equipment: parchment paper, baking sheet, large pot, cheese grater, kitchen scissors, food processor or immersion blender, large frying pan, long kitchen matches, spatula

Ingredients for the Velouté:

2 medium-sized potimarron (Hokkaido squash) or butternut squash*
Extra-virgin olive oil
Salt (fleur de sel, sea, or kosher)
Fresh ground pepper
4 teaspoons cinnamon
1 medium leek, sliced into thin rounds*
1 onion, peeled and diced
2 celery stalks, diced
2 carrots, peeled and diced
2 garlic cloves, peeled, de-germed, and finely minced
6-7 cups homemade chicken broth or canned chicken or vegetable stock
1 to 2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 tablespoon paprika
1 tablespoon ground turmeric
3 healthy pinches herbes de Provence
Juice of 1 lemon
Sprigs of lavender or rosemary for garnish
Crème fraîche or sour cream (optional**)
Chopped chives (optional**)

Ingredients for the Parmesan Crisp:

7 ounces Parmesan cheese, a nice chunk

Ingredients for the Lobster Tails:

4 langoustes (spiny/Caribbean lobsters) thawed—approximately 4 oz. each
Juice of 1 to 2 freshly squeezed oranges
2 to 3 tablespoons finely minced ginger
Fresh ground pepper
Extra-virgin olive oil
1 to 2 knobs of butter (about 1 to 2 tablespoons each)
¼ cup Armagnac or cognac

Technique:

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Using a sharp knife, cut the squash in half. Deseed, then cut the squash into large chunks. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet, skin side down. Drizzle with olive oil. Lightly salt and pepper. Sprinkle with cinnamon. Bake for 25 minutes.

While the squash is cooking, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add leeks, onion, celery, carrot, and garlic, cooking until vegetables are soft, about ten minutes. Add the broth, cumin, paprika, turmeric, and herbes de Provence. Bring to a boil, cover, and reduce heat to simmer.

When the squash is ready, set aside and let cool.

It's time to make the Parmesan crisps while the oven is hot. Hand grate the Parmesan using a grater. Each crisp requires 1½ to 2 tablespoons of cheese, totaling 8-10 rounds. Bake on a parchment-lined baking sheet for around 7 minutes, until golden. Remove from the oven and set aside.

Using kitchen scissors, cut off the lobster shells. Gently remove the meat of the lobster from the shell, aiming to remove it in one piece. Place the tails in a bowl and add the juice of the oranges and the ginger. Mix well, cover in plastic wrap, and set the bowl in the refrigerator until ready to cook.

When the squash is cool enough to handle, peel off the skin and chop the squash into 1-inch to 2-inch cubes. (You should have about 5 to 6 cups.) Add the squash to the pot of vegetables and broth. Simmer for another 15 to 20 minutes. Purée in batches with a food processor or all at once with an immersion blender until creamy. Season with the juice of the lemon and salt and pepper to taste. Keep warm.

Add a dash of olive oil to a large pan along with a knob or two of butter. Set the heat to medium high. Place the lobster tails in the pan and fry until the meat is white, flipping to cook both sides. After the tails are cooked to perfection, turn off the heat on the stove and, very important, the evacuation system, if using. It's time to flambée. Pour the Armagnac over the tails and quickly light a long kitchen match, dipping it into the alcohol. If the flames rise too high, grab a pot cover and snuff the flame out. Please note: flambée at your own risk. If you have long hair, tie it back out of the way.

Cut the lobster tails into bite-sized pieces. Pour the soup into bowls. Add a few morsels of lobster, about four to six pieces a person. Using a spatula, lift up the Parmesan crisps. Garnish the soup with one Parmesan crisp, and fresh herbs like lavender, thyme, or rosemary. Serve immediately.

Bon appétit!

Chef Sophie's Notes:

To clean leeks, slice off the dark green end, trimming to the part where the color is pale green or white. Cut off the roots. Slice the stalk lengthwise, not cutting through it. Run leeks under cold water. Set aside until ready to chop and use.

This soup can be served on its own. Garnish with a dollop of crème fraîche (or sour cream), chopped chives, and fresh ground pepper.



THE PLAT PRINCIPAL



Filet of Daurade (Sea Bream) served over a Sweet Potato Purée and Braised Cabbage

Serves 8 • Prep Time: 25 minutes • Cook Time: 30 to 40 minutes

Ingredients:

8 to 10 medium-sized sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into rough chunks
½ to 1 cup crème fraîche or sour cream
Freshly squeezed juice of 1-2 oranges
Ground nutmeg
3 to 4 tablespoons butter
Extra-virgin olive oil
3 to 4 tablespoons finely minced garlic
1 head red cabbage, sliced into ¼-inch strips
Freshly squeezed juice of 3-4 lemons, plus more if needed
Balsamic vinegar
3 tablespoons fresh rosemary or herbes de Provence
8 filets of daurade (sea bream)
2 to 3 pinches saffron
½ to 1 cup finely minced flat parsley
Fresh ground pepper
Salt
Fresh herbs like lavender and rosemary and/or edible flowers for garnish

Technique:

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Place the sweet potatoes in the pot, boiling for about 18 to 20 minutes until tender. Drain and place back into the pot. Add ½ cup crème fraîche or sour cream, the juice of 1 orange, and a pinch or two of nutmeg. Using an immersion blender or hand-held mixer, purée. The sweet potatoes should have a mashed consistency. If the mixture is too dry or has too many chunks, add a little more orange juice or crème fraîche, and mash again. Taste. Then season to taste with salt, pepper, butter, and a dash (or two) of nutmeg. Place on a burner and set to low to keep warm.

In a large frying pan, combine a dash or two of olive oil, a pat of butter, and the minced garlic over medium-high heat. Once the garlic has softened, add the sliced cabbage, stirring until it wilts. Add two tablespoons lemon juice, a dash (or three) of balsamic vinegar, and sprinkle with ground nutmeg to taste. Turn heat to low to keep warm.

In another large frying pan, heat olive oil and a knob of butter over medium-high heat. Season each side of the daurade filets with one tablespoon lemon juice, minced parsley to lightly cover, and fresh ground pepper to taste. Sprinkle with saffron. Once the pan is hot, place the daurades in the pan and fry, about 2 to 3 minutes per side, adding a bit more lemon juice if desired, cooking until the fish is no longer translucent. (If you have to sear the fish in batches, keep them warm in an oven on low heat.)

It's time to serve. If you want to get fancy, use a 4-inch circle tool to plate. First, place the cabbage, and press down. This is followed by the sweet potato purée. Again, press down. Place the daurades on top of the sweet potato and garnish with fresh herbs and edible flowers. If you're not feeling fancy, plate it in the above order. Serve immediately and enjoy!

THE SALAD/CHEESE COURSE



*Arugula and Endive with Rosemary Encrusted Goat Cheese Toasts,
garnished with Pomegranate Grains and Clementine Slices,
served with a Citrus-Infused Dressing*

Serves 8 • Prep Time: 15 to 20 minutes • Cook Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
Freshly squeezed juice of 1 orange
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
Extra-virgin olive oil
Salt
Fresh ground pepper
1 or 2 French baguettes, sliced in ½-inch-thick rounds
Butter
Fresh rosemary or herbes de Provence
1½ cups lardons (small pieces of salted ham) or chopped pancetta
1½ cups leeks, chopped in rounds
2 logs goat cheese (200 grams or 7 ounces), sliced into ½-inch-thick rounds (two per person)
1-1/2 cups panko or bread crumbs, plus more if needed
8 cups arugula, around 1 cup per person
4 cups endive, roughly chopped, around ½ cup per person
1 deseeded pomegranate, separated
4 clementine or mandarin oranges, peeled, separated into slices, and deseeded
Fresh tarragon, roughly chopped

Technique:

Prepare the dressing. In a small bowl, combine 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard with the juice of 1 orange, with the balsamic vinegar. Add in the olive oil to taste and whisk until it's a creamy (but not too thick) consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste. Put the dressing in the refrigerator until ready to use.

Slice the baguette(s) into rounds about ½ inch thick, counting out two per person. Heat a frying pan with 2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil and a nice knob of butter over medium-high heat. Add the needles from the fresh rosemary to the pan or a tablespoon or two of herbes de Provence. Place the slices of bread in the pan, grilling both sides until golden. Set aside and repeat, if necessary.

When all the baguette rounds are toasted, in the same pan, add a dash of oil, the lardons, and the leeks. Cook until tender and slightly caramelized. Set aside and keep warm.

Gently encrust the goat cheese slices with the panko or bread crumbs, coating both sides. Fry them in the already greased pan for approximately 2 minutes per side. Place the goat cheese on the baguette toasts and get ready to plate.

Combine one cup arugula and ½ cup endive on each plate. Add the lardons and leeks, splitting the ingredients per dish. Place two baguette toasts topped with panko-encrusted goat cheese on each plate. Scatter the pomegranate seeds and the slices of clementine or mandarin oranges. Drizzle the dressing, garnish with fresh tarragon . . . and serve.

LE DESSERT



Crème Brûlée with Two Seasonal Topping Options

Serves 8 • Prep Time: 20 minutes • Cook Time: 55 minutes • Rest Time: 4 hours

Special Equipment: 8 ramekins, deep-sided baking or roasting pan, kitchen torch

Ingredients:

2 cups milk
3 cups heavy cream or crème fraîche liquide
8 egg yolks
½ cup white sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract or the seeds from a vanilla bean pod
½ to 1 cup brown sugar
Seasonal fruit and herbs

Technique:

Preheat oven to 215°F.

In a saucepan, combine the milk with the cream and bring to a boil. Lower heat to keep warm.

Combine the egg yolks, white sugar, and vanilla in a mixing bowl. Using a whisk or beater, blend until smooth. Temper the egg batter, mixing in the warm milk and cream mixture one tablespoon at a time. This ensures your egg mixture won't cook. Then slowly add the mixture to the milk and cream; mix well.

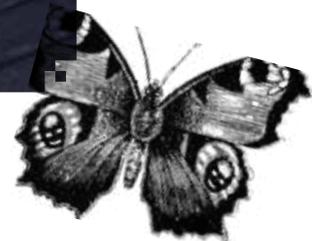
Set the ramekins in a baking pan. Add just enough water so the ramekins are almost halfway submerged—a bain-marie. Using a ladle, fill the ramekins with the mixture. Gently place the baking pan in the oven, careful not to slosh water into the ramekins. Bake for 55 minutes. Take the pan out of the oven, again being careful not to get water in the ramekins. Let the ramekins cool, then refrigerate for a minimum of four hours.

Before serving, sprinkle each ramekin with brown sugar, covering the mixture—around 1/2 tablespoon. Caramelize the sugar topping using a kitchen torch.

Toppings:

In the spring or summer, top your crème brûlée with fresh sliced strawberries marinated in cognac. Garnish with a sprig of fresh rosemary or basil.

In the fall or winter, top your crème brûlée with spicy red wine–poached pear slices and garnish with a star anise.



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