

FOOD52

Watermelon Tomato Salad with Cumin and Fennel

By Amanda Hesser

I had this revelatory spiced watermelon tomato salad at a dinner hosted by Kitchensurfing, a marketplace for chefs that gives people access to great restaurant cooks and chefs for private events. One of their chefs, Surbhi Sahni, cooked a stunning Indian dinner that evening, and she served the salad as an intense, refreshing first course. Surbhi, who owns the bakery Bittersweet NYC, and does gigs with Kitchensurfing on the side, first had the salad in Rajistan. There, she said, a watermelon-only version is a traditional dish and is eaten with plain roti and a variety of other yogurt, lentil, vegetable, and rice dishes. The watermelon is seasoned with citrus and salt, and cooked in a hot curry sauce. In Brooklyn, Surbhi adds tomatoes, and makes a curry sauce separately, with cumin, fennel, chile powder, watermelon juice, and citrus, then mixes the sauce with the two fruits, and serves it as its own course. No one will snicker if you show up with it at a potluck. You may also consider it for your work lunch. And I'd definitely show it off at a dinner party. And now that I have permission to add spices to my watermelon salads, I may even go rogue and try curry leaves and mustard seeds.

Serves 6

- 6 cups cubed (1/2-inch cubes) watermelon
 - 2 heirloom or beefsteak tomatoes, cored and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
 - 1 teaspoon sugar
 - Salt
 - 1/4 cup sliced mint
 - Juice of 1/2 lime
 - 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
 - 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds
 - 1 inch ginger, peeled and finely chopped
 - 1/4 teaspoon turmeric
 - 1/4 teaspoon chile powder
 - Juice of 1 lemon
1. Puree 2 cups of the watermelon in a blender and set aside. In a large bowl, combine the remaining watermelon and tomato and toss with the sugar, a large pinch of salt, the mint, and lime juice.
 2. Set a large saute pan over medium heat and add enough oil to thinly coat the base of the pan. When the oil is hot, sprinkle in the cumin, fennel, and ginger, and toast for 30 seconds. Add the turmeric and chile powder, then 1/2 cup watermelon juice, and the lemon juice. Bring to a simmer. Add salt or sugar as desired, and cook for 1 minute.
 3. Pour the sauce over the watermelon and tomatoes and gently fold together. Divide among 6 shallow

bowl, and serve.