

APBOUR -- ԱՊՈՒՐ

Armenian Yogurt and Barley Soup with Curry Oil

Serves 4-6

I have so many distinct memories of my mother and her mother at the stove, wooden spoon in hand, stirring a big pot of apbour. For us, it was the ultimate comfort food, and in the cold months, there was always a pot either on the stove or in the fridge.

My version of this classic Iranian-Armenian soup is a bit different from theirs. Unlike the soup I grew up with, which was thickened with flour, I use egg yolks. I further enrich the soup with a bit of cream and add some chives. For the final flourish -- which I'm happy to say my mother approved -- is the drizzle of curry oil on top, right before the soup is served.

1 Tbsp	Curry powder
½ cup	Canola oil
2 Tbsp	Unsalted Butter
2 ½ Tbsp	Kosher Salt, or more to taste
1	Large Spanish or white onion, grated coarsely
2 cloves	Garlic, grated with microplane or minced well
1 large	Bay leaf
1 lb	*Pearled barley, rinsed in cold water
2 cups	Whole milk yogurt
2	Egg yolks
1 cup	Milk
¾ cup	Heavy cream
2 cups	Chicken or vegetable stock
1 Tbsp each	Thinly sliced Chives, Mint & Dill Leaves
2 Tbsp	Dried black currants (optional)
	Salt and freshly ground pepper
	Juice of 1 lemon or more to taste

Curry Oil: In a small bowl, combine the curry powder and canola oil, and mix well. Repeat two more times, then strain through a coffee filter or moistened paper towel. The curry oil can be kept in the refrigerator upto three month, in an air tight container.

Barley: In a large, heavy saucepan, melt the butter. Add the onion and garlic and cook for a few minutes, until the liquid evaporates, about five minutes. Add the barley 1 ½ tablespoon of salt and mix well. Add enough water to cover the barley by 2 inches and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer until the barley is al dente, about 25 minutes. Add more water as needed.

Once the barley is cooked, for the soup, with a ladle strain and reserve 1 ½ cups of the cooked barley drained of excess cooking liquid. Strain the remaining barley in a colander, rinse it with cold water and place the colander over a bowl to catch excess water. **(See *Note Below)** The barley could be made upto two days before and kept covered in the refrigerator.



Yogurt and Egg Mixture: In a medium bowl, whisk together the yogurt and egg yolks, then incorporate the milk and cream. This could be prepared and kept in the refrigerator upto two days in advance.

To Make the Soup: If the yogurt-egg mixture was chilled, take it out of the fridge and place it in a medium bowl, about 20 minutes before you want to make the soup.

In a heavy bottomed, medium saucepan, bring the stock of your choice to a boil, add the 1 ½ cups of the cooked barley and continue to simmer. Very gradually whisk one cup of the hot stock and barley mixture into the yogurt and egg mixture to temper it.

Gradually whisk the tempered yogurt and egg mixture into the saucepan of stock and barley and bring to a gentle simmer. Don't let it boil or the egg will curdle.

Season the soup with remaining salt or to taste. Add the herb mixtures and the currants if using, mix well. Squeeze the juice of half a lemon and taste; if needed, add more lemon juice.

Ladle the soup into soup bowls, drizzled with a bit of the curry oil and serve.

***NOTE:** Since the soup only calls for 1 ½ cups of the cooked barley, I make a salad with the leftover barley by tossing it with chopped herbs and finely diced carrots and parsnips and dress it with olive oil and lemon juice. You could also add any variety of vegetables or greens to the barley salad.