



OVERNIGHT EXPERT

When buying lavender for cooking, check it hasn't been treated with any preservatives. You could also use a spoonful of lavender syrup (look for the Monin brand at good off licences and some supermarkets), lavender sugar (from delis and steenbergs.co.uk) or a drop of lavender essence (from hopshop.co.uk), all of which are suitable for use in cooking.

Apricot and lavender compote with crème brûlée

1 hour + chilling ■ EASY

Lavender adds a perfumed twist to the sharp sweetness of apricots. This goes beautifully with crème brûlée but would work equally well with plain Greek yoghurt.

egg yolks 5

caster sugar 75g, plus extra to brûlée

milk 50ml

double cream 450ml

vanilla pods 2, split

COMPOTE

unsalted butter 40g

caster sugar 100g

apricot brandy or brandy a dash

apricots 10, halved and stoned

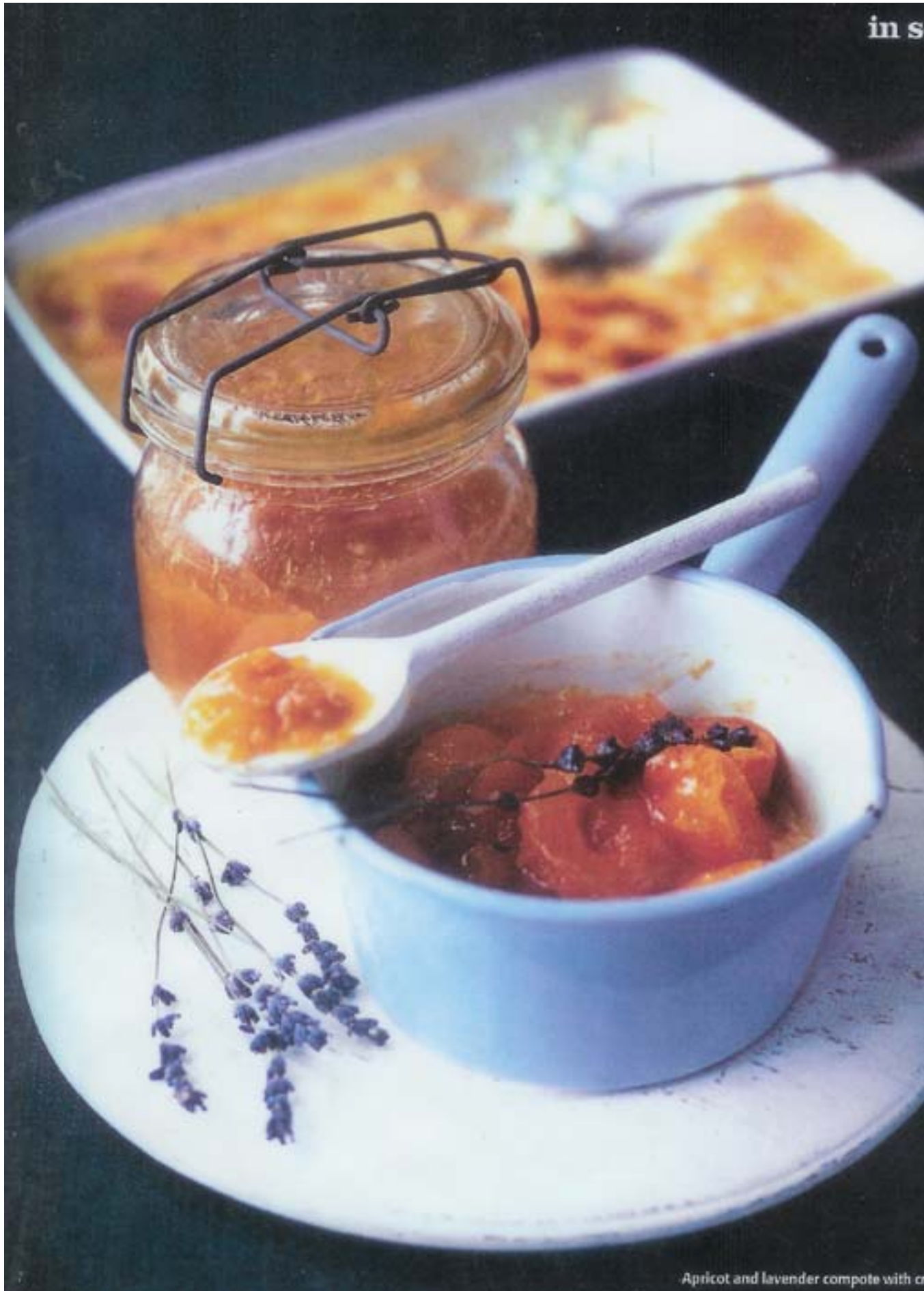
fresh or dried lavender a couple of sprigs

■ Heat the oven to 150C/ fan 130C/gas 2. Mix the egg yolks and sugar. Heat the milk, double cream and vanilla pods to a simmer then whisk into the yolk mix. Fish out the vanilla pods then pour into a shallow heatproof dish. Put in a small roasting tin, pour in boiling water to come halfway up the dish then cook for 35 minutes.

■ Cool, then chill until set (at least 4 hours or overnight). To brûlée, sprinkle the top with a thin layer of caster sugar and use a blow torch or put under a hot grill to caramelise the top.

■ To make the compote, heat the butter in a pan, add the sugar and a dash of apricot brandy. Add the apricots and cook slowly until the juice has reduced slightly and it looks almost, but not quite, jammy.

■ Add the lavender then cool and serve with the crème brûlée. You can also store the compote in sterile jars where it will keep for several months. **Serves 4**



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