



West African Silky Sweet Potato Garlic Soup

By Dylan Sabuco

Prep Time 10 / Cook Time 30 / Serves 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

chop: to cut something into small, rough pieces using a blade.

measure: to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

sauté: to cook or brown food in a pan containing a small quantity of butter, oil, or other fat.

simmer: to cook a food gently, usually in a liquid, until softened.

stir: to mix together two or more ingredients with a spoon or spatula, usually in a circle pattern, or figure eight, or in whatever direction you like!

Equipment

- Large pot + lid
- Medium mixing bowl
- Dry measuring cups
- Measuring spoons
- Wooden spoon
- Can opener
- Colander or strainer
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife
- Stand blender or immersion blender

Soup ladle

Ingredients

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1/2 C sunflower butter

1/2 tsp mild chili powder

1 tsp salt

1/2 tsp ground black pepper

1 T tomato paste **

1 15-oz can cut sweet potatoes

1 tsp vegetable oil ** for cooking

3 garlic cloves

1 vegetable bouillon cube ** + 4 C water

1 bay leaf

Food Allergen Substitutions

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Tomato: Omit 1 T tomato paste OR substitute 1/2 red bell pepper, chopped and sautéed.

Gluten/Wheat: Check vegetable bouillon labels for possible allergens and, if necessary, use water only.

Soy: Check vegetable bouillon labels for possible allergens and, if necessary, use water only. Substitute canola oil or other nut-free oil for vegetable oil.

Instructions

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intro

Today's recipe is based on a West African peanut soup or stew called "maafe" (MAH-fay)! Traditionally, this stew is prepared with a thick broth consisting of creamy peanut butter and rich spices. The combination of flavors is unique and leaves your taste buds craving more. Enjoy!

measure + stir + chop

Have your kids measure and add **1/2 cup sunflower butter, 1/2 teaspoon mild chili powder, 1**

teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper, and 1 tablespoon tomato paste to a medium mixing bowl and stir to combine. Then, open **1 can of cut sweet potatoes**. Drain and discard the liquid. Have your kids roughly chop all the sweet potato chunks into small pieces.

sauté + simmer

Next, measure and add **1 tsp vegetable oil** to a large pot over medium-low heat. Add the **sweet potatoes, 3 garlic cloves**, and the **sunflower butter mixture** to the pot and sauté for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Slowly add **1 vegetable bouillon cube, 4 C water**, and **1 bay leaf**. Cover with a lid and simmer for 15 minutes on medium-low heat.

blend + drizzle

Remove the bay leaf and discard. Carefully and slowly pour the soup into a stand blender or blend using an immersion blender in the pot (avoid going so fast that the hot soup splashes). Once the soup is smooth, drizzle it with **Not-So-Spicy Chili Oil Kiss**. Practice counting to 5 in Senegalese Wolof while you blend: 1 benn (ben), 2 ñaar (nyar), 3 ñett (nyet), 4 ñeent (nyen-ent), 5 juróom (jer-ohm).

serve + devour

Serve everyone a big ladle full of soup! Devour and enjoy!

Featured Ingredient: Chili Pepper!

Hi! I'm a Chili Pepper!

"I think I'm pretty hot stuff since so many people and cultures around the world love me! Depending on the type of pepper, we can be extremely hot or very mild. Did you know that a chipotle pepper is actually a smoked, dried jalapeño pepper?! And, did you also know that birds and other non-mammals are immune to our heat?!"

History & Etymology

Chili (or chile) peppers are the fruit of a flowering plant in the genus Capsicum. They are grown to be used as a spice, adding heat and a pungent or piquant flavor to dishes.

The peppers were first domesticated by people living in South America where Bolivia and Peru are located and were part of their diet as early as 7500 BCE. They've been grown in parts of Mexico for around 6,000 years.

Christopher Columbus and his sailors discovered chili peppers in the Caribbean on his voyage to the Americas. They called them "peppers" because of their familiarity with the spice of "black peppers."

The Spanish brought chili peppers to Europe. They were introduced to Africa and Asia by Spanish and Portuguese traders.

Chili peppers are popular in the cuisines of parts of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. China produces, by far, the most chili peppers, followed by Mexico, Indonesia, Turkey, and Spain.

The intensity of a chili pepper's heat is measured on the Scoville heat scale, invented in 1912 by American pharmacist Wilbur Scoville. Each pepper is rated according to its Scoville heat units or SHU.

Examples at the mild level include bell peppers at zero SHU on the Scoville heat scale and Anaheim chilis within the 500 to 2,500 SHU range. Jalapeños and serranos fall within the mild hot range of 2,000 to 50,000 SHU. Thai peppers (or bird's eye chilis) are at the hot level between 50,000 and 100,000 SHU. Scotch bonnets are spicy hot in the 100,000 to 250,000 SHU range, and habaneros are very hot between 250,000 and 500,000 SHU.

The chili pepper officially recognized by Guinness World Records as the hottest in the world is Pepper X at 2,693,000 SHU. It was created by Ed Currie of South Carolina in the United States. He also bred the Carolina Reaper pepper, officially recognized as the second hottest pepper at 1,641,183 SHU. The Dragon's Breath pepper at 2,480,000 SHU, developed in Wales and England, had not yet been officially recognized as the second hottest as of May 2025.

The word "chili" comes from the early 17th century, from the Spanish "chile," from the Nahuatl "chilli."

Anatomy

The chili pepper is a member of the Solanaceae or nightshade family. Botanically, it is a fruit since it has seeds and develops from flowers.

A chili pepper's shiny outer wall is the "exocarp." The "calyx," at the base of the stem, protects the flower bud. Inside the pepper is the "placenta," which holds the seeds, and the "capsaicin glands." The placenta and the capsaicin glands (known as the "pith") contain the most capsaicin, and removing these before eating reduces the amount of the pepper's heat. The inner wall of the pepper is the "endocarp." The "mesocarp," between the exocarp and endocarp, is the fleshy tissue of the fruit. The "apex" is the blossom end of a mature pepper.

Chili peppers vary in size and color depending on the cultivar. The smallest pepper, 0.20 inches long and 0.10 inches wide, is the siling labuyo or Filipino bird's eye chili. The largest is the Big Jim pepper from New Mexico, which can grow to over one foot in length.

Chili peppers may be green, yellow, orange, red, or purple. As they ripen, many chili peppers turn from green to yellow, to orange, and then red. Others change from purple to red as they ripen.

How to Pick, Buy & Use

Peppers ready to harvest should be firm, full size, shiny, and the correct color for mature fruit. Using pruners to cut the pepper's stem from the plant is better than pulling it.

When choosing peppers at the farmer's market or grocery store, look for firm ones with smooth, bright skin with no blemishes or wrinkles.

The type of chili pepper you choose for your dish depends on what you are making and the amount of heat you can handle.

Fresh, dried, or powdered chili peppers can be used in cooking.

Charring or roasting peppers can give them a smoky, sweet flavor. It also helps soften their flesh and make them easier to peel.

Some of the dishes with chili peppers you may have heard of with their country or region are: chili con carne (Mexico/United States), chili relleno (Mexico), Kung Pao chicken (China), drunken noodles (Thailand), jollof rice (West Africa), vindaloo (India), and ceviche (Peru).

Nutrition

Chili peppers are a rich source of vitamin C. At 160 percent of the daily value of vitamin C, they have a higher percentage than oranges, at 59 percent. However, a person may be more likely to eat more oranges than chili peppers.

There is a good amount of vitamin B6 and potassium in chili peppers. They are low in calories and contain 88 percent water, 9 percent carbohydrates, 2 percent protein and fiber, and 0.4 percent fat.

Chili peppers may help improve the immune system and prevent heart disease. The capsaicin in peppers can help reduce inflammation.