Pumpkin Flan

Makes 10 servings.

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This luscious, satin-smooth custard tastes like pumpkin pie, without the fuss and fat that come with making your own pastry crust. In place of the crust, caramelized sugar poured into the pan before baking makes its own silky sauce. When you invert the cooled custard onto a serving platter, the sauce glazes the top and sides.

1 cup sugar
4 beaten eggs
1 (16-ounce) can pumpkin
1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk
½ cup sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon vanilla
½ teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon salt
Boiling water
Sweetened whipped cream, optional
Ground nutmeg, optional

■ In a large heavy skillet cook the 1 cup sugar over medium-high heat until it begins to melt. Do not stir; just shake the skillet occasionally. When the sugar starts to melt, reduce heat to low.

■ Cook, stirring frequently, until the sugar is golden brown. Quickly pour the sugar into a 10-inch-deep pie plate or quiche dish. Tilt to evenly coat the bottom. Place the pie plate or quiche dish in a large roasting pan. Place on a rack in the oven.

■ In a large mixing bowl stir eggs, pumpkin, milk, the ½ cup sugar, cinnamon, vanilla, ginger, nutmeg and salt. Pour the pumpkin mixture atop the melted sugar in the pie plate or quiche dish.

■ Pour boiling water into the roasting pan around the pie plate or quiche dish to a depth of ½ inch. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 50 to 55 minutes for pie plate or 45 to 50 minutes for a quiche dish or until a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool.

■ Cover and chill the flan for 4 to 24 hours. To serve, loosen edges of flan with a knife, slipping the point of the knife down the sides of the flan to let air in. Invert the flan onto a serving platter. Top with sweetened whipped cream and nutmeg, if desired.

Notes: