



LENTILS BRAISED IN RED WINE

Serves: 8

I've used Beluga lentils here, partly because I love the name, but mostly because I am very keen on these tiny, black spheres which, when slicked with oil, look like caviar. But do use the paler grey-green Italian Castelluccio lentils if you can get them, or indeed the slate-blue Puy lentils from France. The crucial thing here is that lentils be served on New Year's Day. In Italy, sausages and lentils are a traditional New Year's Day feast, as the lentils are supposed to resemble coins and therefore signal a year of prosperity ahead.

Recipe posted by Nigella

Ingredients

1 carrot
2 cloves garlic
1 stick of celery
1 large onion
4 oz bacon
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 ⅓ cups beluga lentils
2 bay leaves
2 teaspoons dijon mustard
1 ¼ cups red wine (or vermouth)
3 cups water
olive oil for dressing
1 handful fresh parsley (optional)

Method

1. Peel the carrot and garlic cloves and chop finely with the celery, onion and bacon, or process everything until finely chopped. Heat the oil in a large pan, and add the chopped or processed vegetables and bacon. Cook them over a gentle heat until soft, which will take up to about 10 minutes.
 2. Tip the lentils into the pan and stir them around to get slicked with the oil, and then add the bay leaves and Dijon mustard.
 3. Pour in the red wine and the water, or enough water so that the lentils are just covered in liquid. Bring to the boil and cover and simmer for about 30 minutes or until just tender. One of the good things about the Beluga lentils is they tend not to turn mushy, so there's less problem about overcooking.
 4. When the lentils are cooked, check the seasoning and add salt if necessary and dress with a little olive oil as you serve them. If you are cooking the lentils in advance, simply take them off the heat, and put the pan in a cool place somewhere (say on a chilly stainless-steel surface or near a window out of the sun). Warm through the next day by adding a little water and olive oil and keeping them, covered, on a low heat until warm.
 5. Then, by all means, take the lid off and stir through with a wooden spatula to help them get hot throughout.
 6. Transfer to a serving dish, tasting for seasoning and dressing with a little olive oil as you do so. If you want some freshly chopped parsley on top, scatter as desired. I rather like, however, their uninterrupted muddy blackness.
 7. Additional information - for gluten free Dijon mustard is usually gluten free but check the ingredients list on the jar.
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