

TAKE U
Pg 398

Caramelized Pear Custard

SERVES 4

WHEN FALL COMES, I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE COOKING pears or apples—in a puree or tart, baked whole, or sautéed with maple syrup.

For this recipe, I first caramelize pear wedges (I love the flavor of Bartletts, but any pears will work) in a skillet with butter and sugar, then transfer them to a gratin dish and bake them in a custard mixture. The custard is served at room temperature with a sprinkling of confectioners' sugar on top.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Peel and halve the pears, core them, and cut each half into 3 wedges. Put them in a skillet with the granulated sugar and butter and cook, uncovered, over high heat for 6 to 8 minutes, turning them once, until lightly caramelized. Transfer to a 4- to 5-cup gratin dish.

Mix together the half-and-half, vanilla, rum (if using), beaten egg, and maple syrup in a bowl. Pour the custard over the pears.

Place the gratin dish on a baking sheet and bake for 15 to 25 minutes, until the custard is just set.

Serve at room temperature, with a sprinkling of the confectioners' sugar on top.

- 2 ripe hard pears, such as Bartlett or Comice (about 1 pound)
- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup half-and-half
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon dark rum (optional)
- 1 large egg, beaten with a fork
- 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar

