

Pumpkin Caramel Custard

For Caramel:

3 tablespoons water
¾ cup sugar

For Custard:

1 ¼ cups sugar
1 ¼ cups canned or fresh, cooked pumpkin – unsweetened and unspiced
1 ½ cups half & half or evaporated skim milk
5 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 ½ teaspoons vanilla
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground allspice
½ teaspoon salt

To make caramel, place sugar and water in a medium heavy saucepan over medium heat. Stir just to dissolve sugar. Bring mixture to a boil, without stirring, until caramelized, about 7 – 10 minutes. Immediately and CAREFULLY pour the caramel into a 1 ½ quart soufflé dish or ramekin, or divide into six 6-oz. Individual ramekins. Using a pot holder, swirl dish(es) to coat the bottom and sides well with caramel. Set dish(es) aside.

To make the custard, place the pumpkin and sugar in a mixing bowl. Whisk well to mix. Whisk in remaining ingredients until well incorporated. (Option: place all ingredients into a blender and whirl until well mixed.) Pour the mixture into the caramel coated dish(es). Cover dish(es) tightly with foil. Place in a large baking pan and pour in enough hot water to reach halfway up the sides.

Bake until firm, about 90 minutes. Cool the custard, uncovered, to room temperature, then cover and refrigerate until well chilled. Can be prepared one day ahead.

When ready to serve, run a knife around the side of the dish and invert custard onto a serving platter. Drizzle any remaining caramel over the top. If caramel seems to be sticking to the bottom of the dish, dip dish into hot water to loosen, then invert onto serving platter. Cut into 8 wedges and serve with whipped cream, if desired.

NOTE: This custard may be prepared without the caramel if desired. Simply skip that step. Be sure to prepare the baking dish by spraying with non-stick cooking spray before adding custard mixture.