



West African Peanut Soup

Serves 4 to 6

This delicious peanut soup is easy and quick, I'd say 30 to 45 minutes, tops. The soup base can be made one day ahead of time, as described in my notes in the recipe below. This vegan, vegetarian, dairy free and gluten free soup should please all diners! A scoop of white rice makes a nice accompaniment and a heartier meal.

Ingredients

2 tbsp. oil
2 cups onion, chopped (about 1 large)
3 medium cloves garlic, chopped
2 tsp. curry powder
1 tsp. ground ginger
4 tbsp. tomato paste
2 medium tomatoes, chopped
1/3 cup peanut butter (any kind)
4 cups vegetable stock, or water
1/2 to 1 tsp. salt
1 cup diagonally sliced asparagus
1 cup diagonally sliced snow peas
2 to 3 heads baby bok choy, sliced

Directions

Heat a soup pot over medium heat and add the oil and onions. Sauté for a few minutes, until the onion begins to soften. Add the garlic, stir for a moment, then add the curry powder and ginger. Give that a minute over the heat to toast the

spices, then add the tomato paste. Let the paste cook for a minute or two until it begins to brown a little bit and caramelize.

Next, add the chopped tomatoes and peanut butter. Mix well, then add the vegetable stock and ½ teaspoon of salt. Let this simmer on low heat for about 20 minutes. More salt can be added at this point, if necessary. The soup base up to this point can be prepared one day ahead of time and refrigerated until you are ready to use it.

When you are ready to serve your soup, bring the soup base back to a simmer and add the fresh vegetables. Let the soup simmer for a few more minutes until the vegetables are just done, but still bright green and a little crispy.

Recipe and photo credit: Linda McElroy



Mali

Culture

Mali is a landlocked country in western Africa. Formerly called the French Sudan, it borders Algeria, Niger, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Cote D'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. Mali is located in what was a great medieval empire. The Sahara desert covers the northern half of Mali.

Mali has a population of almost 17 million. Half of the population is Mandinka; the other half is comprised of various ethnic groups including Moors and Tuareg nomads. The languages are Bamanankan and French. French is the official language in schools and the government. Ninety-five percent of the population is Muslim. Many people fled from Mali to Niger during a coup, political upheaval and continued armed conflict in 2012.

The country has one of the world's lowest gross domestic product per capita. Most Malians are illiterate due to widespread lack of education. Lack of medical care is widespread and malaria is the leading cause of death in children. Most Malians live in small rural villages and farm small family plots of land. Droughts can be severe.

There are many festivals and rituals celebrating life, including weddings and naming ceremonies for infants. Islam is the primary religion and the festivals have native tribal cultural influences.

Cuisine

The cuisine of Mali varies from region to region due to different cultural groups, but there are dishes found throughout the country. Chickens have been raised in Mali for thousands of years. Other protein sources include lamb, beef and fish.

Vegetables farmed include carrots, yams, sweet potatoes and peanuts. Grains include millet and rice. Rice is a main staple and can provide up to 40 percent of the daily food intake. African rice has a distinct taste, coloring and aroma. There is evidence that millet and rice have been farmed since 1,000 BC.

Typical dishes include rice with vegetables in a peanut sauce, rice or other cereal grains served with tomatoes and fish or meat with vegetables. Meat curries are frequently made with lamb.

“Riz au gras” is a dish of rice with vegetables and meat. “Jollof rice” is rice with tomatoes, vegetables and meat.

Drinks include a sugar, lemon and ginger drink called jinjinbere. Dabileni is a drink made of sugar, water and sorrel.

Meals end with a strong sweet tea. Three rounds of tea are served; the first is for life, the second is for love and the third is for death.

Sources

Cambridge World History of Food

World Book Encyclopedia
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every culture.com
foodbycountry.com
“Africa” Lonely Planet

Photo credit: Caravan to Class