

everyday kichari

serves 4-6

Kichari is the balancing staple food of Ayurveda. Served regularly at Ayurveda clinics and centers, this is a neutral, light, and soft food that both cleanses and nourishes the body, without supporting imbalance of any kind. In fact, kichari is thought to remove toxins from the system. This complete, one-pot meal is a mixture of hulled mung beans and rice, known to be gentle on the digestive organs, cooked with a rotating cast of vegetables and spices. Once you get the hang of the formula, you can experiment with seasonal varieties of beans and grains. Most would do well to eat this dish three to four times a week; I do, and it feels great.

EVERYDAY

- 6 cups water
- 1 cup basmati rice
- ½ cup yellow split mung dal (ideally, soaked for 1 hour or more)
- 1 tbsp Everyday Savory Spice Mix
- pinch of asafetida (hing) powder (optional)
- 2 cups vegetables (choose from the Everyday Shopping List in appendix 4, page 290), coarsely chopped into ½-inch cubes, leafy greens also coarsely chopped into strips
- ½–1 tsp salt
- fresh cilantro for garnish

FOR THE TEMPERING

- 1–2 tbsp ghee
- ½ tsp cumin seed
- ½ tsp coriander seed
- ½ tsp fennel seed (optional)

In a large saucepan boil 5 cups water on high heat. Set the other 1 cup aside to add during cooking as needed.

Rinse the rice and dal twice or until water runs clear. Add them to the boiling water, along with the spice mix and optional hing, and keep on high heat until the liquid boils again. Then immediately turn the heat down to low. If using hard vegetables like potatoes, carrots, and squash, add the ½-inch cubes now. Partially cover the pan with the lid ajar and simmer for 20 minutes without stirring. Check after 20 minutes to see if it needs more water. If the dal is not submerged, it does. Pour the additional cup of water on top and do not stir. If using quick-cooking vegetables like greens, green beans, and the like, add those on top to steam now. Simmer partially covered 10 minutes more.

To make the tempering, warm the ghee in a small skillet on medium heat. Add the cumin, coriander, and optional fennel seeds and cook until the seeds pop, about 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat and pour into the kichari. Add salt, stir well, and let stand, covered, for a few minutes.

Kichari should have a soupy, soft consistency; serve it in bowls, as you would a stew. Garnish with fresh cilantro.



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everyday ayurvedic spice mixes and salts

Two simple spice mixes, one sweet and one savory, are featured in many of the Everyday recipes and can come in quite handy in your other cookery or as condiments. Steamed vegetables topped with ghee and Everyday Savory Spice Mix need no special sauce. Cooked fruits or cereals with a dash of Everyday Sweet Spice Mix are ready to enjoy. The familiar taste of Everyday Digestive Salts can spruce up almost anything with minimal effort. Keep these mixes in your kitchen to enjoy their neutral, beneficial qualities for year-round eating and healing.

EVERYDAY SAVORY SPICE MIX

makes ¼ cup

The combination of turmeric, cumin, coriander, and fennel is a traditionally balanced digestive formula for kindling agni, stimulating liver function, and moderating the fire element. You will notice this mixture is the basis for all of the seasonal spice mixes and is indeed the basis for most Ayurvedic savories. I recommend tasting the spices individually first, to be sure you like them. If any flavor does not agree with you, you may reduce the amount of that spice and tailor the recipe to your own taste. (It's usually the fennel that takes some getting used to!)

- 1 tbsp whole coriander seed
- 1 tbsp whole cumin seed
- 1½ tsp whole fennel seed
- 1 tbsp turmeric powder

Dry roast the whole spices in a frying pan for a few minutes, just until they release their fragrance and you can smell them. Let them cool completely. In a coffee grinder reserved for spices or, alternatively, by hand with a mortar and pestle, grind to a uniform consistency. Transfer to a small mixing bowl and stir in the turmeric powder.

Using a teaspoon, a funnel, or a postcard folded in half to make a V-shaped chute, pour into a shaker jar with an airtight lid for storage.

EXTRAS

