

Tamarind Rice with Cashew Nuts Recipe

Ingredients: Serves 4-6

225g pigeon peas (tuar dhal)
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
Salt, to taste
225g basmati rice, washed, soaked for 20 minutes and drained
4 cloves
2.5cm piece of cinnamon stick, halved
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
125g green beans, cut into 2.5cm lengths
90g carrots, cut into small dice
1 tablespoon coriander seeds
2-6 dried red chilies
2 teaspoons split chick peas (channa dhal)
½ teaspoon fenugreek seeds
25g desiccated coconut
1 teaspoon tamarind concentrate or 2 tablespoons lemon juice
3 tablespoons sunflower oil
1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
20 curry leaves
50g raw cashew nuts, chopped
melted unsalted butter or ghee, to serve (optional)

Method:

Wash the lentils in several changes of water and put into a saucepan with 500ml water and the turmeric and place over a high heat. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat to medium-low and cook, stirring occasionally, for 20-25 minutes until the lentils are soft but not mushy. Add a little more water, if necessary, during cooking. Add salt to taste and mix well and keep hot. In a large pan bring plenty of salted water to the boil. Add the cinnamon and cloves and the drained rice. Bring back to the boil and cook over a medium heat for 6-8 minutes. Drain the cooked rice and keep hot. Boil the green beans and carrots in salted water for 5 minutes and drain then refresh in cold water. Preheat a small heavy-based frying pan or a saucepan over a medium heat and add the coriander seeds, chilies and split chick peas. If the chilies are the long, slim variety, cut them into 2-3 pieces with a pair of scissors. Stir the spices continuously for about a minute when they will release their aroma. Reduce the heat slightly and add the fenugreek seeds and the coconut and continue to roast them until the coconut is lightly browned. Transfer them to a plate to cool. Grind in a coffee grinder. The oil in the coconut will tend to stop the blades from moving; simply scrape it off with a spoon and continue to grind until the mixture is smooth. Put the cooked lentils, rice and vegetables in a large shallow pan. If using tamarind concentrate, dilute it with 2 tablespoons boiling water. Alternatively, microwave with cold water for 30 seconds. Pour the tamarind juice or lemon juice over the rice and mix with a metal spoon or a fork. Next, add the roasted ground spices and gently mix with a fork until thoroughly blended. In a small pan or a wok, heat the oil over a medium heat and add the mustard seeds. As soon as they start popping, add the curry leaves followed by the cashew nuts. Reduce the heat to low and fry until the cashews are brown. Pour this mixture over the rice and mix well, again only with a metal spoon or fork. Wooden ones will squash the delicate grains of basmati rice. Served topped with melted butter or ghee, if using. The lentils used here are known as tuvar dhal which you can buy in Indian stores. Alternatively, use yellow split peas. It is a meal in itself for vegetarians

accompanied by a raita. It also tastes superb with any dry spiced meat, poultry or fish. It is traditionally served with melted ghee or butter poured over the rice.

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