



NIGERIAN

Oxtail Pepper Soup

COMPLEXITY	SERVES	PREP	COOK	TECHNIQUE	CUT
Basic	6	15 min	3 hr	Simmer	Oxtail

Ingredients

- 1.2 kg (2½ lb) oxtail, cut into segments
- 2 litres (8 cups) water
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cm (¾ in) piece ginger, grated
- 2 tbsp pepper soup spice mix (or 1 tsp each ground nutmeg, black pepper and cayenne, plus ¼ tsp ground cloves)
- 1 to 2 Scotch bonnet peppers (or habaneros), whole or sliced
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 stock cube (optional)
- 1 handful scent leaves (efirin) or basil, torn
- 1 tsp ground dried crayfish (optional; or 1 tsp fish sauce)

Steps

1. Rinse the oxtail and put it in a large pot with the onion, garlic, ginger, half the spice mix, 1 tsp salt and the water.
2. Bring to a boil over high heat, skimming the foam for about 5 minutes.
3. Lower the heat, cover, and simmer gently for 2 hours.
4. Add the Scotch bonnet, the stock cube and crayfish if using, and the remaining spice mix.
5. Simmer 45 minutes to 1 hour more, until the meat is tender and the broth is thin, aromatic and a little red-brown. Add water if it falls below the meat.
6. Taste, add more salt if needed, and stir in the leaves for the final 2 minutes, until just wilted.
7. Serve in deep bowls, piping hot.

Notes

- **Heat:** the soup should be peppery; leave the Scotch bonnet whole for fragrance or slice it for fire.
- **Other cuts:** shank, goat or cow foot also make traditional pepper soup.
- **Serving:** eat it as a starter, or with boiled yam or white rice for a meal.
- **Slow cooker:** cook on low 8–9 hr with 1.5 litres (6 cups) water, adding the Scotch bonnet and leaves in the last 30 minutes.
- **Make ahead:** keeps 3–4 days, or freeze 3 months; reheat until steaming hot.