

Filipino Leche Flan

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The Filipino Leche Flan is a legacy of Spain's centuries-long colonization of the Philippines. The Filipino version of the classic custard dessert tends to be richer than most variations of the dessert. While most recipes call for whole eggs, Filipino flan primarily, or exclusively, uses egg yolks. Once mixed with sugar and evaporated milk, it's slowly cooked in the oven in a water bath.

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups evaporated milk
1 teaspoon lemon rind or vanilla
8 egg yolks
1 cup sugar
1/2 c. caramel sugar syrup (see NOTE)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Bring eggs to room temperature.

NOTE: Start by making the caramel sugar. Pour 1 cup of sugar into a saucepan on high heat. When the sugar melts and turns into a golden brown sugar syrup, add 1/2 cup of warm or hot water. Stir till smooth. Pour enough syrup into the flan mold to coat the bottom and sides. Set aside and let cool. (You will likely have some extra syrup, which you can use as extra sauce for the flan when it is served.)

About the water bath: The flan mold (a standard bread loaf pan is a good option) will eventually have to go in a water bath and cook in the oven. Get a large deep pan that can accommodate the mold. Find something that can elevate the bottom of the mold and keep it from sitting directly on the pan. (Chopsticks are a possible option.) There needs to be space between the pan and the flan mold bottom so the flan can gently cook while surrounded on all sides by in the hot water.

Separate the egg yolk from the egg whites Gently mix the egg yolks together. Add vanilla or flavoring. Stir and set aside.

Scald the evaporated milk over high heat, and stir for 10-15 minutes. As it cooks and reduces, take care not to allow the bottom to burn. Don't over stir. Remove milk from the heat and add to the eggs. Stir the egg milk mixture and add one cup of sugar. Mix gently by hand until all the ingredients are well blended.

Before pouring the egg mixture into the mold, make sure syrup coats the bottom and the sides of the mold. Strain the egg mix as you pour it into the mold to remove any lumps. Flan mixture should be about an inch or 1.5 inch deep in the mold.

Move the pan into the heated oven, and carefully place the mold in the pan. Again, make sure that the mold is slightly elevated and the bottom of the mold is not resting on the pan. Add water to the pan, being careful to avoid getting water into the egg mix. Add enough water until the water level reaches just above the midpoint level of the flan mold.

After about 50 minutes to an hour of baking, the flan mixture should be set. It's done when it's firm at the center. Remove the mold from the water bath. Be careful as the water will be very hot. Set the flan aside and let it cool before unmolding.

Unmolding can be tricky. Make sure the flan has completely set before flipping it over on a serving

platter. You only get one shot at a perfect unmolding. Run a knife along the edge of the mold to separate the flan from the sides of the mold. The bottom should not need to be unstuck because of the syrup lining. Pick a serving platter that can fully cover the flan mold. While standing over a sink, with the platter covering the flan mold, flip the mold and platter together in one fluid motion. The flan will slide down from the mold onto the platter. With all the syrup, it might get messy, which is why this is best done over a sink. Do the flip in a quick and decisive movement and the flan should come out intact. Cut to desired size and serve. Spoon some extra syrup over the flan if desired.