

Buttermilk Panna Cotta with Apricot and Candied Fennel

8 SERVINGS Buttermilk lightens the traditional all-cream panna cotta base—without sacrificing lusciousness.

- 1 envelope unflavored powdered gelatin (about 2½ tsp.)
- 2½ cups heavy cream, divided
- ¾ cup plus 3 Tbsp. sugar
- 3 cups buttermilk
- ¾ cup dried apricots, preferably Californian, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp. fennel seeds

Place ¼ cup cold water in a small bowl. Sprinkle gelatin over; let stand 10 minutes.

Heat ½ cup cream in a medium saucepan over medium heat until very warm (it will

deactivate the gelatin if it gets too hot). Remove from heat, add gelatin and ¾ cup sugar, and whisk until they are completely dissolved. Gradually stir in remaining 2½ cups cream, then buttermilk. Divide among eight small bowls or 6-oz. ramekins and chill until set, at least 4 hours.

Meanwhile, bring apricots, 2 Tbsp. sugar, and 1 cup water to a boil in a small saucepan, reduce heat, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until thickened and jam-like, 20–25 minutes. Let compote cool completely.

Bring remaining 1 Tbsp. sugar and 2 Tbsp. water to a boil in a small saucepan over medium-high heat and cook, swirling often, until thick and syrupy (do not let it take on any color), about 4 minutes. Add fennel seeds and reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring constantly, until sugar starts to become dry and crystallized, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir until sugar is completely dry and crystallized, about 1 minute longer. Transfer seeds to a small bowl; set aside.

Serve panna cotta topped with compote and candied fennel seeds.

DO AHEAD: Panna cotta can be made 3 days ahead; cover and keep chilled. Compote can be made 1 week ahead; cover and chill.