

# Spiced Peas and “Paneer” (Mattar “Paneer”)

YIELD: 7 CUPS (1.66 L)

My mother and mother-in-law both make a great mattar paneer. In fact, theirs are so good that I'd rather not disappoint my husband with my own version when it comes to his favorite dish. With this recipe, I finally got close enough to the experts in my family. Even with the tofu substitution, it's delicious—baking the tofu first makes all the difference in the world.

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 heaping teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 (2-inch [5-cm]) cinnamon stick
- 1 black cardamom pod
- 1 large yellow or red onion, peeled and minced (2 cups [300 g])
- 1 (2-inch [5-cm]) piece ginger root, peeled and grated or minced
- 6–8 cloves garlic, peeled and grated or minced
- 2 medium tomatoes, peeled and diced (3 cups [480 g])
- 3 tablespoons (45 mL) tomato paste
- 2–4 green Thai, serrano, or cayenne chiles, stems removed, chopped
- 3 cups (711 mL) water, divided
- 1 heaping teaspoon *garam masala*
- 1 heaping teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon red chile powder or cayenne
- 2 teaspoons coarse sea salt
- 1 pound (454 g) fresh or 1 (16-ounce [454-g]) bag frozen peas
- 1 (14-ounce [397-g]) package extra-firm organic tofu, baked and cubed (see the Baked, Spiced Tofu recipe on page 68)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, for garnish

1. In a large, heavy pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat.
2. Add the cumin, turmeric, cinnamon, and cardamom and cook until the seeds sizzle, about 30 seconds.
3. Add the onion and cook until browned, about 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Add the ginger root and garlic. Cook for another minute, stirring to avoid sticking.
5. Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, chiles, 1 cup of the water, *garam masala*, coriander, red chile powder, and salt and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes.
6. Remove and discard the cinnamon stick and cardamom. Blend the mixture, either using an immersion blender or by transferring it to a blender or food processor. (This step is not necessary, but it adds smoothness to your final dish.)
7. Add the peas, baked tofu cubes, and remaining 2 cups (474 mL) water. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and cook for 10 minutes, uncovered.
8. Garnish with the cilantro. Serve with brown or white basmati rice, *roti*, or *naan*.