Thyme and Lemon Crème Brûlée

Makes 4 ramekins.

- 350 ml double cream
- 120 ml milk - full fat is best if not substitute semi-skimmed
- zest of a large lemon
- 6 long sprigs of thyme
- 4 egg yolks
- 60 g sugar
- brown granulated sugar for the caramelisation of the tops.

Chop the lemon zest and add it to a pan with the thyme sprigs, cream and milk. Bring just to the boil and then remove from the heat and leave for the flavours to infuse for 30 minutes. After the flavours have been extracted strain through a sieve to remove the zest and thyme sprigs, return to the pan and reheat to hot but not boiling.

Fill a roasting tin which will hold your 4 ramekins with 1cm boiling water, place in the oven and preheat to 325F, Gas Mark 3, 160C (140C fan).

In a large bowl whisk together the egg yolks and the 60g sugar and add a little of the lemon zest and thyme leaves from the strainer. Beating constantly, add the cream mixture to the egg yolks a little at a time until it is all incorporated. Divide the mixture between 4 ramekin dishes, make sure that you fill each dish well as the filling tends to shrink after cooking. Place in the pan of hot water in the oven. The water should reach no more than half way up the sides of the ramekins.

Bake for 25 minutes or until the edges are set and the centres are just a little wobbly. The time may vary according to your oven - oven temperatures being notoriously unreliable! Turn off the oven and leave the brûlées inside for a further 10 minutes before removing and leaving to cool. Refrigerate until required.

When you are ready to serve, sprinkle each ramekin with the brown sugar - about 1 tsp each or more to taste. If you have a special cook's blowtorch then you are well away, but for the rest of us... Preheat the grill to as hot as possible. Heat the ramekins for a few minutes until the sugar is melted and caramelised, taking care that they do not burn.

Serve immediately decorated with a sprig of thyme.