SALTED CARAMEL SAUCE

Makes 1 pint or 4 (4-ounce) Jars

This recipe makes a French-inspired, less sweet, more buttery version of caramel sauce. A small drizzle turns ordinary ice cream or pound cake into a dessert fit for company. A pint-sized jar of salted caramel sauce, such as this recipe makes, sells for $15 at fancy grocery stores. So imagine everyone’s delight when you bring this delectable confection to the food swap. Just do not tell them how inexpensive and quick it is to make.

The only tricky thing about this recipe is knowing when the sugar syrup is done. With sugar, it is a fine line between caramelized and burnt. Do not be tempted to multitask or walk away from the stove while the sugar syrup is boiling. Give the pot your full attention, and watch the changing color and smell as the sugar caramelizes.

1 1⁄2 cups heavy cream

1  cup sugar

2  tablespoons corn syrup

1⁄4 cup water

1⁄2 cup (1 stick) butter, cut into pieces

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 1⁄2 teaspoons kosher salt

Packaging:

Package the caramel sauce into four clean 4-ounce glass jars. Decorate with a label or hanging tag, and label as perishable.

Note: The caramel will bubble up furiously when the cream is added in step 4, so select a deeper pot than you might be inclined to otherwise.

1. Bring the cream to a boil over high heat in a small saucepan. Turn the heat down to low and keep the cream at a simmer until step 4.

2. In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine the sugar, corn syrup, and water, then turn heat to high. Stir just until the sugar is dissolved, then stop and do not stir again. Bring the mixture to a boil, occasionally brushing down the sides of the pot with a pastry brush dipped in water to dissolve any sugar crystals.

3. Continue to boil the sugar syrup over high heat without stirring until it turns a golden brown and smells like caramel, 7 to 8 minutes. Do not allow it to burn.

4. Turn down the heat to medium and slowly pour in the cream while stirring, being careful, as the mixture will bubble up.

5. Remove the pot from the heat and add the butter. Stir until the butter is melted and the mixture is completely smooth. Then stir in the vanilla extract and salt.

6. Allow the sauce to cool before pouring into glass jars. Refrigerate until ready to swap or use.