

## Baked Custard



1. For 6 servings, in medium bowl, beat together **4 eggs**, **1/2 cup sugar**, **1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla** and **1/4 teaspoon salt**, if desired, until well blended.



2. Stir in **3 cups skim or 1% low-fat milk**, heated until very hot.



3. Place 6 lightly greased 6-ounce custard cups or 1 lightly greased 1 1/2-quart casserole in large baking pan. Pour egg mixture into cups or casserole.



4. Sprinkle with **ground nutmeg or cinnamon**, if desired. Place pan on rack in preheated **350° F oven**. Pour very hot water into pan to within **1/2 inch** of top of cups or **1 inch** of top of casserole.



5. Bake until knife inserted near center comes out clean, about 25 to 30 minutes for cups or about 35 to 40 minutes for casserole. Remove promptly from hot water. Cool on wire rack about 5 to 10 minutes. Serve warm or refrigerate and chill thoroughly to serve cold.



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## Baked Custard Tips

- You can bake dessert custards individually in custard cups or as a large pudding in a casserole, baking dish or souffle dish. A *bain-marie*, or water bath, promotes even cooking by insulating the custard from direct oven heat which can cook the custard too fast and cause curdling. To make a water bath, place the dish/es in a larger pan deep enough to hold water that will reach within 1/2 inch of the top of the cups or 1 inch of the top of the dish.
- Time the baking carefully. Too short a time and the custard will not set; too long and it will curdle. Test for doneness by inserting a knife into the custard near, but not at, the center. For dessert custards, the knife will come out clean when the custard is done. Savory custards containing cheese may continue to test “wet” when they are done. Use a thermometer to see if the custard has reached at least 160° F and jiggle the dish slightly to judge whether or not the vast majority of the custard is set. With the retained heat in the custard, the innermost center will continue to cook after removal from the oven and will quickly set.
- Easy additions to an unbaked dessert custard mixture are drained canned fruits, dried or candied fruits, fruit preserves, flaked coconut and nuts with the exception of pecans and walnuts which will turn the custard an odd brownish-purple wherever they touch. You can add any flavoring extract you like to the egg-milk mixture – lemon, orange, mint, rum, maple – or use a liqueur, cocoa or instant coffee.
- To prepare soothing, classy *creme brulee*, top either stirred or baked custard with brown sugar and heat until crispy under the broiler or with a small blowtorch or salamander. Beyond the classic cup custard of ancient Greece, other sweet custard delights include simple custard pie, rich Latin-American *flan*, homespun rice or bread pudding and syrup-topped *creme caramel*. Unsweetened, baked custard can be a *timbale* (a cupful) or a *quiche* (a dishful), each flavored with vegetables, cheese and/or meats.