

## THE ST. HELENA FARMERS MARKET INSPIRES A SPRINGTIME SOUP

By Suzanne Carreiro

A friend's family recipe for a traditional Indian lentil soup is the inspiration for the soup's flavors. Classic Indian spices and seasonings—whole mustard seeds toasted in butter, fresh lime juice, serrano peppers (if you like it fiery), and fresh cilantro—turn an ordinary carrot soup into a lively soup with intriguing flavors.

This carrot soup makes a satisfying lunch, served with a salad or toast and cheese, or a lovely first course at the start of a meal. It's delicious the moment it leaves the stove, but it's possibly even better the next day.

### Indian Spiced Carrot Soup

#### Ingredients:

1-1/2 tablespoons butter  
2 teaspoons whole mustard seeds  
1-1/2 pounds carrots, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch rounds  
1 medium onion, chopped  
3 large garlic cloves, minced  
2 teaspoons sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
6 cups cold water  
1/2 to 1 serrano or jalapeno pepper, minced (see note)  
1/2 cup packed cilantro, minced  
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice (about 1 large lime)

**Directions:** In a 4-quart saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat, being careful not to burn it. Stir in the mustard seeds; cook until lightly toasted, 1/2 to 1 minute. Add the carrots, onion, garlic, sugar, salt, and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally until lightly caramelized, about 20 minutes. Add the water and serrano pepper; bring to a boil over high heat. Simmer uncovered, stirring frequently, until the carrots are tender, about 10 minutes; cool slightly. Puree in a blender in small batches, being very careful as the hot mixture may cause the blender lid to pop off and the soup to shoot out in a violent burst. As each batch is pureed, return it to the saucepan. Stir in the cilantro and lime juice; simmer 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**Makes 4 servings (about 1-1/2 cups each)**

**Note:** Use gloves while handling chile peppers to avoid burning skin. Avoid touching eyes—immediately wash hands and utensils with soap and water when done handling peppers.

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