



## Hearty Spanish-Style Lentil and Chorizo Soup

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 14: Hearty Spanish and Italian Soups, Revamped

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

To ensure creamy, well-seasoned lentils with intact skins, we soak them in a warm brine for 30 minutes before cooking. For a rich, vegetal flavor, we sweat onion, carrot, and parsley in a covered pot to provide a background taste to the main ingredients: heady smoked paprika, meaty chorizo, earthy lentils, and tart sherry vinegar. To finish the soup, we garnish it with an Indian preparation called a *tarka*, a mixture of spices and aromatics bloomed in oil.

### Serves 6 to 8

We prefer French green lentils, or *lentilles du Puy*, for this recipe, but it will work with any type of lentil except red or yellow. Grate the onion on the large holes of a box grater. If Spanish-style chorizo is not available, kielbasa sausage can be substituted. Red wine vinegar can be substituted for the sherry vinegar. Smoked paprika comes in three varieties: sweet (*dulce*), bittersweet or medium hot (*agridulce*), and hot (*picante*). For this recipe, we prefer the sweet kind.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1** pound (2 1/4 cups) lentils, picked over and rinsed
- Salt and pepper
- 1** large onion
- 5** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2** pounds Spanish-style chorizo sausage, pricked with fork several times
- 3** carrots, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch pieces
- 3** tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 7** cups water, plus extra as needed
- 3** tablespoons sherry vinegar, plus extra for seasoning
- 2** bay leaves
- 1/8** teaspoon ground cloves
- 2** tablespoons sweet smoked paprika
- 3** garlic cloves, minced
- 1** tablespoon all-purpose flour

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Place lentils and 2 teaspoons salt in heatproof container. Cover with 4 cups boiling water and let soak for 30 minutes. Drain well.
- 2.** Meanwhile, finely chop three-quarters of onion (you should have about 1 cup) and grate remaining quarter (you

should have about 3 tablespoons). Heat 2 tablespoons oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add chorizo and cook until browned on all sides, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer chorizo to large plate. Reduce heat to low and add chopped onion, carrots, 1 tablespoon parsley, and 1 teaspoon salt. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are very soft but not brown, 25 to 30 minutes. If vegetables begin to brown, add 1 tablespoon water to pot.

**3.** Add lentils and sherry vinegar to vegetables; increase heat to medium-high; and cook, stirring frequently, until vinegar starts to evaporate, 3 to 4 minutes. Add 7 cups water, chorizo, bay leaves, and cloves; bring to simmer. Reduce heat to low; cover; and cook until lentils are tender, about 30 minutes.

**4.** Heat remaining 3 tablespoons oil in small saucepan over medium heat until shimmering. Add paprika, grated onion, garlic, and ½ teaspoon pepper; cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, 2 minutes. Add flour and cook, stirring constantly, 1 minute longer. Remove chorizo and bay leaves from lentils. Stir paprika mixture into lentils and continue to cook until flavors have blended and soup has thickened, 10 to 15 minutes. When chorizo is cool enough to handle, cut in half lengthwise, then cut each half into ¼-inch-thick slices. Return chorizo to soup along with remaining 2 tablespoons parsley and heat through, about 1 minute. Season with salt, pepper, and up to 2 teaspoons sherry vinegar to taste, and serve. (Soup can be made up to 3 days in advance.)

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## TECHNIQUE

### WHAT MAKES IT SPANISH?

Three quintessential ingredients provide our soup with authentic Spanish flavor.

**SMOKED PAPRIKA:** *Pimentón*, made by drying red peppers over an oak fire, offers a distinctive rich and smoky taste.



**SHERRY VINEGAR:** Lightly sweet sherry vinegar boasts assertive yet balanced acidity.

**SPANISH CHORIZO:** This heady sausage combines coarsely ground, dry-cured pork with a hit of pimentón.

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## TECHNIQUE

### SWEATING IT OUT FOR A SWEET, VEGETAL TASTE

Caramelized vegetables are prized for a sweet, deeply roasted flavor—and the darker they get the richer they taste. But what about the opposite approach, called sweating, which keeps vegetables entirely pale by cooking them ever so slowly in a covered pot? I knew that long cooking would develop a certain amount of sweetness in the chopped onion, carrot, and parsley I was using, as well as remove any trace of unpleasant sulfuric compounds in the onion. What I didn't know was that their flavor would be a revelation: The sweated aromatics offered a pure, sweet background taste that not only allowed my soup's primary ingredients (smoked paprika, chorizo, lentils, and sherry vinegar) to come to the fore but also seemed to fortify their individual flavors.

**1.** Lid traps moisture

**2.** Aromatics develop pure, clean flavor

**3.** Low heat prevents browning




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## TECHNIQUE

## INTRODUCING TARKA

A *tarka* (also known as a *baghaar* or *chownk*) is a classic Indian preparation that involves blooming spices and sometimes garlic in hot ghee or oil to bring out their flavor and aroma. A tarka can be incorporated into a dish at the beginning of cooking or, more commonly, drizzled on at the end as a potent garnish. Since Indian cooks often use tarkas with lentils, we decided to adapt the technique for our soup. Our take calls for briefly sizzling sweet smoked paprika, ground black pepper, minced garlic, and grated onion in oil and incorporating the fragrant mixture into the soup when it is nearly finished cooking.