Red Lentil Pasta Sauce

Four pasta meals with the complete lentil-tomato sauce · Active 25 min · Total 1 hr 5 min

Skills: Cooking split lentils into a coarse sauce and using pasta water deliberately

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive or neutral oil (15 ml)
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped (150 g)
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped (6 g)
- 1/2 cup split red lentils (100 g), rinsed and checked
- 1 1/2 cups water for lentils (360 ml), plus up to 1/4 cup/60 ml if needed
- 1 can chopped tomatoes, 14–14 1/2 oz/400–411 g, including juice
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (1 g)
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt (3 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (0.5 g)
- 10 1/2 oz dry spaghetti (300 g)
- About 10 cups water for pasta (2.5 L), or package-specified amount
- Up to 1/4 cup reserved pasta cooking water (60 ml), taken from the pot

Set out

Saucepan, at least 3 qt/3 L, Large pasta saucepan, at least 4 qt/4 L, Strainer, Potato masher or wooden spoon, Measuring cup, Tongs

Allergens

wheat. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat oil in the sauce saucepan over medium heat. Cook onion for 7–8 minutes until soft. Add garlic for 30 seconds, then lentils and 360 ml lentil water.

2. Bring to a simmer, partly cover and cook for 15–20 minutes until lentils are very tender and begin breaking down. Stir occasionally. Add extra water in small amounts only if still firm and the pan is drying, up to 60 ml.

3. Add tomatoes with juice, oregano, salt and pepper. Simmer uncovered for 12–15 minutes, stirring, until thick but moist. Mash with the back of the spoon or potato masher into a coarse even sauce.

4. Meanwhile cook spaghetti in boiling water according to its package until tender. Reserve 60 ml cooking water before draining.

5. Lift drained hot pasta through all the sauce, adding reserved pasta water a tablespoon at a time only if needed for an even coating. Divide into 4 complete portions and serve.

A sauce batch you can divide

If cooking only part of the pasta now, divide the finished sauce into four equal portions first and cool the unused shares promptly. Do not leave the full pan warm while deciding on a second meal.

Ingredient labels

Spaghetti normally contains wheat and some pasta also contains egg. Check actual pasta, canned tomato and herb labels for added ingredients.

A useful detail

The lentil-water stage precedes the tomato simmer; pasta cooks alongside the final sauce stage. The 65-minute total leaves room for bringing both pans to temperature and draining safely.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 3 days. Reheat a portion to 165°F/74°C throughout, stirring with a little water. Freeze promptly cooled sauce alone for up to 2 months, or combined pasta for up to 1 month; thaw in the refrigerator. Keep the sauce's original cooking date if later paired with freshly cooked pasta.