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crème, *n.*

Pronunciation: /krɛm/ /kreɪm/

Forms: Also *crème*.

Frequency (in current use):

Etymology: French = CREAM *n.*²

1.

a. A cream (CREAM *n.*² 2a) or custard.

1845 E. ACTON *Mod. Cookery* xx. 526 *Crème à la Comtesse*, is a very delicate kind of sweet dish, which..may be rendered more recherché by a flavouring of maraschino.

1855 E. ACTON *Mod. Cookery* (rev. ed.) xxiii. 484 The French make their custards, which they call *crèmes*, also in small china cups.

1865 M. B. CHESNUT *Diary* 5 Apr. in C. V. Woodward *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (1981) xxxiii. 778 We keep a cookery book on the mantelpiece, and when our dinner is deficient we just read a pudding or a *crème*.

1935 *Punch* 9 Jan. 33/1 Oh, many a *crème* have I consumed.

b. A name for various syrupy liqueurs, as *crème de menthe* (peppermint), *crème de vanille*, *crème de noyau*, *crème de cacao*. (Cf. CREAM *n.*² 2e.)

a1821 KEATS *Cap & Bells* lvi, in *Compl. Poet. Wks.* (1907) 472 The least drop of *crème de citron*, crystal clear.

c1870 H. W. ALLEN *Three St. James's St.* (1950) viii. 186/2 Liqueurs..*Crème de Noyau*—10/-.

1877 *Cassell's Dict. Cookery* 382/2 *Noyau*, or *Crème de Noyau*, is a sweet cordial flavoured with bitter almonds.

1892 T. F. GARRETT & W. A. RAWSON *Encycl. Pract. Cookery* I. 477/1 *Crèmes*, a French term applied to certain cordials and liqueurs, to indicate the cream-like smoothness of these manufactures.

- 1903 *Daily Mail* 11 Sept. 3/3 Crème de menthe, with its strong peppermint flavour, is the one almost exclusively favoured by ladies.
- 1930 E. WAUGH *Labels* 26 Shady young men in Charvet shirts sit round the bar repairing with powder-puff and lipstick the ravages of grenadine and crème de cacao.
- 1930 H. CRADDOCK *Savoy Cocktail Bk.* I. 18 Alexander Cocktail, $\frac{1}{2}$ Dry Gin, $\frac{1}{4}$ Crème de Cacao, $\frac{1}{4}$ Sweet Cream.
- 1958 A. L. SIMON *Dict. Wines* 55/1 *Alexander*, (1) $\frac{1}{3}$ gin; $\frac{1}{3}$ Crème de Cacao; $\frac{1}{3}$ cream. Frappé. (2) $\frac{3}{4}$ jigger Rye Whisky; $\frac{1}{4}$ jigger Bénédictine; twist orange peel on top.
- 1961 I. FLEMING *Thunderball* x. 112 A tall glass of his favourite drink—crème de menthe frappé with a maraschino cherry on top.

c. crème de riz *n.* a fine rice-flour; ground rice.

- 1896 A. B. MARSHALL *Cookery Bk.* (ed. 2) 15 (*adv.*) Marshall's Crème de Riz..highly prized for Cakes, Puddings, Blancmanges.
- 1960 E. DAVID *French Provinc. Cooking* 97 Crème de Riz, Ground Rice.

2. crème de la crème *n.* the elite, the very pick of society.

- 1848 F. A. KEMBLE *Let* 22 Jan. in *Rec. Later Life* (1882) 336 The..pretensions of an Austrian crème de la crème are comprehensible and consistent.
- 1860 *Once a Week* 28 July 119/2 The elders—the crème de la crème, or those initiated into the highest mysteries of the sect.
- 1867 S. W. BAKER *Nile Tributaries Abyssinia* xvii. 451 The society in this district was not crème de la crème.
- 1898 B. L. FARJEON *Miriam Rozella* xi Need I say that he and Lady Laverock move in the best society, and are crème de la crème?
- 1920 D. H. LAWRENCE *Lost Girl* i. 8 In his palmy days, James Houghton was crème de la crème of Woodhouse society.
- 1967 R. SHAW *Man in Glass Booth* vi. 70 I love you all for you are the finest of your kind, the crème de la crème Americaine.

3. Meat, fish, or vegetables, baked in white sauce and covered with bread-crumbs.

[1901 C. H. SENN *New Cent. Cookery Bk.* 307 *Petites Crèmes de Veau à l' Ecarlate.*]

COMPOUNDS

crème brûlée *n.* a cream topped with caramelized sugar.

- 1886 M. CLARK tr. Brisse *366 Menus* 163 *Crème brûlée*. Burnt cream.
 1909 *Cent. Dict. Suppl.* *Crème brûlée*, caramel or browned sugar with cream.
 1959 *Listener* 6 Aug. 227/2 To make the *crème brûlée* take 1 pint of double cream, 6 oz. of caster sugar, 4 egg yolks, and vanilla essence.

crème caramel *n.* a custard coated with caramel.

- 1846 A. SOYER *Gastron. Regenerator* 528 *Crème au Caramel*... Have three quarters of a pint of milk in which you have boiled an ounce of isinglass, pour it upon the caramel.
 1906 *Mrs. Beeton's Bk. Househ. Managem.* (rev. ed.) lxvii. 1730 *Crème Caramel renversée*. Caramel Pudding.
 1914 C. MACKENZIE *Sinister St.* II. III. v. 592 Our *crème caramel* is a much showier sweet than anything they've got at the House.
 1930 A. BENNETT *Imperial Palace* lx. 478 Evelyn heard the order: vermicelli soup, cutlets, *crème caramel*.
 1949 'C. HARE' *When Wind Blows* 153 Spooning into his mouth the last of the tasteless *crème caramel* which the club almost invariably provided by way of a sweet.

crème Chantilly *n.* [compare CHANTILLY *n.* 3] whipped cream sweetened and flavoured with vanilla.

[1886 M. CLARK tr. Brisse *366 Menus* 324 *Crème à la Chantilly*. Cream à la Chantilly.]

- 1908 C. H. SENN *Menu Bk.* 273 [Crème] Chantilly, whipped double cream, with vanilla flavour.
- 1958 R. GODDEN *Greengage Summer* ix. 95 Meringues with crème chantilly.

crème pâtissière *n.* (see quot.)

- 1970 A. L. SIMON & R. HOWE *Dict. Gastron.* 143 Crème pâtissière, also known as confectioner's custard or baker's custard, this is a thick French custard or cream used to fill tartlets, cream horns or puff creams.

crème renversée *n.* a custard turned out of a mould.

- [1888 *Mrs. Beeton's Bk. Househ. Managem.* (rev. ed.) xxxi. 828 Caramel Pudding. (Fr.—Crème Renversée.)]
- 1912 'SAKI' *Unbearable Bassington* xv. 271 Jerome and the girls don't want to eat any more crème renversée.

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