



THE WRITERS' GREENHOUSE

Bhakti Dhal Soup

Warming, bright and fragrant lentil soup, lively with ginger and chilli



Serving and times

Active time: 5–10 mins

Simmering: 30–40 minutes

Makes: 5–6 portions

Ingredients

Spices

- 1 Tablespoon cumin seeds
- 1 Tablespoon black mustard seeds
- 1–2 inches ginger, finely chopped / grated
- 1–2 green chillis, finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon hing (also called asafoetida)
- 1 teaspoon turmeric

Other ingredients

- 1 Tablespoon ghee or oil
- 1 courgette, grated
- 1 teacup red lentils (170g)
- 1 tin tomatoes
- 5 teacups boiling water (1 litre)
- 1 teaspoon salt

Optional: to serve

- Fresh coriander, if you have any and fancy it
- Handful of spinach leaves stirred in and wilted just before serving
- Generous dollop of yoghurt

Freezing & portioning

Always cool food fast to freeze it. I allow just under 300ml per person. To label it, I stick masking tape on the tupperware and write in Sharpie.

Recipe credits: The Higher Taste (Hare Krishna recipe book)

Method

- Grate **1 courgette** and discard the top.
- Chop / grate **1–2 inches ginger** and **1–2 chillies**.
- Boil a litre of **water** in the kettle.
- Heat **1 Tablespoon oil or ghee** to medium-high in a good-sized pot.
- Add the dry spices: **1 Tablespoon cumin seeds, 1 Tablespoon black mustard seeds**.
- As soon as the mustard seeds start to crackle like tiny popcorn (usually about **30 seconds**), turn the heat to medium-low and add the wet spices: **ginger and chilli**.
- Stir for **30 seconds** or so till fragrant, then add the powdered spices: **½ teaspoon hing, 1 teaspoon turmeric**.
- Stir to mix well then add a teacup of **red lentils** (170g approx) and the grated **courgette**. Add the tin of **tomatoes** and 5 teacups (1 litre) of hot **water**. If the tomatoes are whole, use a potato masher to break them down.
- Stir in a teaspoon **salt**.
- Simmer for **30–40 minutes** till the lentils are soft and mostly broken down.

Notes

- **Weights and measures:** This recipe is very happy with approximation. I use an actual teacup instead of weighing / measuring, with a 1:5 ratio of lentils:water.
- **Ginger & chilli:** Original recipe says 1 inch ginger, 1 chilli; I double both. (And I sometimes add more chillis, if they're mild. I like heat.)
- **Storing ginger:** When you buy it, cut off any very tough bits of skin, chop it into 1-inch lengths, and freeze it in a ziplock bag: you then always have fresh ginger to hand. To use it, I blitz it from frozen in my food chopper, along with the chilli. You can also grate it. I don't bother peeling it.
- **Hing aka asafoetida aka yellow powder:** If you don't know it, Hare Krishna recipes use this in lieu of onion or garlic and you'll smell why! You can find it in most Asian groceries (eg Tahmid Stores on Cowley Road), usually in a bright yellow container. It comes from the resin of giant fennel plants and is wonderfully pungent.