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Gingerly Greens and Shrimp Soup

SERVES 4

TAKES 35 MINUTES

Part of Vietnamese everyday meals, fragrant, wholesome, and fast soups like this one are called *canh*. Surprisingly, they're typically made with water and rely on gently sautéed onion, salt, and fish sauce for foundational depth. What often defines *canh* is a ton of leafy greens, cooked in the pot to contribute their flavor and nutrients. A little protein is dropped in for savory flair. At the Viet table, *canh* is not just a first course—you can help yourself to it throughout a meal to refresh your palate. This nimble soup plays well with other dishes, but you can make a light meal of it too. Just add warm bread and butter.

1 tablespoon canola or other neutral oil

½ medium yellow or red onion, thinly sliced

5½ cups water

Fine sea salt

1 tablespoon fish sauce, plus more as needed

One 8-ounce bunch mustard greens, coarsely chopped, including tender stems

12 large shrimp, peeled, deveined, and cut crosswise into thumbnail-width chunks, or split horizontally into symmetrical halves

1½ teaspoons finely chopped peeled ginger

Recently ground black pepper (optional)

In a 3-or 4-quart saucepan over medium heat, warm the canola oil. When the oil is barely shimmering, add the onion and cook for about 4 minutes, stirring, until soft and sweetly fragrant. Add the water, ½ teaspoon salt, and fish sauce, then turn the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil. Adjust the heat to maintain a vigorous boil for 3 to 5 minutes to develop flavor. Add the greens, stirring them for even cooking. When the greens are very soft and cooked through, about 5 minutes, add the shrimp and ginger. When the shrimp are opaque and cooked through, 1 to 2 minutes, remove from the heat and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes, uncovered. Taste and add additional salt or fish sauce, if needed.

Serve the soup in a communal bowl or ladle into individual serving bowls. Sprinkle with pepper for a final spicy burst, if you like.

NOTES

Instead of mustard greens, use another bold-flavored leaf, such as turnip greens or the radish tops left over from making pickles. Opt for spinach for a milder taste, or combine complementary greens, like kale and mustard.

As pictured, corkscrew-shaped shrimp result from halving them horizontally. Not fond of shrimp, or maybe it's too expensive? Use a 6-ounce fish fillet, such as tilapia or rockfish. Cut the fillet into bite-size pieces to add to the soup.



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