

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN

All-Purpose Caramel Sauce

SERVES Makes 2 cups

TIME 20 minutes

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Caramel strikes fear even in experienced cooks. Why? It's notorious for burning, turning gritty, or simply cooking unevenly. We worked through every variable and question we had to come up with an easy method that anyone can master. The highlights: We cook the sugar with water and corn syrup, which helps the sugar dissolve and melt evenly and prevents crystallization, respectively. We use two heat levels, starting the sugar mixture over medium-high heat so that it melts quickly and then reducing the heat to low to provide a wider window for nailing the temperature. And we use two basic but key pieces of equipment: a heavy saucepan, which cooks the sugar evenly, and an instant-read thermometer, which is the fastest and most reliable way to assess the caramel's doneness. Once the caramel reaches between 360 and 370 degrees, we stir in cream, vanilla extract, and salt to create a rich, complex, versatile sauce.



INGREDIENTS

1 ¾ cups (12 1/4 ounces)
granulated sugar

BEFORE YOU BEGIN



- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Serve this sauce over ice cream, cakes, or fresh fruit.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Bring sugar, water, and corn syrup to boil in large heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, without stirring, until mixture is straw-colored, 6 to 8 minutes. Reduce heat to low and continue to cook, swirling saucepan occasionally, until mixture is amber-colored and registers between 360 and 370 degrees, 2 to 5 minutes longer.

2 Off heat, quickly but carefully stir in cream, vanilla, and salt (mixture will bubble and steam). Continue to stir until sauce is smooth. (Sauce can be refrigerated for up to 2 weeks. Reheat in microwave, stirring frequently, until warm and smooth.)