

Upma for the Indian Mother's Soul

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Upma (pronounced "oohp-maa") is a popular breakfast food originating from South India. Upma flaunts its versatility by also serving as a hearty snack, savory lunch, or even a light dinner. Who doesn't love a breakfast food that can be eaten for dinner?! The dish is made of refined wheat grains known as rava and varies across India's regions on vegetables and flavors. It is a universal food that my husband's Telugu family and my sister-in-law's Jain family all enjoy, albeit in modified versions. My mom did not prepare upma when I was growing up, but she started cooking it in the last few years because it is a wholesome food for her young grandkids. It has become a staple in my own household because of the healthy ingredients and straightforward preparation. And even my one-year-old son will eat it.

This recipe version is a lunch or side dish that is soft, fluffy, and rich and made of roasted rava mixed with onions, vegetables, spices, and cashews. Upma is a great food to experiment with so choose vegetables and nuts and Indian spices according to your taste. In my mommy quick-meal version, I add the frozen mixed vegetable packages found in the grocery store to simplify the cleaning/cutting/dicing step of fresh vegetables. I include plain yogurt for extra calcium and protein and cashews for the antioxidants. If you desire a versatile and filling meal, then try Upma.

Upma Recipe

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp cooking oil, i.e. canola oil
- 2 tbsp butter

- pinch of turmeric powder
- 3/4 medium chopped green chillies
- 1/2 tsp crushed ginger paste
- 1-2 tbsp plain yogurt (optional)
- lemon juice to taste



- 1/2 cup chopped cashews (optional)
- fresh chopped cilantro to garnish

Preparation

1. Heat oil and butter in a pan over medium flame.
2. When oil is slightly hot, drop in the cumin and mustard seeds.
3. When the seeds begin to pop, add the onions and fry until they become translucent and soft.
4. Lightly roast rava about 10-15 minutes until it begins to turn a pinkish-beige shade. Stir constantly to prevent lumps.
5. Stir in hot water and salt.
6. Add mixed vegetables that have been defrosted in the microwave. Bring to boil.

- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 or 2 medium onions, chopped
- 1 cup Rava or Sooji from the Indian store (substitute cream of wheat)
- 2 - 3 cup hot water (pre-heated in microwave)
- salt to taste
- frozen vegetable mix - peas, carrots, green beans, corn

7. Add turmeric powder, ginger paste, and green chillies.
8. Stir in yogurt according to your taste.
9. The upma is done when all the water is absorbed by the rava.
10. Sprinkle the lemon juice and garnish with cashews and chopped cilantro leaves.
11. Turn off stove and close lid. Serve hot.