

From *Truly Mexican*



Simple Pumpkin Seed Sauce Pipián Verde

If my mother or any other sophisticated eater tells me that he or she is dropping by for dinner with a few friends, I'll throw together a dish that doesn't take much time but still delivers great flavor—something like this pipián. A major wallop of heat from the serranos is essential to cut through the richness of those pumpkin seeds like a sharp knife through ripe tomato. If you're serving it with seafood, don't forget to squeeze on some lime juice.

Makes: 4 cups sauce (enough for 4 or 5 servings)

Active time: 25 to 40 minutes

Start to finish: 50 minutes to 2 hours

Ingredients

5 ounces hulled raw (green) pumpkin seeds (1 cup)

$\frac{1}{8}$ cup chopped white onion

3 fresh serrano or jalapeño chiles, coarsely chopped, including seeds
1 small garlic clove, peeled
½ teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican
¼ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon fine salt, or 1 teaspoon kosher salt
4 to 5 cups chicken stock, divided
2 tablespoons mild olive oil or vegetable oil
½ cup chopped cilantro
1¼ pounds raw shrimp or fish fillets

Garnish

Lime wedges

Directions

Heat a skillet over medium heat and toast the pumpkin seeds, stirring and tossing constantly, until they're puffed and just slightly browned, 5 to 8 minutes.

Put the pumpkin seeds in the blender jar along with the onion, chiles, garlic, oregano, cumin, salt, and 2 cups of the stock, and blend until the mixture is smooth, at least 3 minutes.

Heat the oil in a 4- to 5-quart heavy pot (this will give you enough room to add the fish later; if you're making just the sauce, a 3- to 4-quart pot is fine) over medium heat until it simmers, and carefully pour in the blended mixture. Cook (use a splatter screen so the sauce doesn't make a mess of the stove), stirring, until thickened, about 5 minutes. Add just enough stock to thin the sauce to a velvety consistency that thickly coats a wooden spoon, but isn't gloppy. Simmer, partially covered, for 20 minutes, adding more stock, as necessary, to maintain the velvety consistency.

Return some of the sauce, about 1 cup (or all if the sauce has broken and looks like scrambled eggs), to the blender, then add the cilantro and blend until smooth. Be careful when you're blending hot ingredients: Cover the top with a kitchen towel, and hold the top firmly in place with your hand. Work in batches to avoid blending with a full jar. Return the sauce to the pot and simmer, uncovered, 5 minutes more. As the sauce is simmering, swish a little liquid around in the blender and add it to the pot. Season to taste with additional salt.

Season the shrimp or fish with salt, gently cook it in the sauce until just cooked through, about 10 minutes, and serve with lime wedges.

Serve it with corn tortillas, rice, beans, or any other side you like. Or turn it into enchiladas.

This pipián tastes best the day it's made.