



Brazilian Flan

VINEYARD GROCER, VINEYARD HAVEN

Elio Silva was working in Boston in the late 1980s when some friends of his wanted to visit Martha’s Vineyard to look for work. He drove them down, and his two-week vacation turned into two weeks’ notice. Growing up in a rural farming town with only nine hundred people in Brazil, the Vineyard, where everyone knows one another, felt like home.

Vineyard Grocer, Elio’s red barn stocked with international ingredients and homemade prepared foods, is a mainstay for all, not only for the Brazilian community. “We have people from every culture here on the Vineyard,” says Elio, “and they all tell me it feels like home when they walk through the door.” He grows much of the produce they use and sell on his regenerative farm in West Bridgewater, Massachusetts. This means there are no days off, and Elio is up at three a.m. working twenty-hour days. “You know what they say: If you love what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life,” he says.

There’s an air of conviviality at Vineyard Grocer as customers fill their baskets with linguíça, bacalhau, and plantains and grab coxinho (fried croquettes) for a snack. “Everyone is homesick, so we make food from all regions,” Elio shares. One recipe that crosses borders is flan, a must for holidays and special occasions. Made with only five ingredients, it’s silky smooth and luscious, with a pool of caramel syrup.

“I have customers who came to the store twenty years ago with their moms, and who now bring their kids,” says Elio, smiling. “I hope one day these kids will bring their kids, too.”

SERVES 6

- 3 large eggs

1 (14-ounce)
can sweetened
condensed milk

1¾ cups whole milk
- 1¾ cups heavy cream

¾ cup sugar

Mixed berries
for serving

Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F. Place a 9-inch flan ring pan or tube pan in a deep roasting pan.

With a blender, blend the eggs until smooth. Add the condensed milk, whole milk, and cream and blend again. Strain the mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a large measuring cup (straining removes any lumps and ensures a silky-smooth custard).

Combine the sugar and ⅓ cup water in a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a simmer, then continue simmering until the mixture turns deep amber, about 13 minutes. It will bubble and stay pale for most of that time; do not stir, and watch carefully as the caramel can burn quickly. Immediately pour it into the flan pan.

Stir the custard and gently pour it over the caramel. Cover the pan tightly with foil. Pour boiling water into the roasting pan to reach halfway up the side of the flan pan. Bake until the flan is lightly set with a slight jiggle in the center, about 45 minutes.

Cool the flan in the roasting pan at room temperature for 1 hour. Loosen the flan from the sides of the pan by running a paring knife around the inside and outside rims. Place plastic wrap over the flan and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight. Remove plastic wrap. Place a large serving plate on top of the pan, and, holding both plate and pan tightly, quickly flip to invert. Lift off the pan. The flan should slide out. If the flan sticks, dip the base of the pan in a bowl of warm water for 1 to 2 minutes to loosen the caramel and try again. Scatter berries around the flan and serve.

THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD COOKBOOK

100 Recipes from the Island's Restaurants,
Farmers, Fishermen & Food Artisans



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