

Serves 4

Ingredients

a thumb-sized knob of
fresh ginger, peeled
and finely chopped
3–4 garlic cloves,
finely chopped
1–2 tablespoons ghee
1 onion, finely chopped
1–2 teaspoons coriander
seeds
1–2 teaspoons cumin seeds
1–2 teaspoons jaggery,
muscovado sugar or honey
2 teaspoons Harissa Paste
(p36)
225g/6oz brown lentils,
cooked but with
a bite to them
2 medium-sized firm
pawpaws (papaya),
peeled, seeded and cut
into bite-sized chunks
600ml/1 pint coconut milk
a bunch of fresh coriander,
finely chopped
juice of 1 lime
sea salt and freshly ground
black pepper

To serve:

1 lime, cut into wedges

Pawpaw and Brown Lentil Curry

In our kitchen in Kenya, I would often join our cook, Nelson, to chat and keep a watchful eye on the welfare of his toes – or lack of them, I should say – as he had a tendency to drop the sharp chopping knives, and his well-worn flip-flops offered no protection so each foot was missing two-and-a-half toes. He showed me how to scoop out the large seeds of the pawpaw (or papaya), which I always thought looked uncannily like bloated ticks, and to lay them out in the sun to dry so that they could be ground like peppercorns and used for seasoning. We would make this curry with the firm flesh. I was intrigued at the way fruit was used like a vegetable in tribal dishes – firm bananas, pineapple, mango and avocados are often cooked with beans, rice or lentils. If you would like to enjoy a dram with this dish, I would suggest a smoky or floral one offering grassy notes, such as Caol Ila 12 or Linkwood 12 to contrast the sweet spiciness and enhance the earthiness of the lentils.

Using a mortar and pestle, pound the ginger and garlic to a paste. Heat the ghee in a heavy-based pan, add the paste and stir for one or two minutes until fragrant. Add the onion, the coriander and cumin seeds and the jaggery, then fry, stirring, until the onions begin to colour.

Stir in the harissa paste, and then the lentils, coating them in the spices. Carefully toss in the chunks of pawpaw and add the coconut milk. Cook gently for ten minutes.

Toss in most of the coriander and the lime juice. Season well to taste and serve hot with a sprinkling of coriander and a wedge of lime to squeeze over the curry.