



Kitchari: A Simple Recipe for a Voracious Appetite



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Franny & Kitchari Dish

As a breastfeeding mom, fueling my body is no joke. After dealing with nausea, food aversions and heartburn throughout my pregnancy, the joy of eating has returned. I love food, my baby loves to eat and breastfeeding makes me ravenous. Overall, it's a winning combination.

After a long and hard labor, the first thing I did in recovery was order everything that even remotely sounded good off the hospital menu. The enchiladas were off the hook - you know you were hungry when you have fond memories of hospital food.

I was so excited to eat that I made my husband stop at Whole Foods on the way home with our 3-day old baby asleep in her car-seat - on the edge of waking - to make a mad dash inside for all my favorite

treats. I cruised through the aisles like a game show contestant given only few minutes to put as much as she can into her shopping cart for free.

Except Whole Foods food is not free, unfortunately.

Babies cost money. I was surprised given they sleep so much and, if you're breastfeeding, don't cost anything to feed. But the diapers, copays, classes, all the stuff you order from Amazon that you didn't realize you needed but now must have - it all adds up

And so does a grocery bill for a mother with a daughter who nearly doubled her birth weight at 2 months. Maybe breastmilk does cost something.

Babies also require more space than expected for someone so small - how can this be? (note: see above mention of Amazon orders). Soon after bringing our little bundle home my husband and I agreed our apartment wasn't going to cut it anymore. We held our breath, closed our eyes and signed a lease on a larger place that more than doubled our rent.

We are now on a budget.

Another impact a baby has on your life is, of course, time. I try not to think about the abundance of time I had pre-baby. There is less time for everything (except cuddling), including time to prepare meals. And by meals I don't mean standing at the refrigerator door eating peanut butter out of the jar and calling that lunch. Eating healthy is paramount as a new mom - the stamina required to get through a day is that of an ultra-marathon. But how to eat healthy when there is less money and so little time?

In those first few weeks my parents were in town and my mom cooked, friends brought meals over, and my husband stepped in - he's not a bad chef! But by 2 months postpartum my parents were long gone, friends had moved on with their lives filled with time, and my husband was back at work. My daughter and I had to fend for ourselves.

How do we survive?

Kitchari (kitch-a-ree).

It's an old standby of mine that I had shelved during pregnancy when all I wanted to eat was red meat and pancakes. But it tastes so good to me now (as does all food, really).

Kitchari is a dish traditionally made out of mung beans and basmati rice that stems from Ayurveda - an ancient holistic healing system from India. Kitchari is nourishing - consisting of carbohydrates, protein and healthy fats - and very easy to digest. It's also inexpensive, easy to make while managing a baby, and it satisfies a voracious appetite. It also tastes really good, even when I make it (which is saying something).

For my kitchari I use red lentils because mung beans are harder to find and lentils require no soaking in advance (and how can I remember to soak beans in advance if I can't even remember if I shampooed my hair while I'm still in the shower?).

There are countless variations on kitchari but here is one I've adapted that's simple and easy to remember.



Kitchari, Photo by: Jennifer Brian

Basic ingredients:

1 cup red lentils or mung beans (traditional)

1 cup basmati rice

6 cups water

1 Tablespoon of cumin

1 Tablespoon of coriander

1 teaspoon Salt

1/2 teaspoon pepper

2-4 Tablespoons of unrefined coconut oil or sesame oil or ghee (traditional)

You may also like to add:

Steamed Veggies (kale, sweet potato, spinach, etc)

Lemon

Avocado

Sriracha

First, set your baby down.

Rinse lentils and rice (if using mung beans soak for a few hours first). Bring the rice, lentils and water to a boil.

While this is boiling, pick baby up.

Let boil for 5-15 minutes depending on when your baby lets you set her down again.

Reduce heat to simmer. Add cumin, coriander, salt and pepper. Cook for 20-30 min.

While simmering, pick up baby. Perhaps give her a meal while yours cooks.

Once beans and rice have soaked up almost all the water, set baby down again.

Turn off heat. Add coconut oil, sesame oil or ghee (be very generous with this!). Cover with lid. Let sit while soaking up remaining liquid.

Get back to that baby. The dish will stay warm for awhile so eat when you're hungry, when your baby lets you, or both.

Before serving, steam veggies and combine with the kitchari in individual bowls. Add a avocado and a squeeze of lemon if desired. Also, I love sriracha but my breastfeeding baby is not really a fan.

But that's ok.

I keep it simple and let it be satisfying. Just like my new life filled with cuddle time.

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