

Panna cotta

This recipe is based on one by David Tanis, one of the very talented chefs at Chez Panisse in California, where I worked for a while in 2007. Panna cotta is really easy – you just need to remember to make it in advance so it has time to set in the fridge. You could use any combination of milk and cream, even yoghurt.



Serves: 6 (using 125ml ramekins/moulds)

250ml whole milk
250ml double cream
250ml crème fraîche
6 tbsps white sugar
pinch salt
a vanilla bean
3 tsps powdered gelatine

1. Combine milk, cream and crème fraîche in a saucepan with sugar and salt. Split vanilla bean along its length and scrape out seeds. Add seeds and pod to pan and heat the mixture, stirring occasionally. Do not boil. When sugar has dissolved, take it off the heat, cover and set aside while you prepare gelatine.
2. Put 3 tbsps cold water into a small ramekin and sprinkle over the gelatine. Let it 'sponge' for 5 minutes without stirring. Meanwhile pour a little hot water from the kettle into a larger container, such as a saucepan. Place ramekin in hot water to dissolve the gelatine.
3. Now make sure both cream and gelatine are luke warm, then combine the two and sieve the mixture into a jug, rubbing through the vanilla seeds with a spatula. Let mix cool to room temperature. (You can speed this up by nestling the jug in a big bowl of ice cubes.)
4. Give it a gentle mix to distribute the vanilla seeds, then pour into six ramekins or pudding moulds, carefully cover tightly with clingfilm, and chill for at least five hours. Invert onto plates to serve and garnish with fresh or poached fruits. (If needed, dip the moulds in hot water briefly before inverting them, to loosen the panna cotta.)