

# The Perfect Scoop: Ice Creams, Sorbets, Granitas, and Sweet Accompaniments

## MAKING PERFECT ICE CREAM CUSTARD

Many of the ice cream recipes in this book are French-style ice creams, which mean that you use custard-based. Others are Philadelphia style, which refers to ice creams made by simply mixing milk or cream with sugar and other ingredients. French-style ice creams tend to be richer and smoother, due to the emulsifying properties of egg yolks. My fruit-based ice creams are usually Philadelphia style, because I prefer to let the flavor of the fruit come forward without the additional richness. But in some cases I offer a flavor in both styles, so you can decide which you prefer.

If you've never made an ice cream custard before, follow these step-by-step instructions to ensure success (in some recipes, note that the procedure may vary slightly). Although I make my custards in a saucepan over moderate heat, you may wish to cook your first few custards in a double boiler, or use a flame cover to diffuse the heat, until you get the hang of it. They will take longer to cook, but you'll appreciate the extra time to watch and make sure they cook to just the right consistency. After you've made a custard a couple of times, it'll become second nature.

1. If you're using an ice cream maker that requires preheating, make sure the container spends the required amount of time in the freezer—whatever's recommended by the manufacturer. Although the container may feel frozen to the touch before the recommended time, if you use the machine prematurely you might end up watching the custard go round and round without ever freezing—a big disappointment. So don't cheat! Most containers require 24 hours of prefreezing. Machines with built-in compressors usually can be used right away, but check the manufacturer's instructions that come with your model.

2. Before getting started, prepare an ice bath to expedite the chilling of the custard. To make one, put some ice into a large bowl and then add a cup or two of cold water so the ice cubes are barely floating. You could also partially fill an empty sink with ice and some water. Most custard-based ice cream recipes call for straining the hot, just-cooked custard right into the cream, which helps stop the cooking and expedite cooling. Set the bowl of cream into the ice bath, put a strainer over the top, and be sure to keep the setup nearby (a la in, not on the other side of the kitchen); after you've cooked the custard, you'll need to strain it into the bowl right away.

3. Heat the milk or the liquid called for in the recipe with the sugar in a saucepan on the stove. Always use nonreactive cookware, such as stainless steel or anodized aluminum, because other types of cookware can react unfavorably with fruit and other acidic ingredients.

4. In a separate bowl set on a damp kitchen towel or a silicone baking mat to keep it steady, whisk together the egg yolks.

5. The next step is to temper the yolks with the hot milk. Here's where you need to be careful. Once the milk is hot and steamy, slowly and gradually pour the milk into the egg yolks (see top-left and right photos on this facing page), whisking constantly, which keeps the yolks moving and avoids the risk of cooking them into little egg bits. I pour the milk into the eggs directly from the saucepan, but you might find it easier to remove the saucepan from the heat and use a ladle to add the hot liquid one-fourth of a cup at a time until the liquid no longer feels hot, which the egg yolks break; they'll cook and you'll end up with bits of scrambled eggs.

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