Sauces / India

Tamarind-Date Chutney

The dark, sticky sweet-and-sour chutney of the Indian chaat cart — tamarind pulp simmered with dates, jaggery, and cumin into a glossy, concentrated dip that makes fried things sing.

Time 30 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 g Tamarind block (seedless pressed pulp), roughly broken
- ☐ 250 g Hot water
- ☐ 80 g Pitted Medjool dates, roughly chopped
- ☐ 60 g Jaggery or dark muscovado sugar, grated
- ☐ 5 g Cumin seeds, dry-toasted and ground
- ☐ 3 g Ground ginger (dried)
- ☐ 3 g Kashmiri chili powder
- ☐ 5 g Fine salt
- ☐ 2 g Black salt (kala namak)

Let's make it.

01 Break the tamarind block into rough pieces and submerge in the measured hot water in a bowl. Press the block down with your fingers and leave to soak for 15 minutes, pressing and kneading the pulp every few minutes to help it dissolve. After 15 minutes, the block should have broken down almost entirely. Pour the mixture through a coarse sieve set over a saucepan, pressing firmly with the back of a spoon to extract every drop of the sour brown liquid. Discard the fibrous solids and seeds that remain in the sieve. The resulting tamarind water should taste intensely, bracingly sour — almost mouth-puckering.

02 Add the chopped dates, grated jaggery, ground cumin, dried ginger, Kashmiri chili powder, fine salt, and kala namak to the tamarind water in the saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring to dissolve the jaggery. The mixture will foam initially as the jaggery melts. Reduce to a gentle, bubbling simmer and cook for 15–20 minutes, stirring every few minutes, until the dates have dissolved completely into the liquid and the chutney has reduced and thickened. The volume should reduce by roughly a third. As it reduces, taste constantly — the balance should shift from bracingly sour toward sweet-sour-spicy equilibrium.

03 For a smooth, glossy chutney (the style most commonly served with chaat), pass the hot reduced mixture through a medium sieve, pressing firmly to extract every bit of glossy sauce and leaving any date skins or fibrous bits behind. For a more rustic texture, skip the straining step. Either version is authentic. Taste the strained chutney: at this point it should taste intensely flavored — sweet, sour, spiced, and slightly sulfurous from the kala namak — knowing it will be used as a condiment by the spoonful, not eaten in large quantities.

04 Transfer the chutney to a clean glass jar and allow to cool to room temperature uncovered. As it cools it will thicken further — a consistency that seems slightly loose when hot is correct; it will reach the drizzling consistency you want once cold. Refrigerate for up to 3 weeks. The flavors deepen and mellow significantly after 24 hours in the refrigerator. Serve drizzled over samosas, pakoras, papdi chaat, or dahi puri — or use it as a meat glaze by warming it briefly and thinning with a little water.

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