UGALI WITH COCONUT BEANS

A humble, heart-steadying Tanzanian staple, where soft maize porridge meets creamy, spice-kissed beans.

Country Tanzania
Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 C water
1 C maize flour (cornmeal)
1/2 t salt
2 C cooked kidney beans
1 C coconut milk
1 medium onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 T oil
1/2 t ground cumin
1/4 t turmeric
salt to taste
black pepper to taste

METHOD

Bring the water and salt to a boil in a pot.
Add the maize flour gradually, stirring to prevent lumps.
Reduce the heat and cook, stirring, until the mixture thickens.
Continue cooking until the ugali pulls away from the sides of the pot.
Turn the ugali onto a plate and shape it with a spoon.
Heat the oil in a pan and cook the onion until soft.
Add the garlic and cook briefly.
Stir in the cumin and turmeric.
Add the cooked beans and coconut milk.
Simmer until the sauce thickens slightly.
Season with salt and pepper.
Serve the coconut beans alongside the ugali.

Cultural note

Ugali is the backbone of Tanzanian meals, a simple maize porridge served with vegetables, beans, or stews. Coconut beans are especially common along the Swahili coast, where coconut palms shape the flavors of daily cooking. Together, they form a comforting, everyday dish that reflects Tanzania’s blend of inland staples and coastal influences