

Yellow Lentil Dal with Cilantro and Tadka

This is one of my favorite simple Indian soups. As the dal simmers away I really enjoy watching the whole seeds tempered in oil or ghee burst and dance around and out of the skillet.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup ghee or coconut oil
- 2 teaspoons fresh ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon garlic, freshly minced
- 2-3 teaspoons sea salt or Himalayan pink salt, divided
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 green chile (jalapeño or serrano), cut in half lengthwise
- 1 large tomato or 1/2 c sundried tomatoes, cut into 1/2 inch dice
- 2 cups toor dal (split yellow lentils), masoor dal (split red lentils) or chana dal (yellow split peas)
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- 1 Tablespoon brown mustard seeds
- 1 Tablespoon coriander seeds
- 2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 1 small dried red chile, or 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 large onion, cut into 1/2 inch dice (about 2 cups)
- 1 cup cilantro leaves (optional), coarsely chopped or 2 cups coarsely chopped fresh fenugreek
- fresh lemon juice, to taste
- 1 cup yogurt, for garnish

Method

1. Unless its tomato season, I prefer using sun-dried tomatoes. To prepare them, pour boiling water over tomatoes and cover with a lid or saucer for at least 10 minutes to soften the tomatoes. Drain the soaking water and hold it for use as part of the water added with the lentils. Cut the tomatoes into bite-size pieces and set aside.
2. Prepare the grated ginger and minced garlic and combine the 2 teaspoons salt, turmeric and green chile in a small bowl . Once you start cooking, action happens quickly so you'll want to

be organized and ready to enjoy the kitchen chemistry.

3. In a large pot or Dutch oven over medium high heat, warm 2 Tablespoons ghee or coconut oil. Add the ginger, garlic, 2 teaspoons salt, turmeric and green chile and cook until aromatic, about 2 minutes. Add the tomato and cook several more minutes, until most of the moisture has evaporated. Add the lentils and 6 cups of water and bring the mixture to a boil, stirring occasionally. Lower the heat and simmer, partially covered, until the lentil mixture is soft and thick and resembles a rough purée, about 1 hour.

4. Meanwhile, make the tadka. In a large sauté pan over medium heat, warm the remaining ghee or coconut oil. When hot, add the mustard, coriander, cumin seeds and dried red chile, stirring constantly until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add the onion, increase to high and continue to cook until the onion goes from translucent to brown around the edges, about 15 minutes. Don't be afraid to get the onions dark. Add the chopped fenugreek or cilantro and continue to cook about 5 more minutes until it wilts slightly but retains its bright color.

5. Remove the whole chile from the pot of cooked dal and stir in the tadka. Season to taste with additional salt if needed and cook over medium-low heat for 10 to 15 minutes, again stirring occasionally, to allow the flavors to marry. Add lemon juice to taste and cook 5 minutes before serving. Garnish each portion with a spoonful of yogurt and a few cilantro leaves.

Notes



In the winter 2019 cooking class we used mung dal (split yellow mung beans) but each of the lentils or split peas mentioned in the ingredients would be unique and wonderful.

Fenugreek leaves may be available at some Indian and Asian groceries such as Fiji Emporium on North Interstate, Apna Bazaar or India Sweets and Spices in Beaverton.

You can store the dal in the refrigerator for 3-5 days and it will thicken as it cools. Also, the taste improves, as it does with so many soups, after a day or two. Add water when reheating or add 7-8 cups of water when cooking if you like a thin dal.

servings)
