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by Liz Robb

Spicy Tomato, Lentil and Vegetable Soup

Ingredients

1 large onion
1 stalk of celery
1 large leek
2 carrots
2 fat cloves of garlic
1 red chilli
A small piece of fresh ginger
1 tablespoon of olive oil
1 and a half teaspoons of ground cumin
1 teaspoon of ground coriander
1 litre of vegetable stock
600g canned chopped tomatoes
2 tablespoons of tomato puree
160g red lentils
3 bay leaves
1 lemon
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Soured cream
Fresh coriander
Servings
5
Person

Preparation

1. First prepare the vegetables. Peel and finely chop the onion and carrots. Finely chop the celery and thinly slice the leek. Deseed the chilli, peel the garlic and finely chop both. Peel and grate the ginger.
2. Gently sauté the chopped onion in the olive oil in a large saucepan for 3-4 minutes, add the celery, carrot and leek and cook for a further 5 minutes. Stir in the chilli, garlic and ginger and cook on a low heat for another 2 minutes.
3. Sprinkle in the cumin and coriander and cook, stirring frequently, for just a minute or two.
4. Stir in the chopped tomatoes, the tomato puree, the bay leaves and the hot vegetable stock. Wash the lentils thoroughly, stir them in and bring up to the boil. Simmer gently for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally to stop the lentils from catching on the bottom, until the lentils and vegetables are cooked and soft.
5. Blend the soup, remembering to take out the bay leaves first
6. I prefer not to blend it until totally smooth but leave some colours and textures there. Adjust the thickness if you wish by adding a little more stock. Return to the heat, stir in a tablespoon of lemon juice and season to taste with salt and plenty of black pepper.
7. Garnish each bowl with a heaped tablespoon of soured cream, sprinkle chopped coriander leaves on the top and serve with chunks of fresh crusty bread, flatbreads or naan bread.

Cooks Note

This warming, gently spiced soup smells and tastes gorgeous and is really satisfying. It is also very nutritious, made from vegetables and pulses. This soup can be easily put together using basic ingredients from your fridge and store cupboard, so give it a try!

Serves 5 - 6.

This is one of those soups that you can easily alter according to your own tastes or even what you happen to have in the kitchen! Here are a few ideas:

- **Try adding different vegetables; red peppers would work well!**

- Alter the level of spicing to suit you, or even the spices; maybe try garam masala or hot paprika instead.
- If you have a glut of fresh tomatoes, they would be lovely to replace canned.
- Plain yoghurt or crème fraiche would make good replacements for soured cream.