

# A Carioca in Miami

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## Brazilian Flan



What a better way to start this blog than with one of Brazil's favorite and most traditional desserts? What you see above is called "pudim de leite moça" in Portuguese, and today I'll teach you how to make one. I've made this dessert a few times for my friends here in Miami and everyone asks me for the recipe. This was also the first thing I cooked for my wife when we had just started dating. It was a success: she fell in love with it, and with me as a consequence.

You'll find many recipes for "pudim de leite moça" online. It's very easy to make; you just have to be careful. The recipe I explain below is my mom's (patiently obtained over the phone). Mom: thanks for sharing your culinary secrets. I'll make sure to pass them along to future generations!

Without further ado, here we go. It goes without saying that the better your ingredients, the tastier anything you cook will be. Therefore, buy organic whenever possible, especially milk. Please: no antibiotics in the

“pudim”!



**Ingredients:**

- 3 whole eggs
- 1 can of sweetened condensed milk (this is what Brazilians call “leite moça” because “leite”=milk and there’s a woman pictured on the label; “moça” is one way to refer to a woman in Portuguese)
- whole milk: enough to fill the can of condensed milk
- 1/2 teaspoon of corn starch
- 9 tablespoons of sugar
- 1/2 cup of water

**Preparation:**

There are two parts to this dessert. The caramel sauce, and the flan itself. Let’s make the caramel sauce first. Put the sugar in a pan, turn the heat up, and wait until it melts. It begins like this (I use unrefined cane sugar):



As the sugar heats up, it gets a little translucent and then darkens. At some point, you'll notice that bubbles will form and it will begin to foam, like this:





When that happens, add the 1/2 cup of water. A lot of vapor will form, of course. Don't worry. Stir everything to homogenize the mixture and let it boil for a while until enough water evaporates and the sugar concentrates. Stir frequently. As it's boiling, it will look like this:



While you wait for the water to evaporate, start pre-heating your oven. As oven temperatures vary, I'd say you should set it somewhere between 300 and 325 degrees Fahrenheit (you may have to experiment a little; last time I made this flan I used 320 degrees). You'll also have to boil some water for the double-boiling that's coming up, so you might want to start that now as well.

How do you know when the sauce is done? Remove it from the heat for a moment and use your spoon to draw a straight line right through the middle of the liquid. If it's not concentrated enough, you won't be able to see the line you drew because the liquid returns to its original position quickly. If you can see the trace you made with the spoon before the liquid covers it again, it's done. You won't have much of the caramel sauce at the end. That's OK. It should look more or less like this:



Now it's time to take your bundt pan and put it inside a large baking pan because we'll set up a *Bain Marie* for this bad boy (or as the Brazilians call it "banho Maria"). I like to use a silicone bundt pan because it makes life easier when it comes to flipping the flan at the end. Here's what my setup looks like. Note that I haven't added any water to the bottom pan yet.





Take the caramel sauce you just made and pour it gently and uniformly on the bottom of the bundt pan, like this:



Set that aside. It's actually a good thing to let this cool down and harden a little bit. You'll understand why in a moment. We'll now make the flan. Put the eggs in a blender and blend them by themselves first. (According to my mom, it is **very important** to blend the eggs by themselves first before adding anything else. Don't ask me why; ask her.) Once the eggs are blended, add the condensed milk, the whole milk (a can's worth), and the corn starch. Then blend everything together for a little while. Come on, how easy was that? By the way, make sure to scrape all the condensed milk out of the can. It's almost a sin to leave any of that deliciousness behind. The spoon that was used to scrape the condensed milk out of the can must be given to nearby kids to lick. (I'm teaching you some Brazilian culture here!) If no kids are present, it's your duty to lick it.

Now we have to pour this blended mix into the bundt pan, on top of the caramel sauce. But I don't want the sauce to get mixed with the flan; I want it to stay on the bottom. To accomplish that, I take my wooden spoon (the one I used to stir the caramel sauce), turn it upside down, and place it over the hole in the center of the bundt pan. Then I pour my flan into the pan in such a way that it hits the back of the spoon first and slowly drips down. Here's a picture:



Be patient and do it slowly. After that, it's just a matter of baking. Place the pans in the oven and then pour hot water into the bottom pan until you have about an inch of water surrounding the bundt pan. I like to pour the hot water after I've placed the double-boiling setup on a rack inside the oven to reduce the risk of spilling hot water, but that's up to you. I'm not much of a risk taker.

Bake at 320 degrees Fahrenheit (or as I said above, somewhere from 300 to 325 degrees) for 50 minutes. Then take a look and see if the top is slightly golden. Shake the bundt pan and check whether the flan wiggles like

jello. If it seems to be softer than jello, bake it a little longer. You can also insert a toothpick in the center of the flan to check how soft it is. You don't want it to harden too much. Typically, 50 to 55 minutes will do the trick.

Take it out of the oven and let it sit on your countertop until it cools down. Then cover the bundt pan with a dinner plate and put it in the fridge for at least 8 hours. I usually make it the day before and leave it in the fridge overnight; that's ideal.

The final step is to remove the flan from the bundt pan. Take a plastic knife and insert it around the outer edges of the flan, but not very deep (about half an inch or so). Then do the same around the center hole. The silicone pan makes life much easier during this stage because you can actually bend it to help unstick the flan from the pan. Before flipping, make sure you're pretty confident that the flan is reasonably loose (you don't want it to break). Then put a large plate on top, hold the bundt pan by the edges, and flip it as fast as you can. After a few taps to the bottom of the pan you should hear the flan fall on the plate. (Mmmm...I can taste it already...) Then remove the pan and marvel at the beautiful caramel color. If you did everything correctly, the flan should look like the first photo of this post. If it doesn't, it was your mistake, not mine.

That's it! My mom's recipe is now an eternal part of the internet.

I hope you enjoy it! Let me know how it turned out in the comments section.

“Bom proveito!”

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES:

If making several mini flans using disposable aluminum foil ramekins (the ones I use can fit 4 oz, the top diameter is 3.2", the bottom diameter is 2.2", and the height is 1.7"), one recipe yields 8 mini flans, and they should bake at the same 320F for 30 minutes.

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