

Red Lentil Dumplings

1 basket cherry tomatoes, stemmed
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon maple syrup
scant 1/2 teaspoon fine grain sea salt
3 cups cooked red lentils
1/3 - 1/2 cup water, plus more for cooking
4 garlic cloves, peeled
2 teaspoons smoked paprika, or to taste
1 teaspoon red chile flakes
round potsticker wrappers

flour, for dusting
clarified butter for pan-frying

Preheat the oven to 350F, and place a rack in the top third. Slice the tomatoes in half and place them on a rimmed baking sheet. In a small bowl, whisk together the 1/4 cup of the olive oil, maple syrup, and salt. Pour the mixture over the tomatoes and gently toss until well coated. Arrange the tomatoes in a single layer, cut-side up, and roast, without stirring, until the tomatoes shrink a bit and start to caramelize around the edges, 45 to 60 minutes. If you aren't using these immediately, let them cool and then scrape them into a clean glass jar along with any olive oil that was left in the baking dish or sheet. Sometimes I top off the jar with an added splash of olive oil. The tomatoes will keep for about 1 week in the refrigerator.

Use a food processor or hand blender to puree the red lentils along with the water.

In a small saucepan combine the remaining 1/4 cup of olive oil with the garlic, paprika, and chile flakes. Cook over gentle heat until the oil barely comes to a simmer. Turn off heat, and allow to sit for a few minutes.

Add the paprika oil to the pureed lentils, and then gently fold in the roasted tomatoes. Thin with a bit more water if needed, you want the filling to be quite moist, but still able to hold shape. Season with a bit of salt, just enough that it tastes good. Taste and make any necessary adjustments.

Now, fill and shape the dumplings. Very lightly dust your counter top with a bit of flour. Place 12 wrappers on the floured countertop, and add a small dollop of filling in each dumpling. Run a wet finger around the rim of each wrapper, press the edges together well, and try to avoid trapping air bubbles in the dumplings if you can. Crimp or pinch each dumpling, and gently press it down against the counter to give it a flat base, so it sits upright. This base is also what gets brown and crunchy - one of the things you're after. Repeat until you run out of wrappers or filling. Place the dumplings seam side up on a well-floured plate or baking sheet. The extra flour that sticks to the base gives extra crunch.

At this point you can freeze any dumplings you know you aren't going to cook.

To cook the dumplings, heat a scant tablespoon of clarified butter or oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Arrange dumplings in the pan, seam side up, with a

sliver of space between each (so they don't stick together). Pan-fry until the bottoms are golden, a few minutes. With a large lid in one hand, carefully and quickly add 1/3 cup / 80 ml water to the pan, immediately cover, and cook the dumplings for a few minutes, or until the water is nearly evaporated. Uncover and finish cooking until all the water is gone - another minute or so. Dial back the heat if the bottoms are getting too dark. Cook in batches, and serve drizzled with the scallion oil and spicy soy sauce.

Make 4-5 dozen dumplings.