

Scarlet Carrot Soup

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Scarlet Carrot Soup Gourmet (November 2009)

Serves 12 Active Time: 30 minutes Start to Finish: 1 hour

For Soup: - 2 tablespoons coriander seeds, toasted and cooled - 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil - 1 cup sliced shallots (4 large) - 3 large thyme sprigs - 2 Turkish bay leaves or 1 California - 1/8 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes - 3 lb carrots, peeled and thickly sliced - 1 lb trimmed beets, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces - 8 cups water plus additional if needed - 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

For Crisp Carrot Ribbons - About 4 cups vegetable oil for frying - 2 large carrots - 2 to 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

Equipment: an electric coffee/spice grinder or a mortar and pestle; a deep-fat thermometer

MAKE SOUP:

Grind coriander in grinder. Heat oil in a 5-quart heavy pot over medium heat until it shimmers, then cook shallots with thyme, bay leaves, and red pepper, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 3 minutes. Add carrots, beets, 2 teaspoons coriander, 2 teaspoons salt, 1/4 teaspoon pepper and water. Bring to a boil, then simmer, covered, until vegetables are very tender, about 20 minutes.

Discard bay leaves and any tough thyme stems. Puree soup in batches in a blender until smooth (use caution when blending hot liquids), then return soup to pot. Stir in vinegar, salt and pepper to taste, and additional water if needed to thin soup.

MAKE CARROT RIBBONS WHILE SOUP SIMMERS:

Heat 1 inch of oil to 350 degrees in a 3-quart pot over medium-high heat.

Peel carrots, then continue making thin lengthwise ribbons with peeler until you reach core. Toss ribbons in flour, shaking off excess, and season with salt.

Fry ribbons in 3 or 4 batches until golden along edges, about 1-minute per batch. Transfer to paper towels to drain and spring with some of remaining coriander. Return oil to 350 degrees between batches.

NOTES:

Soup can be made 2 days ahead and chilled. Reheat, thinning with water if desired.

Carrot ribbons can be fried 2 hours ahead and kept, uncovered, at warm room temperature.

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