Simple Kitchari

Rice and split mung dal, cooked together in one pot

Kitchari is rice and split mung dal simmered together until soft and spoonable. It is everyday home food across much of India, and Ayurveda traditionally describes it as suitable for all three doshas, with the spices adjusted to the person.

PREP	COOK	SERVES	YOU NEED
10 min, plus an optional 30-min soak	35 to 40 min	4	A heavy 4-quart pot

Ingredients

- ¾ cup white basmati rice
- ¾ cup split yellow mung dal (sold as moong dal)
- 6 cups water
- 1½ tablespoons ghee, or a neutral oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- ½ teaspoon black mustard seeds (optional)
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon salt, or to taste
- 2 cups chopped vegetables: carrot, sweet potato, zucchini, spinach or a mix
- Cilantro and lime wedges, to serve

Method

1. **Rinse.** Put the rice and dal in a bowl, cover with water, swirl and pour off. Repeat 3 or 4 times until the water is mostly clear. Soak 30 minutes if you have time, then drain.
2. **Toast the spices.** Warm the ghee in the pot over medium heat. Add the cumin and mustard seeds. When they pop, in about 30 seconds, stir in the ginger.
3. **Coat the grains.** Stir in the turmeric and coriander, then the drained rice and dal. Turn everything in the spiced ghee for 1 minute.
4. **Simmer.** Add the water, bring to a boil and skim off any foam. Lower the heat, set the lid slightly ajar and simmer 30 to 35 minutes, stirring now and then. Add firm vegetables after 10 minutes and tender ones for the last 10.
5. **Finish.** Stir in the salt. It is ready when the grains have broken down into a loose, porridge-like texture. Thin with hot water if it gets stiff.

Electric pressure cooker: do steps 2 and 3 on the sauté setting, add 4½ cups water and the firm vegetables, and cook 8 minutes at high pressure. Release naturally for 10 minutes, then stir in any leafy greens.

Serving notes

- Serve warm, topped with cilantro and a squeeze of lime.
- **Leftovers:** cool in a shallow container and refrigerate within 2 hours. Reheat with a splash of water until steaming hot all the way through.
- **Dairy-free:** use coconut, sesame or sunflower oil instead of ghee.
- **Allergies:** ghee is a milk product, and some people are allergic to mustard seed.

Adjusting for your dosha

Traditional suggestions, not research findings

- **Vata:** cook it a little wetter and add an extra spoonful of ghee.
- **Pitta:** go light on ginger and mustard seed, and add plenty of cilantro.
- **Kapha:** use less ghee, more ginger and black pepper, and more greens.

A caution about kitchari “cleanses”

Some plans call for eating only kitchari for several days. We do not advise a mono-diet cleanse like this without guidance from a clinician who knows your health, and especially not if you **have diabetes**, **have or have had an eating disorder**, or **are pregnant** or breastfeeding. Kitchari is mostly carbohydrate, so a sudden change in eating pattern can affect blood sugar and diabetes medicines. As one meal in a varied diet, kitchari is ordinary food.

This handout is general information. It is not a substitute for medical advice from your own doctor or practitioner.