

Cook-It-Yourself Ethnic Recipes



Smoky Yellow Split Peas (Tamatar Chana Dal)

This vegan and gluten-free recipe traces its roots to Southeast India, where roasting spices to yield nutty-hot flavors creates a layered experience.

Yields: 6 cups

- 1 cup yellow split peas
- 1 lb potatoes (Yukon gold or russet), peeled and cut into ½-inch cubes
- ¼ tsp ground turmeric
- 2 to 4 dried red cayenne chiles (like chile de arbol), stems discarded
- 1 Tbsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 medium-size tomato, cored and diced
- 2 Tbsp finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems
- 1½ tsp coarse kosher or sea salt

Measure the peas into a medium-size saucepan. Cover with water and rinse the grains by rubbing them in-between fingertips. Drain and repeat three to four times until the water, upon rinsing the peas, remains fairly clear.

Measure and pour 4 cups of water into the pan and bring it to a boil over medium-high heat. When some foam arises, scoop it out and discard it.

Add the potatoes and turmeric to the peas, stirring once or twice. Lower the heat to

medium-low and cover the pan. Stew the mélange, stirring occasionally, until the peas are tender, but still firm-looking and the potatoes are cooked, 20 to 25 minutes.

While the peas and potatoes cook, preheat a small skillet over medium-high heat. Once the pan feels hot (a palm held close to the bottom usually feels the heat within 2 to 4 minutes), sprinkle in the chiles, coriander and cumin.

Toast the spices, shaking the pan very frequently, until the chiles blacken and smell smoky-hot and the seeds turn reddish brown and smell strongly aromatic (nutty with citrus undertones), 1 to 2 minutes.

Transfer this spice blend to a blender jar and plunk in the tomato. Purée, scraping the insides of the jar as needed, to make a smooth, reddish brown paste with a smoky aroma.

Once the peas are cooked, scrape the spicy, well-seasoned tomato paste into the pan. Stir in the cilantro and salt.

Set the heat to medium-high and vigorously boil the dal, uncovered, stirring occasionally, to allow the flavors to mingle and the sauce to slightly thicken, 12 to 15 minutes. For a thicker sauce, mash some of the peas and potatoes with the back of a spoon. Serve warm.

Recipe courtesy of Raghavan Iyer (RaghavanIyer.com).

Eat-a-Lot Wakame Sea Vegetable Soup

This soup satisfies a body's call for a dish rich in minerals and vitamins.

Yields: 4 servings

- 1 Tbsp sesame oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 Tbsp peeled and julienned ginger
- 3 scallions, both green and white parts, cut into thin disks
- 4¼ cups chicken or vegetable broth
- ¼ cup sake
- 1 Tbsp instant wakame sea vegetable, soaked in cold water for 2 minutes and drained
- 1 Tbsp white sesame seeds, toasted in a skillet
- Tamari to taste
- Ground white pepper to taste

In a medium pot, heat the sesame oil over medium heat until it's hot, but not smoking. Add the garlic and ginger and cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. Add the white part of the scallions, reserving the green part, and cook, stirring, for 1 minute.

Add the chicken broth and sake, then bring the mixture to a boil. Add the wakame and the sesame seeds. Season the soup with a few drops of tamari and ground white pepper, and add the green part of the scallions.

After a few strong stirs, serve piping hot in individual bowls.

Recipe of Hiroko Shimbo from The Japanese Kitchen; permission from Quarto Publishing Group USA.





Pasta with Caponata

Try adding a sliced avocado or a can of tuna fish packed in olive oil.

Yields: 4 servings

Caponata:

2 Tbsp olive oil

*¾ lb eggplant, peeled and diced
(about 2 cups)*

1 celery rib (about ½ cup)

1 medium onion, chopped (about 1 cup)

*1 small tomato, coarsely chopped
(about ½ cup)*

2 Tbsp capers packed in vinegar

2 Tbsp wine vinegar

2 tsp natural sugar, optional

1 Tbsp pine nuts

*Kosher or sea salt and freshly ground
black pepper to taste*

Pasta:

¾ lb farfalle or penne pasta

*1 can tuna packed in olive oil,
drained (optional)*

2 Tbsp grated Parmesan

2 Tbsp julienned fresh basil leaves

For the caponata, heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the eggplant and cook over medium-high heat, for 15 minutes, until lightly browned, mixing often.

Remove the eggplant with a slotted spoon and add the onions and celery to the skillet. Lower the heat and sauté, stirring occasionally. When the celery is tender, in about 10 minutes, add the tomatoes. Cover and continue to cook, mixing the vegetables together, for 10 minutes more. Add the eggplant.

Drain the capers and soak them in cold water for 15 minutes. Rinse and blot on a paper towel.

In a small pan, heat the vinegar and natural sugar together. As soon as the mixture boils, add desired amount of capers and pine nuts, then salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for 1 minute, and then add to the eggplant mixture. Cook over a low heat for 5 minutes. Adjust the seasoning.

Transfer to a large serving bowl. The dish is best at room temperature, but can be cold.

For the pasta, bring a big pot of salted water to a boil and add the pasta. Cook until al dente, drain and pour over the caponata. Add the tuna if desired. Toss gently and garnish with the Parmesan cheese and fresh basil.

Recipe courtesy of Eugenia Bone (Kitchen Ecosystem.com).

Cherries with Parsley, Walnuts and Pomegranate Vinaigrette

This salad combines fresh summer fruits from the U.S. and Lebanon. Pomegranate molasses is a bottled condiment available at Middle Eastern markets and specialized grocers.

Yields: 8 servings

1 qt sweet cherries, pitted and halved

*½ cup walnuts, toasted and
coarsely chopped*

¼ cup flat leaf parsley, coarsely chopped

2 tsp pomegranate molasses

Juice of ½ lemon

3 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

Pinch kosher salt

In a decorative small salad bowl, combine the cherries, walnuts and parsley.

In a small prep bowl, whisk the pomegranate molasses, lemon juice, olive oil and salt until it emulsifies.

Dress the salad with the vinaigrette and serve immediately, or later, at room temperature.

Recipe courtesy of Maureen Abood (MaureenAbood.com).

