

Red Lentil Soup

By Melissa Clark

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Total Time 45 minutes

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (30,186)

This is a lentil soup that defies expectations of what lentil soup can be. Based on a Turkish lentil soup, mercimek corbasi, it is light, spicy and a bold red color (no murky brown here): a revelatory dish that takes less than an hour to make. The cooking is painless. Sauté onion and garlic in oil, then stir in tomato paste, cumin and chile powder and cook a few minutes more to intensify flavor. Add broth, water, red lentils (which cook faster than their green or black counterparts) and diced carrot, and simmer for 30 minutes. Purée half the mixture and return it to the pot for a soup that strikes the balance between chunky and pleasingly smooth. A hit of lemon juice adds an up note that offsets the deep cumin and chile flavors.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 servings

3 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for drizzling

1 large onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Salt and black pepper

Pinch of chili powder or ground cayenne, plus more to taste

1 quart chicken or vegetable broth

1 cup red lentils

1 large carrot, peeled and diced

Juice of ½ lemon, more to taste

3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

PREPARATION

Step 1

In a large pot, heat 3 tablespoons oil over high until hot and shimmering. Add onion and garlic, and sauté until golden, about 4 minutes.

Step 2

Stir in tomato paste, cumin, ¼ teaspoons each salt and black pepper and the chili powder, and sauté for 2 minutes longer.

Step 3

Add broth, 2 cups water, lentils and carrot. Bring to a simmer, then partly cover pot and turn heat to medium-low. Simmer until lentils are soft, about 30 minutes. Taste and add salt if necessary.

Step 4

Using an immersion or regular blender or a food processor, purée half the soup, then add it back to pot. The soup should be somewhat chunky.

Step 5

Reheat soup if necessary, then stir in lemon juice and cilantro. Serve soup drizzled with good olive oil and dusted lightly with chili powder, if desired.

Private Notes

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