Crème brûlée with saffron

Ingredients (serving 4)
- 5 egg yolks
- 70 g of brown sugar
- 20 cl of milk
- 30 cl of liquid cream
- 1/2 vanilla pod
- saffron (infused in milk as described above)

Preparation
Bring to boil the milk with half a vanilla pod split in two. Then, with a knife, undo the black seeds from the vanilla pod and mix them in the milk. Once the milk is boiling, let infuse for approximately 10 minutes with a lid on the pan. Add the cream and continue to heat until the first bubbles appear, remove the vanilla pod and add the saffron. Stop the heating and let stand. Meanwhile, whisk the egg yolks with the sugar and add little by little to the milk/cream/saffron mixture while whisking continuously. Distribute the mixture in four ramekins.

Baking
Bake for approximately 40 min at 100°C in a convection oven. The cream must set but still tremble in the center. Cool down immediately (at least one hour in the fridge). Sprinkle with the brown sugar, broil in the oven or with a small kitchen blowtorch, and serve.

TIPS FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT SAFFRON

There is much counterfeit saffron on the market. Such fraud is mostly the work of middlemen or retailers. Avoid fraud and be aware of the different types of fraud:

Fraud by substitutes:
Addition of plant parts of saffron or other plants (safflower, beet fibres, dried seaweed, wood fibre, etc.), dyed in a saffron-like colour.
Mixture of Talouine saffron with lower quality saffron.
Synthetic saffron.
The substitute most widely used in Morocco is maize silk.

Moist saffron: Sometimes retailers display their saffron next to a moist product.

Coated saffron: Adding or dipping saffron in honey, vegetable oil, glycerine, sugar, salts, carbonates, sulphate or other minerals.

Weight fraud: Be careful with the standard weight and the balance used by your retailer.

How to check whether you really have saffron?
- Check whether the stigmas are tied at the base. Wet a stigma and crush it on paper, saffron should leave a yellow/orange trace.
- Be careful with “good deals”. Cheap saffron should set alarm bells ringing. One golden rule: Never purchase saffron powder ...

WHERE TO BUY YOUR SAFFRON?

By purchasing saffron from a producers’ group or a cooperative you avoid intermediaries and contribute to the sustainable economic and social development of farmers.

Saffron is one of the principal economic resources of the Taznakht and Talouine areas.

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HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF SAFFRON WHEN COOKING?

ADVICE AND RECIPES:
SAFFRON FOR ALL
So, what is the best way to keep the spice intact? Infuse the saffron in advance!
The universal dose of reference, with which you can work and experiment: 0.1 gram of SAFFRON for a dish for 4 persons.
Once in your life... use tweezers to extract 45 stigmas of SAFFRON. Then, place them in a teaspoon and remember...

Moisten 0.1 gram (45 stigmas) with steam. Let it cool down: put on a sheet of paper. With the back of a spoon, crush the SAFFRON stigmas. Add a tablespoon of hot water or milk for every 0.1 grams of saffron that you use.

For instance
0.1 gram of SAFFRON = 1 tablespoon
1 gram of SAFFRON = 10 tablespoons
LET INFUSE FOR 2 HOURS

Now you know that 0.1 gram of SAFFRON corresponds to one tablespoon of infusion. If you do not use everything you have prepared, place the leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge. It will keep 10 to 12 days.

SAFFRON is added gently to a dish, without an aggressive impact on the taste; SAFFRON does not dominate, instead it enhances and highlights; in addition, it colours the dish. You should find it in the back of your mouth, under your taste buds.

Dosing is key:
A highbrow recipe may recommend "Add 4 grams of SAFFRON". This is sheer madness. Your dish will be inedible and basically ruined. Or maybe your recipe remains vague. You may read: add a pinch, a few strands, a bit, a sachet, a dash, half a teaspoon of saffron. You now understand that only a little bit is needed, not too much. Well done if you find the right dosage...
By nature, SAFFRON is not an instant spice. I add a pinch of powder, I mix it and I taste my dish: THIS DOES NOT WORK FOR SAFFRON...
SAFFRON needs time to heighten and develop the subtlety of its taste. In addition, it does not stand boiling or frying. Intense heat destroys its aromatic molecules and only the pigments remain.

Saffron sauce
Perfect for fish dishes

Ingredients (serving 4):
- 2 shallots
- 1 dab of butter
- saffron (infused in milk as described above)
- 1 pinch of thyme
- 20 cl of liquid cream
- 10 cl of fish fumet
- salt, pepper
- a few drops of lemon

The recipe:
Finely chop the shallots and sauté them in the butter in a saucepan over medium heat until they turn translucent. Add the saffron, a pinch of thyme, the fish fumet, cream, salt and pepper, and lemon, and cook until reduced to the consistency of custard.
This sauce is perfect to go with fish dishes (monkfish, sea bass, etc.) and also suits fresh pasta or boiled potatoes very well.