

Vegetable Couscous (Upma)

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A twist on couscous, this South Indian breakfast is a nutritious blend of cream of wheat with vegetables, herbs, and spices.

By Meera Vasudevan

Serves 4 | Prep time: 10 | Cook time: 10







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INGREDIENTS:

- 
1/2 cup cream of wheat (Semolina, Rava)
- 
1 onion (finely chopped)
- 
1/4 cup shelled green peas
- 
1/4 cup mixed vegetables like carrots, green beans, etc. (substitute with other non-mushy vegetables of your choice)
- 
1 tbsp split chickpeas (Chana Dal)
- 
About 10-12 curry leaves, if available
- 
2 whole green chilies (medium-sized)
- 
1 whole red chili (for garnish)
- 
1 tablespoon oil
- 
1 teaspoon ghee (clarified butter), if available
- 
Lime or lemon

- 
1/4 cup freshly chopped cilantro
- 
1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 
2 tbsp roasted unsalted cashew nuts (substitute with almonds, peanuts or pistachio)
- 
Salt

PREPARATION:

4-step Method:

- 
Chop vegetables into small cubes, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.
- 
Finely chop onion, cilantro, ginger. Deseed and slice green chilies in half.
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Heat $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon oil in a saucepan. Roast the cream of wheat for about 5 minutes on low heat or until it just turns a little golden (not brownish). Set aside.
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Separately boil $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water in a kettle. Keep ready.
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In a large dish, heat the rest of the oil. When the oil is hot, add mustard seeds. In a few seconds, the mustard seeds will sputter. Add split chickpeas (Chana dal), ginger, green chilies, and onions, and then cook on high flame for about 3 minutes till onions become slightly translucent. Now, add the vegetables and cook for about 10 minutes. Let the vegetables cook but still be al dente.



Add the 3 cups of hot water and bring to boil. (If you have not boiled the water separately, you may add regular water and wait for a few minutes for the water to boil).



Turn stove to slow cook or simmer. This is the pre-final step and perhaps the most delicate and important step in making Upma. Slowly add the roasted cream of wheat to the water, a little at a time, almost creating a slow “rain” of the cream of wheat, continuously whisking the mixture in the pan so it does not form lumps.

(Do not just add the cream of wheat in one go. This will make the Upma lumpy.)



In less than a minute the Upma will thicken rapidly and form a creamy porridge-like consistency. Add salt to taste and stir through. Switch off and remove the pan from heat immediately. Now add about a tbsp of lime or lemon juice.



Garnish with chopped cilantro & roasted nuts. Add the ghee, if using. Stir together.

Serving Suggestion: Serve the Upma with side dishes like Coconut Chutney, or Tomato Chutney or Pico de Gallo.

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