



INGREDIENTS

Serves approximately 8

- unsalted butter to grease
- caster sugar to dust
- 125 g (4.5 oz) caster sugar
- 1 tbsp caster sugar (extra)
- 12 medium eggs
- 75 g (3 oz) plain flour
- 375 ml (13 fl. oz) milk
- 20 g (¾ oz) unsalted butter
- 1 split vanilla pod
- 1 large banana, mashed
- 1-2 tbsp rum (to taste)
- icing sugar to dust

METHOD

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas mark 4. Grease 8 ramekin dishes with butter and then dust with caster sugar.

2 Separate the yolks from the whites of 10 eggs, putting 8 yolks in one bowl, 2 yolks in another, and 4 egg whites in another bowl.

3 Add the 125 g of sugar and 2 remaining whole eggs to the bowl containing the 2 egg yolks. Whisk to a light, pale colour, then fold in the flour.

4 Place the milk, butter and vanilla pod in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Then remove from the heat and discard the vanilla pod.

5 Pour the egg mixture into the saucepan of milk, whisking vigorously and continuously until a very thick custard is formed. Then return to the heat and whisk continuously until it comes to the boil. Add the 8 yolks and beat in briefly.

6 Remove from the heat and pour into a clean bowl. Beat (by hand or with a mixer) for 5 minutes. This will make the mixture smooth and also help to cool it down. This is the 'base' for the soufflé.

7 Mix the rum with the mashed banana, add this to the 'base' and set to one side.

8 Beat the 4 egg whites in a large glass bowl until they begin to form peaks. Then gradually add the tbsp of sugar, beating continually until stiff peaks form.

9 Using a rubber spatula, fold 1/5 of the egg white carefully into the base, making sure not to beat the air out. Then fold in another 3/5 of the egg white. At this point, you need to choose whether to add the remaining 1/5 of the egg white, which will make the soufflé rise more, but will reduce the flavour.

10 Divide the mixture between the ramekins, filling them to the top. Bake for 10 minutes or until golden brown and cooked. Then remove from the oven and dust with icing sugar.

11 Serve immediately.



ABOUT EGGS



To find out how strong eggshells are, when you have used some eggs, don't discard the empty shells. Cut the edges of 4 shells with scissors, so that they are all about the same size. Place them, cut-side down, on a firm surface. Put a book across the top of them and then see how much more weight you can add before the shells break. It should be possible for them to bear 5 kg at least. The strength of the shape of the shell ensures that the eggs do not break when the hen is incubating them.

- Eggs are not just laid by birds. They are also laid by a wide range of creatures including insects, spiders, crustaceans, fish, and reptiles.
- Whisking egg whites causes the globular proteins to unravel and take up new shapes, trapping air in the three-dimensional network which they form. Baking the whisked egg white causes even more coagulation, resulting in the protein going solid to form a meringue. If fat molecules are present, they coat the globular proteins and prevent them from unravelling and tangling when they are whisked, which is why you can't make a meringue if any of the egg yolk, which contains fat, is present in the egg white.
- An egg shell may have as many as 17,000 tiny pores over its surface. Through them, the egg can absorb flavours and odours from other items in the fridge. Therefore it is best to keep eggs in a carton.
- A fresh egg will sink in water, a stale egg will float.
- In the late medieval and early renaissance period, egg yolk was a vital component of paint. Artists mixed pigment with water, then added egg yolk to bind the pigment particles to the board. This 'egg tempera' gives strong, clear colours which have stood the test of time. The technique does not work for painting frescos onto plastered walls. Leonardo da Vinci experimented with using egg tempera in his famous fresco of *The Last Supper* (an idea described by one art historian as 'the mayonnaise approach to fresco painting'). The egg yolk did not bind the pigment to plaster, so, as a result, almost none of the original painting has survived.

If these facts have inspired you to learn more about links between art and science, then you might like to take our short course, *Perspectives on Leonardo da Vinci* (A178).

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