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# Tarka Dhal

A generous helping for one

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## Ingredients

1 cup dhal - red lentils, or a mix of red lentils and mung dhal.

1 tsp turmeric

30 fl oz (1 ltr) water

2 tbs oil (olive is fine, but not required)

1/2 onion, chopped finely

1 clove garlic, thinly sliced

### Variation 1

2 small red chilis, fresh or dried

1/2 tsp cumin seeds

1/3 tsp asafoetida (large pinch)

### Variation 2

3 tbs tomato passata (or a mashed tinned tomato with a little extra juice)

1 green chili, finely chopped

1 tsp ginger, freshly grated

### Garnish

1 tbs coriander leaves

1-2 red chilis, finely sliced

1 tsp garam masala (optional)

## Equipment

Medium/large saucepan

small frying pan

spatula

## Method

This is my version, with some variations on the tarka. It derives from recipes by Madhur Jaffrey and Vicky Bhogal. This is supposed to serve 4-6, but I find as a main course for lunch it works best as two servings.

Wash the lentils and put into a large saucepan with the water and bring to a fast boil. Leave for a few seconds, and skim the scum off. Then reduce to a slow simmer and add 1 tsp turmeric. Cover and leave for 30-40 minutes, at which time you should have an even, loose, porridge. Add water as it cooks if you need to, it will thicken considerably as it cools. Stir and don't let the bottom burn!

For the last few minutes make the tarka. For variation 1, heat the oil and add the chilis, asafoetida and cumin seeds when it starts to move and is hot. After a few seconds the cumin will have released its aroma, and the chili will have browned (if dried). Add the onion, and cook carefully until it is 50% browned, but not burned. Then add the garlic for about 30 seconds until golden. Pour into the lentils, making sure to include all the oil, and stir. Garnish with the coriander and chilis; if you wish, you can stir in the garam masala just before adding the garnish.

For variation 2, heat the oil and add the chilis and onions. Cook until browned and add the garlic, as before. Then add the chili, ginger and tomato. You should reduce the heat so that the tomato doesn't burn. Cook to reduce the mixture; when it is ready, you should see the oil separate out from the mix, but if you aren't careful this won't happen (if not, stop when it is too dry to continue to work with). Stir into the lentils and garnish as before.

Apart from the different tarkas and garnishing options, you can consider different mixes of lentils and beans (chana dhal chick peas makes an excellent dhal as well). Salt is optional (you can add 1 tsp after cooking the lentils, but taste it after adding the tarka (you may find you don't need it). I have seen recipes that combine all these spices, and even add a little ground coriander; and a squeeze of lemon juice is also an option.

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