

Curried spinach, potato & lentil soup

This is a sort of combination of two classic Indian curries in soup format – dahl and sag aloo. As it's not a blended soup be sure to chop the potatoes and onions neatly.

I'm not a fan of frozen vegetables in general but the two that we generally keep in our freezer at home are frozen peas (which I and all my family love) and frozen spinach (which Sarah and I love) – probably indistinguishable from fresh spinach in this recipe, and more convenient.

If you want the soup to be vegan, then add a bit more sunflower oil and miss out the butter. Using freshly toasted and ground mustard and cumin seeds adds extra zing – but use ready ground if you're pressed for time.

The tamarind is a recent addition to this recipe. For me the sharpness adds another dimension – but if you're not familiar with tamarind maybe just use half the quantity at first, and add more if it tickles your tastebuds.

serves 6

3 tbs sunflower oil
50g butter
250g onions (one large), chopped 1cm
1 tsp salt
1 tsp mustard seeds, toasted and ground
1 tsp cumin seeds, toasted and ground
1 tsp turmeric
½ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp cayenne pepper
¼ tsp ground ginger
150g red lentils
250g potatoes (one medium/large),
diced 1cm (no need to peel)
1.5 litres water
2 tsp tamarind paste
350g frozen leaf spinach, de-frosted and
chopped

In a large pan, cook the onions with the oil, butter and salt on a medium heat for about 10 minutes until the onions are soft, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Add all the spices except the tamarind paste and continue cooking for a couple of minutes, stirring constantly so it doesn't burn.

Add the lentils, diced potatoes and water. Bring to the boil and simmer with the lid on for 15-20 minutes, until the potatoes are soft but not quite falling apart (add more water if necessary).

Add the tamarind paste and spinach, bring back to the boil and simmer for another couple of minutes until the spinach is cooked and everything is well-amalgamated.

Check the consistency of the soup, adding more water if necessary. Finally, taste and season if necessary with salt and black pepper.