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CHIA PUDDING WITH ROASTED JAGGERY BLUEBERRIES

Sabbakki Payasa

Summer • Serves 4

Vegan, Gluten-Free

Payasa is a sweetened saffron milk dessert often made with either tapioca or thin noodles and usually prepared on festival days. It is the South Indian equivalent of North Indian rice pudding, or kheer. This recipe is a variation on my mother's tapioca or sabbakki payasa, using chia seeds and coconut milk. I have a number of vegan and gluten-free friends, so my chia pudding satisfies all parties. Instead of the traditional golden raisins, I top the pudding with blueberries roasted with jaggery, unrefined sugarcane.

What's great about chia seeds is that they are extraordinarily nutritious and delicious and easy to prepare. You just soak the seeds overnight in coconut milk and you have the base of your dessert ready to go. If you prefer, you can use almond milk in place of coconut milk. I've also served this pudding topped with homemade jam when blueberries were not in season.

1/3 cup chia seeds
1 3/4 cups unsweetened coconut milk (one 13.5-ounce can)
3 tablespoons honey or agave nectar
1/4 teaspoon cardamom powder
2 pinches of sea salt
1 cup blueberries
1 1/2 teaspoons granulated jaggery or brown sugar
Chopped pistachios or sliced almonds, for garnish
Shredded or chopped dried coconut, for garnish

In a bowl, mix the chia seeds, coconut milk, honey, cardamom powder, and salt together. Refrigerate overnight.

You can choose to serve your chia pudding with warm blueberries or cooled, depending on your preference. If going with the cooled option, you can make the blueberries the day before and chill them in the refrigerator.

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Place the blueberries in a baking dish. Sprinkle the jaggery on top and mix. Roast the blueberries for 14 to 16 minutes, stirring them a few times so they cook evenly. They are done when the berries are exuding their juices but they still hold their shape.



There may be one or two that have collapsed, which is fine. Depending on the ripeness of your berries, they may take less time to get to this point, so keep an eye on them. Make sure that a majority of the blueberries are plump, so when you bite into one, you get a burst of juice.

Serve the chia pudding topped with the roasted blueberries, warm or chilled, and a garnish of chopped pistachios and dried coconut on top.



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