

Simple (Lentil) Dhal

Preface

This is a very simple recipe for Dhal. Dhal is the Indian word for 'lentil' so the dish dhal varies massively all over India. While some will blow your head off, this one is not spicy at all (in a heat sense) but extremely flavoursome.

Ingredients

Serves 4

200g red lentils

1 large onion

2 cloves of garlic

150g runner beans (optional)

1 tin chopped tomatoes (optional)

5 tablespoons of vegetable or olive oil

1 teaspoon cumin

1 teaspoon ground coriander

¼ teaspoon turmeric

½ teaspoon cardamom pods

Approx. 1 litre water

Method

1. Peel the onion. Chop it in half through the root, and slice thinly to produce small semi-circles. Peel and crush the garlic¹.
2. Crush the cardamom pods to remove the seeds, discarding the outer husks. Crush these seeds with a pestle and mortar².
3. Heat the oil in a pan. Add the onion and garlic and sauté, covered for 5 minutes.
4. Add the cardamom, cumin, ground coriander and turmeric and stir well. Leave to cook for a further 2 minutes.
5. Add the lentils and about ¾ of the water, mixing well. Cover and allow to simmer gently for 30 minutes, stirring regularly. Also, check the consistency. If it begins to look too dry, add more water.
6. *If you are using runner beans and tomatoes, begin by preparing the runner beans. Top and tail them, and remove any stringy edges³. Slice diagonally into fine strips. Prepare the tomatoes by draining off any excess liquid, to prevent the dhal becoming too runny. Once the lentils are softened, add the runner beans and tomatoes. Mix them through the dhal, and cook for a further 5 minutes.*
7. When the lentils are soft, the dhal is ready to serve. The finished consistency should be like a thick soup. Add more water to loosen the dhal, or cook with the lid off to thicken the dhal.

¹ If you are using garlic purée from a tube, 1 teaspoon roughly equals 1 clove.

² Alternatively, use the handle of a heavy knife or the end of a rolling pin.

³ You can run a potato peeler down each side to remove the stringy edges.