



Red Lentil Soup with North African Spices

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Red lentils cook quickly into a nubby puree, but their mild flavor requires a bit of embellishment. We start by sautéing onions in butter and use the warm mixture to bloom some fragrant North African spices. Tomato paste and garlic complete the base before the addition of the lentils, and a mix of chicken broth and water gives the soup a full, rounded character. After only 15 minutes of cooking, the lentils are soft enough to be pureed with a whisk. A generous dose of lemon juice brings the flavors into focus, and a drizzle of spice-infused butter and a sprinkle of fresh cilantro complete the transformation of commonplace ingredients into an exotic yet comforting soup.

Serves 4 to 6

Pair this soup with a salad and bread for lunch or a light supper.

INGREDIENTS

- 4** tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1** large onion, chopped fine
- Salt and pepper
- 3/4** teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2** teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4** teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/8** teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch cayenne
- 1** tablespoon tomato paste
- 1** garlic clove, minced
- 4** cups chicken broth
- 2** cups water
- 10 1/2** ounces (1 1/2 cups) red lentils, picked over and rinsed
- 2** tablespoons lemon juice, plus extra for seasoning
- 1 1/2** teaspoons dried mint, crumbled
- 1** teaspoon paprika
- 1/4** cup chopped fresh cilantro

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Melt 2 tablespoons butter in large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and 1 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened but not browned, about 5 minutes. Add coriander, cumin, ginger, cinnamon, cayenne, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper and cook until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Stir in tomato paste and garlic and cook for 1 minute. Stir in broth, water, and lentils and bring to simmer. Simmer vigorously, stirring occasionally, until lentils are soft and about half are broken down, about 15 minutes.

2. Whisk soup vigorously until it is coarsely pureed, about 30 seconds. Stir in lemon juice and season with salt and extra lemon juice to taste. Cover and keep warm. (Soup can be refrigerated for up to 3 days. Thin soup with water, if desired, when reheating.)
3. Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in small skillet. Remove from heat and stir in mint and paprika. Ladle soup into individual bowls, drizzle each portion with 1 teaspoon spiced butter, sprinkle with cilantro, and serve.

TECHNIQUE

WHISK AWAY

Red lentils, which have had their skins removed, cook in just 15 minutes. Even better, they soften so completely that they can be whisked into a puree, no blender needed.

