

Ginger-Scented Tapioca Pudding

When it comes to tapioca pudding, I don't like adding anything that gets in the way of how the little pearls feel tumbling around in my mouth. Infused with just enough ginger and lemongrass, this coconut milk-based version, based loosely on Bob's Red Mill's recipe for the fluffy, old-fashioned kind, perks up the taste buds without sacrificing its hallmark texture. Soaking tapioca pearls in water before cooking encourages their natural starches to come out, making the pudding creamier, so be sure to let them sit for the full 30 minutes.

Note: If your stove's lowest setting isn't really, really low, you should probably be by the stove to mother your pudding as it simmers.

TIME: 30 minutes, plus soaking time

MAKES: 4 to 6 servings

1/3 cup small tapioca pearls

1 cup water

2 eggs, separated

1 (14-ounce) can light coconut milk

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 4-inch segment lemongrass, cut into 1" pieces

5 (1/4" thick) slices ginger (about the diameter of a quarter)

1/2 cup sugar

Combine the tapioca and the water in a small bowl, and set aside to soak for 30 minutes.

Whisk the egg yolks, coconut milk, and salt together in a medium saucepan. Add the tapioca (with its water), stir in the lemongrass and ginger, and bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to low and cook for 10 to 15 minutes, stirring frequently, until thick.

Meanwhile, place the egg whites in the work bowl of a stand mixer. With the mixer on medium speed, add the sugar in a slow, steady stream, then increase speed to high and whip until soft peaks form, about 4 to 5 minutes. (The mixture will be smooth and shiny like meringue, but not nearly as stiff.)

Remove the lemongrass and ginger from the pudding, and stir a heaping 1/2 cup of the hot pudding into the egg white mixture. Fold the egg white mixture back into the saucepan, and cook another few minutes on low, stirring until the mixture is evenly blended. Scoop pudding into small bowls and serve warm or at room temperature.