

SAVEUR

Savor a World of Authentic Cuisine

Sep 4, 2012

Sambar (South Indian Onion Stew)

In South India, rice and *sambar* is a daily meal. A stew made from *chana dal* (yellow split peas), *sambar* is a spicy medium for vegetables from miniature eggplants to okra to pearl onions. South Indian *sambar* is bolstered by sambar powder—coriander seeds, red chile, fenugreek seeds, and curry leaves, among other spices, that are coarsely ground together—as well as spices typically found in garam masala. To Indians, *sambar* is what makes rice taste good.

SERVES 4–6

INGREDIENTS

1 cup chana dal
1/2 tsp. ground turmeric
2 tbsp. Asian tamarind concentrate
2 tbsp. coriander seeds
1/2 tsp. cumin seeds
4 chiles de árbol, stemmed
2 tbsp. peanut oil
1/4 tsp. black mustard seeds
4 cups pearl onions, peeled
1/8 tsp. asafoetida
20 fresh curry leaves
Kosher salt, to taste
Cooked rice, for serving



Credit: Penny de los Santos

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Boil dal, turmeric, and 5 cups water in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook until soft, about 1 hour. Set aside. Place tamarind and 2 cups boiling water in a bowl; let sit, stirring occasionally, until paste dissolves, about 30 minutes. Pour through a fine strainer into a bowl; discard solids; set tamarind aside.
2. Heat coriander, cumin, and half the chiles in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat; cook, swirling pan, until lightly toasted, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a spice grinder; cool. Process until finely ground; set aside.

3. Return saucepan to heat with oil; add remaining chiles, chopped, and mustard seeds; cook until seeds pop, about 1 minute. Add onions; cook until golden brown, about 8 minutes. Add ground spices, asafoetida, and curry leaves; cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add cooked dal and tamarind; boil. Season with salt; serve with rice.

See all 150 classic recipes featured in our 150th issue »

(<http://www.saveur.com/gallery2/150-Classic-Recipes/>)