

Dal Fry – Spiced Indian Lentil Soup (Gluten-Free, Soy-Free, Nut-Free)

Prep: 15 minutes • Cook: 30 minutes

Silky red and yellow lentils are simmered to a cozy, porridge-like texture, then 'fried' in a fragrant tadka of cumin, mustard seed, aromatics, and tomatoes. Bright lemon and fresh cilantro lift this deeply savory, comforting dal.

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup red lentils (masoor dal)
- 1/4 cup petite yellow lentils (yellow mung dal) (or substitute red lentils)
- 3 cups water
- 2 teaspoons oil
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon black mustard seeds
- generous pinch asafetida (hing) (optional; omit if not gluten-free)
- 1 green chili (finely chopped (Serrano, Indian, or Thai))
- 1 cup onion (chopped (red or white))
- 5 or more cloves garlic (finely chopped)
- 1 inch ginger (finely chopped)
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander or garam masala (or both)
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon, or to taste cayenne or red chili powder (optional)
- 1 large tomato (chopped small)
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 3/4 teaspoon, or to taste salt
- 1/3 cup cilantro (packed, chopped, divided)

Instructions

1. Wash the red and yellow lentils and drain.
2. Combine the lentils with 3 cups water in a saucepan over medium heat; cook 18–20 minutes until the yellow lentils are tender, then reduce heat to low and simmer.
3. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add cumin seeds and mustard seeds; let them sizzle and pop until cumin darkens and mustard pops.
4. Add asafetida, green chili, onion, garlic, ginger, and a pinch of salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until onions turn translucent, 5–7 minutes, adding splashes of water as needed.

5. Stir in ground coriander or garam masala (or both), turmeric, and cayenne/red chili powder.
6. Add tomatoes, lemon juice, and a splash of water; cook until tomatoes are saucy and mash larger pieces, about 6 minutes.
7. Pour the cooked lentils into the skillet. Add salt and half the cilantro; simmer 3–4 minutes until bubbling.
8. Taste and adjust salt and spice; add a dash more lemon juice if needed.
9. Garnish with remaining cilantro and serve hot with rice or flatbread and vegetable sides.

Tags: Indian, Soup, Vegan, Gluten Free, Lentils, Weeknight

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