

BUSYCOOK



Lemony couscous

Pair it with prawns and peas for a cool dish on a hot day

COUSCOUS? What's that? My colleagues gathering at the pantry all looked at the dish with grave suspicion. Until, that is, they tried the first mouthful. Then they were instant converts.

It's light, it's lemony, it's almost fat-free and it's just the thing for hot, hot days. It's immensely healthy, too.

Couscous is just another name for semolina, or sugee, as we know it better. Basically, it is cracked wheat in a granular form and is a staple food in North African countries like Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

It's easy to cook and only needs to be re-hydrated with a good soak in hot water or a tasty stock. The grain is already pre-

cooked and works a little like instant rice. One cup of couscous fluffs up to double the quantity when ready.

I found my packet of couscous in Carrefour at \$2.70 for a kilo box. I used about two cups and that was enough to feed four to six people, with second helpings.

It was the first time I cooked couscous and I had to experiment a little. Although the instructions on the box said one cup of couscous to one cup of hot water, the result turned out a little dry. I adjusted the ratio to one and a half cups of liquid and that made the grains more moist.

Couscous goes well with lemon, which lifts it from the ordinary. Pair it with pretty pink prawns and little gems of green peas and you get a dish that looks good, smells great and tastes wonderful. What else could you ask for?



by Pauline D Loh

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Chicken steamed in young coconut

WITH the recent heatwave, most of us have lost the taste for rich dishes. It's time to cool down, and what better, tastier way than to have a light tonic soup using chicken and a young fragrant coconut. These coconuts from Thailand are really refreshing and have a wonderful aroma. Try this easy recipe. Prepare it in the morning, put it in the slow-cooker or crock-pot and by the time you get off work, it's steaming and ready for you.

Ingredients: 1 young coconut, 1 chicken breast, cut into pieces, about 5 or 6 fresh cordyceps roots, 1 spoonful red boxthorn seeds, 1 dried date (nanzhao), a few slices ginger.

Method: Run a knife around the opening of the young coconut so the lid lifts off easily. Pour out coconut juices and reserve for a cool drink later. Pack chicken meat and rest of ingredients into the coconut. Add one bowl of water or enough to cover the chicken in the nut. Place in a slow-cooker or crockpot. Add another bowl of water into the crockpot. Cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 3 hours.

Note: You can get fresh cordyceps at your local market vegetable stall or buy it in packs from the supermarkets. These are also known as "snow ginseng" and are fresh and cooling.



Lemon Couscous with prawn and peas

Ingredients: (serves 4-6)
 2 cups couscous
 1 cup green peas
 1/2 kilo fresh tiger prawns
 2 lemons
 1 bunch coriander, chopped

Method:
 1. Clean and trim prawns of feelers and legs. Wash and drain. Heat up two cups water in a pan and bring to boil. Cook prawns in the water till they turn pink. Remove and rinse prawns under cold, running water immediately. Shell prawns and dice.
 2. Blanch peas in the hot water and drain. Set aside.
 3. Measure prawn stock and add water to bring up to three cups. Bring to boil again. Salt to taste.
 4. Measure two cups couscous into a large pan. Pour boiling stock over, stir immediately to fluff up

couscous. Add prawns and peas.
 5. Thinly slice the peel off one lemon. Cut into very slim strips. Cut lemons into quarters. Squeeze the juice over the pot of couscous and stir well. Sprinkle lemon peel and chopped coriander over the couscous. Mix well. Serve warm or cold.

Notes: I used tiger prawns for this recipe for their fresh pink colour and their crunch. Choose petit pois over normal green peas. These baby peas are very sweet.

Shopping Guide:
 Carrefour Couscous (\$2.70/kg box)
 Carrefour petit pois (\$3.50/500g)
 Fresh tiger prawns (\$8.00/1/2 kg)
 Lemons (\$1.20/3)
 Coriander (\$0.80/bunch)