

Mulligatawny Soup



By: Raghavan Iyer

½ cup oily or un-oily skinned split yellow pigeon peas (toovar dal), picked over for stones

2 Tablespoons of canola oil

1 teaspoon black or yellow mustard seeds

1 medium-size red onion, finely chopped

1 medium-size green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into ½-inch pieces

1 large carrot, peeled, ends trimmed, finely chopped

4 large cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 ½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into ½ inch cubes

¼ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems

1 Tablespoon English-style Madras curry powder

1 ½ teaspoons coarse kosher or sea salt

1 cup unsweetened coconut milk

1 cup frozen green peas

1 large tomato, cored and cut into ½ inch cubes

½ teaspoons black peppercorns, coarsely cracked

Place the pigeon peas in a small saucepan. Fill the pan halfway with water and rinse the peas by rubbing them between your fingertips. The water will become cloudy. Drain this water. Repeat three or four times until the water remains relatively clear; drain. Now add 2 cups of water and bring to a boil, uncovered, over medium-high heat. Skim off and discard any foam that forms on the surface. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover the pan, and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the peas are tender, about 20 minutes.

While the pigeon peas are cooking, heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the mustard seeds, cover the pan, and cook until the seeds have stopped popping (not unlike popcorn), about 30 seconds. Add the onion, bell pepper, carrot, and garlic. Cook, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables start to turn light brown, 10 to 15 minutes. (At first they will release their liquid. Then, as it evaporates, they will start to brown).



Add the chicken and stir-fry until the meat is seared 2 to 4 minutes.

Sprinkle in the cilantro and curry powder, and stir occasionally to let the ground spices cook without burning, about 1 minute. Pour in 3 cups water and scrape the bottom of the pan to deglaze it, releasing any browned bits of vegetable, chicken, and spices. Stir in the salt. Once the broth comes to a boil, continue to boil it, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the flavors meld, 10 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, transfer the cooked pigeon peas, with their cooking water, to a blender. Puree, scraping the inside of the jar as needed, until smooth. (If you have an immersion blender, you can puree the peas and water right in the saucepan)

Add the thin, creamy-yellow pigeon pea puree to the chicken mixture, and stir in the coconut milk, peas and tomato. Continue to simmer the soup, uncovered, stirring occasionally, to let the flavours blend, 5 to 10 minutes.

Stir in the pepper and serve.

Tips:

If pigeon peas are not on hand, use yellow split peas or red lentils as alternatives. Yellow split peas are thicker when pureed than pigeon peas, and so provide more body to the broth.

Optional: Chopped apples and/or golden raisins as a sweet garnish.