

A culinary journey with red lentil dal

Are you ready to tantalize your taste buds with a culinary adventure? While we might not be jetting off to distant lands anytime soon, we can certainly embark on a delicious journey right from our own kitchens. So, let's fasten our apron strings and take a flavorful trip to India with a classic dish: Red Lentil Dal.

Dal (also spelled "dahl," "daal" or "dhal," but I'm sticking with "dal") is the Indian name for dried, split pulses (like lentils, peas and beans) that don't require pre-soaking. Dal, in its various forms, is a global nutritional powerhouse, transcending cultural boundaries and culinary preferences. Whether it's the comforting Indian dal, hearty Middle Eastern mujadara or savory Ethiopian misir wat, these dishes showcase lentils' versatility across diverse cuisines. Embraced by vegetarians, vegans and meat-eaters alike, dal stands as a testament to the universal appeal of plant-based foods, addressing food security challenges and promoting healthier diets globally.

Here's how to make something as simple as a cupful of lentils, some spices and aromatics into a hearty stew that's both delicious and nutritious. The stew is earthy and satisfying; the curry, garlic and ginger flavors are warm and soothing. This is comfort food at its finest.

A few thoughts: If you can't find red lentils, feel free to use any color of lentils you may have. If you don't often cook with fresh ginger, I urge you to try it. You just need a little knob, enough to fill a tablespoon. Peel it with a spoon and mince as you would garlic. The difference is amazing for mere pennies. Also, this dish is very mild. If you enjoy your Indian food spicy, add some jalapeno.

EASY RED LENTIL DAL

Savor the spice

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- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups onion, chopped
- 4 to 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 heaping tablespoon fresh ginger,
- minced
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 3 cups water or vegetable stock
- 1 1/2 cups red lentils
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can petite diced tomatoes,
- undrained
- Cilantro and cooked rice, to serve
- 1 (10 ounce) box frozen spinach, thawed and drained
- 2 cups cauliflower, chopped
- 1 cup carrot, diced

In a medium-size pot over medium heat, heat the oil. Add the onion, and cook until soft, about 5-7 minutes. Add the garlic and ginger and a bit of extra oil, if needed. Cook for 1 minute, stirring occasionally. Add curry and cumin, stirring to coat the onions with spices, and cook for 1-2 minutes, until everything is spectacularly fragrant. Isn't that wonderful?

Add around 1 cup of water or stock, using a spatula to scrape any bits off the bottom of the pan. Add the rest of the water or stock, the lentils and any optional vegetables, if using, and stir. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a bare simmer, cooking covered for 30 minutes. Stir this occasionally to prevent anything from sticking to the bottom of the pan. After 30 minutes,

add the diced tomatoes and salt, stir and heat through. Serve with rice, garnished with cilantro.

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Store leftovers in the fridge for up to four days or freeze for up to four months.

So, whether you spell it “dal,” “dahl,” “daal” or “dhal,” one thing’s for sure: This dish is a testament to the incredible versatility and flavor of lentils. Join the millions of dal enthusiasts around the world and treat yourself to a bowl of this savory delight.

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