Black-eyed pea soup & rice

About
Trinidad is the big island of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago, located in the Caribbean Sea northeast of Venezuela. Colonized by the British, the people of Trinidad are of African and Asian origin, reflecting the labor force imported to the island by the British.

Perhaps the black-eyed pea, also known as the cow pea, came to Trinidad with African slaves. The black-eyed pea probably originated in North Africa, and it has been eaten there for centuries. It was introduced into India perhaps as long as 3,000 years ago, and it was also a staple of Greek and Roman diets.

The rice and beans in this soup make it a complete, vegetarian source of protein.

Ingredients
2 tbsp olive oil
1 green bell pepper, cored, seeded, diced
1 medium onion, peeled, diced
2 medium carrots, peeled, diced
4 tablespoons finely chopped cilantro
1 (10-ounce) package frozen black-eyed peas
6 1/2 cups vegetable stock (bouillon cubes may be used here)
4 tbsp brown rice
1/2 tsp ground ginger
1/2 tsp ground allspice
1/2 tsp dried thyme
1/2 tsp mustard powder mixed with 1 tbsp cayenne
Salt as needed
1 tbsp finely chopped chives
Lime or lemon wedges for garnish

Directions
Put the oil in a large pan and set over medium-high heat. Stir and sauté pepper, onion, and carrots for 3 minutes, or until the onion turns slightly brown at the edges. Add the cilantro and stir once. Add the peas, stock, rice, ginger, allspice, thyme, mustard, and hot chile. Stir and bring to a boil.

Cover, turn the heat down to low, and simmer gently for 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally. Add salt if needed. The soup should be spicy, so add more cayenne if you wish. Serve garnished with the chives and offer the lime or lemon wedges on the side.

Citation: Recipe adapted from Madhur Jaffrey’s World Vegetarian, by the Madhur Jaffrey, 1999. Published by Clarkson Potter, New York.