

Spring Tonic Congee

Congee is a traditional Chinese breakfast dish that can be varied in so many delicious ways. This simple version has a nice blend of textures; a delightfully sweet, mild flavor; and earthiness, thanks to the adzuki beans. You can customize it by adding a furikake-style sprinkle or any of the other tasty toppers in the Condiment Recipes chapter (pages 422 to 465).

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Tip

Adzuki beans originated in Japan and their name translates as “small beans.”

Variation

To nourish the stomach and spleen specifically — and to add a sweeter taste — cook 1 cup (250 mL) chopped peeled seeded winter squash (such as kabocha, acorn or butternut) in the congee.

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1½ tbsp	hato mugi (Job's tears)	22 mL
½ cup	sweet (glutinous) brown rice (or brown Arborio rice)	125 mL

1. Place hato mugi in another medium bowl and cover with water. Let stand for 1 hour or overnight if you plan to cook it in the morning. Drain well.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine 6 cups (1.5 L) water, adzuki beans, hato mugi, rice and Chinese yam. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 2 hours. The congee should have a souplike consistency; if there is not enough liquid left in the pan, add up to ½ cup (125 mL) water. Stir in ginger. Cover and let cool for 10 minutes.
3. Serve immediately or transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 3 days. Warm in a small saucepan over low heat before serving.

Health Tips

Congee is light and easy to digest, so it is great for anyone who is recovering from an illness. The food-grade herbs — hato mugi— is especially useful for building *qi*, or vitality. This congee is beneficial for people suffering from low appetite, fatigue or loose stools.