

Mulligatawny Soup

Vegetarian Mulligatawny Soup

Mulligatawny originated in India, where its name comes from the word for “pepper water.” That gives you a clue that the base is hot. The other key ingredient is lentils, which soak up all the other spices, giving the soup a tremendous depth of flavor. It’s interesting to see how many customers order this soup without really knowing much about it. What they do remember is the “Seinfeld” television episode about the “Soup Nazi,” who made delicious soup but intimidated his customers. When it first aired, mulligatawny (pronounced muhl-i-guh-taw-nee) became a really fashionable soup. It was amazing to see the effect of it at our business. Everyone came in talking about “Seinfeld” and asking for mulligatawny. We gladly served the soup, but drew the line at imitating the shop owner who yelled at everyone.

3 tablespoons olive oil
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 large Spanish onion, peeled and diced
2 ribs celery, diced
4 carrots, peeled and sliced
1 pound dried lentils
2 cups (16 ounces) canned whole tomatoes, cut into pieces
1 can (16 ounces) chickpeas, rinsed and drained
8 cups vegetable stock
2 cups tomato juice
3 teaspoons yellow curry powder
3 teaspoons ground cumin
2 teaspoons ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 can (16 ounces) coconut milk
2 tablespoons honey
1 1/2 cups cooked basmati rice
1/2 bunch fresh cilantro, chopped Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

■ Heat a stockpot over medium-high heat. Add the oil, garlic, onion, celery, and carrots. Sauté for 7 minutes. Add the lentils, tomatoes, chickpeas, stock, tomato juice, curry powder, cumin, coriander, and cayenne pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium, cover the pot, and simmer for 40 to 45 minutes. Stir in the coconut milk, honey, rice, cilantro, salt, and pepper.

Makes 12 servings