Date-Tahini Custard Cups with Toasted Sesame

6 custard cups in 150 ml ramekins, about 105 g custard plus 2 g sesame each | Active 45 min | Cook 56 min | Total 350 min

Ingredients

- 120 g soft pitted dates, chopped
- 300 ml milk made with pasteurized milk
- 40 g smooth tahini, stirred before weighing
- 150 g beaten egg without shell, about 3 large eggs
- 25 g fine sugar
- 1 g fine salt
- 12 g commercially ready-to-eat toasted sesame seeds
- Up to 1200 ml hot water for the bath only, not eaten

Set out

Oven, Six 150 ml ovenproof ramekins, about 7-8 cm wide, 30×23 cm roasting pan, at least 5 cm deep, Digital scales, 1 L tall heatproof jug and immersion blender, Small saucepan, Whisk and ladle, Kettle, Food thermometer, Rack, Six fitted lids or clean covers, Ice-packed cooler, Clean 1 L heatproof metal bowl for cooling the date purée, Ice-water bath wider than the cooling bowl

Allergens

Milk, Egg, Sesame. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 300°F (150°C). Set the six dry ramekins in the roasting pan. Put the dates and milk in the saucepan, bring just to a gentle simmer and cook 3 minutes. Pour into the tall jug and stand 5 minutes. Blend with the immersion blender until smooth.

2. Transfer the warm purée to the clean metal bowl. Stand it in an ice-water bath and stir with a clean spoon for about 10-15 minutes, keeping bath water out, until the purée is below 120°F (49°C). Check with the thermometer; extend cooling if needed. Remove the bowl from the bath, then whisk in the tahini, sugar and salt, followed by all the beaten egg. Avoid beating in a large foam. Divide the complete mixture equally among six ramekins, about 105-108 g each.

3. Place the roasting pan on the oven shelf. Pour hot kettle water around, not into, the ramekins until it reaches about halfway up their sides, using no more than the stated bath water. Bake 35-45 minutes, until the centers reach at least 165°F (74°C) and move with a small set wobble rather than a liquid wave.

4. Lift the ramekins carefully from the bath and cool on a rack for 20 minutes. Refrigerate promptly for at least 4 hours, until 40°F (4°C) or colder, then cover. They must enter refrigeration within 2 hours of baking, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C). Discard the bath water.

5. Divide all 12 g ready-to-eat sesame seeds over the six cold cups, 2 g per cup. Close the individual covers for travel. Serve the custards in their own ramekins with spoons; do not turn them out.

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Bring it

Stand the six covered cold ramekins upright in a rigid fitted carrier. Cushion the gaps with clean nonfood dividers so the cups cannot knock together; bring six spoons and retain the lids for leftovers. Keep at 40°F (4°C) or colder in an ice-packed cooler and at the gathering. Count all time out of cold control during packing, transport and display together: no more than 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C).

Finish at the gathering

Ready to serve cold. The host needs only six spoons if you have not packed them. No caramelizing, unmolding or last-minute blending is required.

Make it yours

These small cups suit a winter supper after a large savory spread. The same sesame-and-date flavor works at an all-year housewarming; keep the portion count and cold packing instead of adding a new sauce.

Ingredient labels

Tahini and the seed finish both contain sesame. Check their processing labels for nuts and other allergens; use pasteurized dairy and ordinary eggs that are fully cooked in the recipe.

A useful detail

The 350-minute schedule allows 40 minutes for preparation:about 8 to heat the milk and dates, 3 to simmer, 5 to stand, 2 to blend, up to 15 in the stirred ice bath and 7 to mix and fill. Then allow 45 minutes baking, 20 rack cooling, 240 chilling and 5 finishing. Active work is about 45 minutes including stirring, bath handling and filling. The 56-minute cook figure includes about 8 minutes heating, 3 simmering and 45 baking; those first 11 minutes sit within the preparation window. The purée must be below 120°F before egg is added; final custard temperature and set texture take precedence over the timer.

Another way

Replace 120 g dates with 120 g soft pitted prunes for a darker fruit note; blend and bake through the same stages.

Replace 40 g tahini with 40 g smooth almond butter and the 12 g sesame topping with 12 g ready-to-eat chopped roasted almonds. This replaces sesame with tree-nut allergens; do not label it allergy-safe.

Keep it well

Cover and refrigerate at 40°F (4°C) or below for up to 3 days. Do not freeze for this serving texture. Keep each cup protected from other foods and use a clean spoon. Date sweetness and tahini do not make a baked dairy-and-egg custard shelf stable.