Drinks / Mexico

Agua Fresca de Tamarindo

A Mexican agua fresca made from tamarind pods cooked until their tart, date-like pulp dissolves into dark, earthy water, then strained and sweetened to a perfect balance of sour and sweet, brightened with a pinch of salt that makes every cold sip taste like the center of a tamarind candy.

Time 45 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 200 g Tamarind paste block (not concentrate) or fresh tamarind pods
- ☐ 500 g Water (for simmering the tamarind)
- ☐ 1000 g Cold water (for diluting to drink strength)
- ☐ 100 g Caster sugar or simple syrup
- ☐ 2 g Fine sea salt (a pinch)
- ☐ 30 g Fresh lime juice (optional, to sharpen)

Let's make it.

01 Break the tamarind paste block into chunks or remove the shells from fresh pods and pull out the seeds. Place the tamarind in a medium saucepan with the simmering water. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, then reduce to low and cook for 10–15 minutes, mashing the pulp against the sides of the pan with a wooden spoon or potato masher as it softens. The pulp will dissolve into the water, turning it a deep mahogany brown. The seeds, fibers, and any shell pieces will remain separate. The smell is intensely sour, fruity, and slightly sweet — the characteristic tamarind aroma that is used in cuisines across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

02 Pour the tamarind liquid through a fine-mesh sieve placed over a large bowl or pitcher, pressing firmly on the solids with the back of a spoon to extract every last drop of pulp. Discard the seeds, fibers, and any remaining shell pieces. The strained liquid will be thick, very dark, and intensely sour — this is your tamarind concentrate. It can be made ahead and stored refrigerated for up to a week at this stage before diluting and sweetening.

03 Add the cold water to the strained tamarind concentrate and stir to combine. Add the sugar (or simple syrup for faster dissolving) and a pinch of salt — the salt is not for seasoning in the traditional sense but works as a flavor amplifier, making the sweet-sour-earthy flavor of the tamarind taste more vivid and complete. Add the lime juice if using for additional brightness. Taste and adjust: more sugar if too sour, more tamarind concentrate if too sweet, more salt if it tastes flat. Serve ice-cold over a full glass of ice, stirring before each pour as the tamarind sediment settles quickly.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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