

## Sweet potato, ginger & coconut stew



This stew has its roots in the Rastafarian Ital stew. This is my take on it. It uses familiar flavors like coconut, ginger, bay and allspice, but in a combination that's new to me. I've suggested a quick topping here that I urge you to make, as it lifts the whole stew. For more recipes from the Ital tradition, check out British cooks Riaz Phillips, and Craig and Shaun McAnuff.

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SERVES 4–6

2 allspice berries or 1 teaspoon ground allspice  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
a bunch of scallions, white and green parts roughly chopped  
4 cloves of garlic, peeled  
a thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and roughly chopped  
a few sprigs of thyme, leaves picked  
a large bunch of fresh cilantro, stalks finely chopped and leaves picked and reserved  
the juice and zest of 2 limes, unwaxed or organic  
2 bay leaves  
½ Scotch bonnet chili  
1 x 13.5-ounce/400 ml can unsweetened coconut milk  
½ butternut squash or pumpkin (about 1 pound 5 ounces/600 g), peeled and chopped into bite-sized pieces  
2 sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped into bite-sized pieces  
1 x 15-ounce/400 g can black-eyed peas or kidney beans  
1 head of greens, (like chard, spinach, kale or spring greens), thick stalks removed, roughly shredded

#### FOR THE TOPPING

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
½ cup/75 g toasted pumpkin seeds (or the toasted seeds from inside your squash)

yogurt of your choice  
rotis or rice (see [this page](#))

Toast the allspice berries for a minute or so in a large heavy-bottomed saucepan that you can use for your stew (skip this step if using ground), then put into a food processor with a tablespoon of the olive oil, the scallions, garlic, ginger, thyme leaves, cilantro stalks and the juice and zest of 1 lime. Season with salt and pepper and blitz to form a paste.

Put the saucepan back over a medium heat and, once hot, add the remaining oil and fry the paste, stirring all the time, for 3–4 minutes, until fragrant.

Add the bay leaves, half chili, coconut milk and 2¼ cups/500 ml warm water to the pan. Stir to combine, bring to a simmer and cook for a few minutes, then add the squash or pumpkin and sweet potatoes. Drain and rinse the beans, then roughly mash them in a bowl, add to the pan and cook for 30–40 minutes at a gentle simmer.

Make your topping. Mix the olive oil and pumpkin seeds with the zest of the second lime and season with salt.

Once the squash or pumpkin and potatoes are cooked, and are just holding their shape but soft throughout, and the sauce is rich and flavorful, scoop out the bay leaves, whole chili and any thyme sprigs, then add the greens to the top of the stew—don't stir them in—and cover with a lid. Cook for a couple of minutes until dark, bright green. Remove the stew from the heat and squeeze over the juice of the remaining lime. Taste and add more lime, salt or pepper if needed.

Use tongs to divide the greens among warm bowls before spooning over generous helpings of the stew. Scatter over the toasted pumpkin-seed topping and the reserved cilantro leaves. Serve with yogurt and rotis or rice on the table for people to help themselves.