



ANSON MILLS

Grits Praline and Brown Butter Ice Cream

Yield

About 1 quart

Time

1 hour active time, 4 hours to overnight to chill the base, 40 to 50 minutes to churn, and a couple of hours to temper in the freezer

Cooking Remarks

Okay, shoot us right now. Go ahead! We call for vanilla extract instead of vanilla bean in this instance. But frankly, we tried them both, and, guess what? The extract was so far superior to the bean, it wasn't even funny. We don't know why, it just was.

Make the ice cream base before the praline. If you have time, make it a full day ahead to deep-chill the base. Freeze the base until the machine whines to a stop, then add the crushed praline and refreeze. The sugar puts some heat on the freeze and tries to thaw it, but persuade your machine to soldier on. When the ice cream is set, transfer it to your freezer and temper it for a few hours before serving. This base is small by volume, about 3 cups—not enough to overwhelm any ice cream maker.

And speaking of the base, custards can be tricky. We think cooks tend to undercook custards, not overcook them. Cooking the yolks in custard properly will have a powerful influence on the ice cream's ultimate consistency. Do use an instant-read thermometer and let it climb to around 180 degrees. Don't stop stirring, though!

As for the caramel, we must tell you that although we don't enjoy baking on Silpat mats, when it comes to confection work, they rule supreme. The silicone and fiberglass surface allows the caramel to remain supple longer than glass or metal. So you can pick the mat up and let the caramel run into a thin, beautiful sheet before it seizes up and hardens forever. You've got more time to press the grits into the caramel, too.

Equipment Mise en Place

For the ice cream base, you will need a large mixing bowl, about 3 quarts of ice, a fine-mesh strainer, small heavy-bottomed saucepan, a wooden spoon, a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan, a medium mixing bowl, a whisk, an instant-read thermometer, a 4-cup glass measure or pitcher, and an ice cream maker.

For the praline, you will need a fine-mesh strainer, a small bowl, a small saucepan, a tea strainer, a wooden spoon, and a baking sheet to dry them. You'll also need a nonstick baking mat such as a Silpat or a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan, a dinner fork for stirring, a small offset spatula, and a metal bench knife.

Ingredients

for the ice cream

2 ounces (4 tablespoons) European-style unsalted butter
1 cup heavy cream
1 cup whole milk
6 large egg yolks
2.3 ounces (1/3 cup) sugar
1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon fine sea salt

for the grits

2 ounces (1/3 cup) Anson Mills Antebellum Coarse Grits (white or yellow)
2½ cups spring or filtered water
1 teaspoon fine sea salt

for the caramel

3.5 ounces (1/2 cup) sugar

Directions

1. Make the ice cream base: Set a large bowl in a sink or basin filled with lots (at least 3 quarts) of ice cubes and cold water. Have a fine-mesh strainer nearby. Melt the butter in a small heavy-bottomed saucepan over low heat, stirring with a wooden spoon to scrape the browning milk solids back into the butter, until the butter is the color of a hazelnut in the shell and the kitchen smells miraculous, 3 to 5 minutes. Pull the pan off the heat and set it aside. Pour the cream and milk into a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan set over medium-high heat. Whisk the egg yolks and sugar in a medium bowl. Drizzle the hot butter cautiously into the yolk-sugar mixture a little at a time, whisking well as you do. When the cream is just shy of a simmer, pull the saucepan off the burner and pour half the hot cream into the yolk mixture. Whisk well. Add the remaining cream and whisk well. Pour everything back into the saucepan, and return the saucepan to the burner. Reduce the heat to medium and stir with the wooden spoon until the cream thickens and the temperature hovers right around 180 degrees, about 1 minute. Do not let the temperature exceed 180 degrees! Pour the custard immediately through the fine-mesh conical strainer into the bowl set in the ice bath. Give the mixture a few stirs to cool it, and then add the vanilla and salt and let it chill completely, stirring from time to time. Remove the bowl from the ice bath and transfer the custard to a 4-cup glass measure or pitcher. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until you're ready to make the ice cream, at least 4 hours or overnight.

2. Cook the grits: Turn the grits into a fine-mesh strainer set over a small bowl. Use your fingers to rub the grits through the strainer—try to sift out all the fine particles, leaving the large pieces behind in the strainer. Measure out 1/4 cup of the large-particle grits or weigh out 1.5 ounces and turn them into a small heavy-bottomed saucepan. (Mix any leftover large grits and the finer, sifted grits back into bag.) Cover the grits with the water, and then stir once. Allow the grits to settle a full minute, tilt the vessel, and skim off and discard the chaff and hulls using a fine tea strainer. Set the saucepan over medium heat and bring to a simmer, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Reduce the heat to low and simmer gently, stirring frequently, until the grits

have swollen and are quite soft, about 25 minutes, adding the salt midway through the cooking process. Strain the grits through a fine-mesh strainer and rinse them well with cool water. Shake well to dry. Turn the grits onto a baking sheet, spread them out into an even layer, and dry them in a 200-degree oven (no need to preheat) for 30 minutes or so, turning 3 or 4 times with a spatula to evaporate water from all surfaces. Do not let them color or become super-crunchy.

3. *Make the caramel praline:* Toward the end of the grits drying process, have ready a nonstick baking mat or a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Pour the sugar into a clean, dry, heavy-bottomed medium saucepan. Set the pan over medium-high heat and allow the sugar to melt without stirring. When a band of colored sugar (caramel) appears bubbling along the edge of the saucepan, begin to stir the dry, white sugar on the top into the melted caramel with a diner fork. Reduce the heat to medium-low and continue stirring from time to time to incorporate the unmelted sugar into the caramel. When the sugar has completely melted, the caramel will have a glassy, deep amber sheen and show no granularity. Pour the caramel onto the baking mat or prepared baking sheet, tilting the surface so the caramel runs as thinly as possible. Remove the grits from the oven, sprinkle them over the hot caramel and use a small offset spatula to press the grits into the surface. Some of the grits will not stick to the caramel, and residual liquid from the grits may produce a few drops of caramel syrup on the praline. This does not matter. Set the praline aside and let cool completely.

4. *Churn and freeze the ice cream:* Pour the chilled ice cream base into the canister of an ice cream maker and churn until the machine indicates the mixture is frozen, about 50 minutes. While the ice cream is churning, loosen the praline from the baking mat or parchment paper and chop it finely with a metal bench knife. Add the praline to the ice cream still in the machine and continue churning until the ice cream has set once again. Remove the canister from the machine, cover with plastic wrap, and place it in the freezer to temper the ice cream, 2 to 3 hours.