

Chicken Mulligatawny Soup

complicated steps in this classic recipe without sacrificing complexity of flavor.



We like to serve this flavorful soup with cilantro leaves, yogurt, and lime wedges.

stovetop step in order to sauté the base veggies and flaked coconut, bloom the spices, and cook the tomato paste and flour. After whisking in the broth and simmering to thicken it slightly, I emptied the pot into the slow cooker and added lentils and cut-up boneless, skinless chicken breasts. The results were mixed. The soup was very thin (the slow cooker doesn't allow for evaporation/concentration); my tasters didn't care for the bits of flaked coconut; and the cut-up chicken breasts, while easier to deal with than bone-in meat, were dry and tough. But we didn't mind the small chunks of onion, celery, and carrot, and the flavor was pretty good. I would have to make some adjustments to give the soup more body, find a way to get around the bits of coconut, and cook the chicken properly.

After fiddling with the amounts of chicken broth and flour, I found that decreasing the broth and upping the flour gave me the slightly velvety consistency I wanted. Trading the chicken breasts for boneless, skinless thighs cut into chunks led to properly cooked meat

in about 4½ hours without any fuss. I was on a roll. Next I tried to fix the problem of the coconut fragments by just omitting the flaked coconut altogether. With the now-thicker base and tender chunks of vegetables and chicken, my tasters and I found the soup much more pleasant, but we had to admit that the missing coconut left the spices without the sweet, nutty foil that made the stovetop version of mulligatawny so satisfying. What about coconut milk? It's smooth and might be able to provide the flavor that we were missing without forcing us to return to the blender for what I wanted to be a low-stress recipe.

I sautéed the aromatics, spices, and tomato paste for another batch, cooked the flour, and whisked in the broth. This time I subtracted 1¾ cups of broth and added a can of coconut milk to the thickened broth mixture and chicken in the slow cooker. When the soup was done, I put out some yogurt, cilantro, and lime wedges for garnishing and called over my tasters. Success. The flavor was full, complex, and, truth be told, amazingly delicious, but the recipe

was simple. "I would never guess this came from the slow cooker," one taster said as she slurped the last drop of soup. "It doesn't *taste* easy to make."

SLOW-COOKER CHICKEN MULLIGATAWNY SOUP Serves 8

Cut the carrots into ½-inch pieces or they won't cook through. If the carrots are more than ½ inch in diameter, halve or quarter them lengthwise.

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 onions, chopped
- 4 carrots, peeled and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 celery rib, minced
- 1½ tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 2 teaspoons garam masala
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 5 cups chicken broth
- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into 1½-inch pieces
- 1 (13.5-ounce) can coconut milk
- ½ cup brown lentils, picked over and rinsed
- Plain yogurt
- Chopped fresh cilantro leaves
- Lime wedges

1. Melt butter in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onions, carrots, and celery and cook until onions are softened and just beginning to brown, 10 to 14 minutes. Add ginger, garlic, tomato paste, curry powder, garam masala, 1 teaspoon salt, and cayenne and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in flour and cook for 1 minute. Slowly whisk in broth, scraping up any browned bits. Bring to boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until thickened, about 5 minutes. Transfer to slow cooker. Stir in chicken, coconut milk, and lentils.

2. Cover and cook until chicken and lentils are tender, 4 to 5 hours on low. Let sit, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Using large spoon, skim fat from surface of soup. Season soup with salt and pepper to taste. Ladle into serving bowls. Garnish with yogurt and cilantro. Serve with lime wedges.