



INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ½ teaspoon brown mustard seeds
- 4 curry leaves
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin seeds
- 1½ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch ground turmeric
- 2 ripe Roma tomatoes, chopped
- 2 cups water
- 3 teaspoons tamarind liquid (see note)
- 1 tablespoon chopped coriander
- Salt flakes, to taste
- Pinch castor sugar
- Papadums, for serving

Rasam

This spicy, tangy southern Indian soup is a great start to any meal served with some crisp papadums; it's also fun in shot glasses for a cocktail party. It's traditionally served as a light meal over steamed rice, especially to people who are feeling poorly. Rasam means 'juice' or 'essence' in Tamil and the essential element of this sour pepper soup is that it is light and thin. Yellow lentils are sometimes added and I often include a tablespoon with the water and then simmer it for about 20 minutes until they're tender. This is quite a mild version, try it first then add more pepper if you want it spicier, especially if serving it in small shots.

Serves 4 as a starter

METHOD

1. Heat oil in a saucepan, add garlic, mustard, curry leaves, cumin, pepper and turmeric and fry for 30-60 seconds over medium heat, until aromatic
2. Add tomato, reduce heat to low and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally and crushing the tomatoes with the spoon until they've broken down.
3. Stir in water and tamarind, bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes.
4. Remove from heat, stir in coriander, taste and add salt and sugar.
5. Serve with papadums on the side.

Note: To make tamarind liquid, mash a small piece of tamarind paste (about 15g) well with about 2 tablespoons of hot water, working the pulp with your fingers to soften it, set aside for 10 minutes or so, then push through a sieve, discarding the solids.