



In The Kitchen February 2020

with Christine Ciancetta

Lentil Lessons



Ethiopian Red Lentil Stew - Serves 4-6

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| 1 cup red lentils | 2 teaspoons berbere (Ethiopian Spice Mix) |
| 4 tablespoons nit'r qibe
(Ethiopian Spiced Butter) or unsalted butter | 1 small tomato, cored and chopped |
| 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped | 4 cups water |
| 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped | Kosher salt, to taste |

Rinse the lentils in a sieve under cold running water and set aside.

Heat the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the reserved lentils, 1 tablespoon of the berbere, tomato, and 4 cups water to the saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until thick and the lentils are tender, 45–50 minutes. Stir in the remaining berbere and season generously with salt. Serve immediately.

Lentil Fritters with Cucumber Mint Sauce - Serves 4-6

For the Fritters:

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| 1 cup brown lentils (OK to use red or yellow too) | 1 tablespoon fresh oregano, chopped |
| 3 cups water | 1 tablespoon lemon juice |
| 1 clove garlic, minced | Fresh cracked black pepper |
| ½ teaspoon ground cumin | 2 large eggs, beaten |
| ½ teaspoon sea salt | 1 cup all purpose flour, for coating |
| ¼ cup curly parsley, chopped | Canola oil, for frying |

Thoroughly rinse the lentils in a fine-holed colander.

Combine lentils and water in a saucepan. Bring the water to a simmer, then reduce the heat to low, cover the saucepan with a lid, and cook for 30 minutes. Remove from heat, drain, and allow the lentils to absorb the water for another 5 minutes.

In a bowl, mix together the cooked lentils, garlic, parsley and oregano, lemon juice and spices. Set aside.

Put both the egg and flour each in individual bowls large enough dip the fritters in. Form the lentil mixture into 2-inch flat patties (about 2 tablespoons per patty). Dip the patties in the egg, coating both sides, and then coat the patties with the flour.

Heat a large skillet on medium/high with canola oil. Place prepared lentils in hot oil. Fry until golden brown. Serve with sauce.

For the Sauce

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| 1 cup plain yogurt | 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint |
| 1 small cucumber, minced | Pinch of kosher or sea salt |

Combine the yogurt, cucumber, mint, and salt in a bowl. Chill until ready to serve.

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Mediterranean Lentil Soup with Lemon - Serves 6

1 tablespoon oil	1 teaspoon turmeric
1 onion, chopped	1½ teaspoons ground cumin
2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped	Handful of chopped flat-leaf parsley
1½ cups of yellow lentils (or red)	Juice of half a lemon
8 cups of chicken or vegetable stock	

Heat oil in a pan and gently sauté the onions for 5 minutes. Add garlic, turmeric and cumin and continue cooking for a few minutes more. Stir in the lentils, add the stock and cook for 35 minutes. Stir several times during cooking, especially towards the end, to prevent lentils from sticking to the pan. Toss in parsley, stir in lemon juice and leave to cook for 2-3 minutes more.

No blending is necessary unless you want it really smooth.

Baked Sweet Potato with Goat Cheese and Puy Lentils - Serves 4-8

4 medium sweet potatoes (2½ pounds)	1 large green onion, chopped
¾ cup French du Puy lentils (or green or black lentils)	4 ounces goat cheese, divided
1 tablespoon olive oil	1 teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped
1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided	Fresh ground black pepper
2 stalks celery, including leaves, sliced thin	Lime wedges

Preheat oven to 450°F.

Wash the sweet potatoes, and prick them all over with a fork. Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the size of the sweet potatoes, until tender.

In a medium pot, combine ¾ cup French du Puy lentils with 3 cups water. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 20 minutes, until tender but not soft. Drain and let sit for 5-10 minutes, then transfer to a bowl. Mix lentils with 1 tablespoon olive oil and ½ teaspoon kosher salt. Add celery stalks, green onion and fresh thyme leaves to lentils and mix. Reserve the celery leaves.

Remove sweet potatoes from the oven. Transfer to a cutting board and let cool slightly until able to handle. Cut each potato in half, then scoop out the insides into a bowl, making sure to keep a layer of sweet potato within the skin so that it can stand on its own. Mash the cooked sweet potato meat, then stir in half of the goat cheese, ½ teaspoon kosher salt, and fresh ground pepper.

Fill each potato skin with the potato/goat cheese filling and top with the lentils. Bake until heated through, 5 to 10 minutes. Remove the potatoes from the oven and garnish with celery leaves and the remaining goat cheese. Serve hot with a lime wedge.

Lentil Varieties and How to Cook Them

If using lentils in a package, follow the directions on the package for basic cooking. If using bulk lentils, a good rule of thumb is to rinse the lentils under cold running water, then combine 1 cup lentils with 3 cups water and a pinch of salt. Bring to a boil, reduce to a very gentle simmer, cover, and cook for the recommended amount of time below. Because the cooking time varies by age (how long lentils were stored) and variety always taste before removing from heat. Drain and let sit, covered, for lentils to absorb steam and last bit of water.

Red, orange or yellow split lentils. Commonly used for Indian dal, these break up during cooking. Best for mashes, soups and stews. Cooking time: 15 to 25 minutes or more, depending on how soft and disintegrated you want them.

Black Beluga lentils. Small, shiny and black, they resemble caviar and maintain their shape and firm texture when cooked. Best for salads or appetizers, and they look great as garnish. Cooking time: 20 to 25 minutes.

French du Puy lentils. These small, blue-green-spotted lentils keep their shape when cooked and have a particularly creamy texture. Best for cold or warm salads. Combine with rice or quinoa for hearty salads with seasonal vegetables. Cooking time: 25 to 30 minutes.

Brown or green lentils. Larger varieties, these can get mushy when overcooked but otherwise keep their shape. Good for sauces or for substituting all or some of the meat in taco fillings, meatballs and more. Cooking time: 30 to 40 minutes.