Red Lentil Walnut Bolognese with Rigatoni

4 large rigatoni bowls | Active 30 min | Cook 40 min | Total 60 min

Ingredients

- 10 1/2 oz dry rigatoni (300 g)
- 1/2 cup walnut halves (60 g)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (30 ml/28 g)
- 1 medium onion (180 g), finely diced
- 1 large carrot (120 g), finely diced
- 2 celery stalks (100 g), finely diced
- 3 garlic cloves (9 g), minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste (32 g)
- 1 cup dry red lentils (190 g), rinsed
- 1 can crushed tomatoes (28 oz/794 g)
- 2 cups water (480 ml/480 g)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (1 g)
- 1 teaspoon fine salt (6 g)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper (1 g)
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar (15 ml/16 g)

Set out

Large pasta pot, 12-inch/30 cm deep skillet, Fine-mesh sieve, Knife and board, Ladle

Allergens

Wheat, Walnut. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Toast walnuts in the dry skillet over medium heat for 3–4 minutes, stirring until fragrant. Transfer to a board and chop finely.

2. Heat oil in the same skillet over medium heat. Cook onion, carrot and celery for 8 minutes, stirring, until softened. Add garlic and tomato paste and cook 1 minute.

3. Stir in lentils, crushed tomatoes, measured water, oregano, salt and pepper. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook partly covered for 20–25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until lentils are tender but the sauce still has some texture. Add a little hot water if the pan becomes dry before the lentils soften.

4. While the sauce simmers, cook rigatoni in boiling water until 1 minute short of the package al dente time. Reserve 1 cup/240 ml cooking water and drain pasta.

5. Stir chopped walnuts and balsamic vinegar into the sauce. Add pasta and toss over low heat for 1–2 minutes, adding reserved water a little at a time until sauce coats the tubes. Divide the entire batch into four equal bowls.

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Estimated nutrition per serving

Calories: 720 kcal | Protein: 28.2 g | Carbohydrate: 113.6 g | Fat: 19.7 g | Fiber: not estimated. One of 4 servings. Batch yield: 4 large rigatoni bowls. Base ingredients and full measured oil included; optional variations excluded. Estimates vary with brands, cooking and actual portions.

Freeze the sauce when texture matters most

If you want freshly cooked pasta later, freeze half the finished sauce before combining it with pasta and cook only half the rigatoni now. Keep the ingredient and portion division explicit: half the sauce plus half the dry pasta makes two of the four stated servings.

A useful detail

Pasta water is used only to adjust consistency and adds no new ingredient beyond the pasta already counted. Do not add cheese unless treating it as a separate addition to the base recipe.

Another way

Replace walnuts with 60 g hulled pumpkin seeds, toasted and finely chopped, for a nut-free version; check cross-contact needs and recalculate nutrition.

Use 300 g dry whole-wheat rigatoni for a firmer bite, adjusting cooking time to its package.

Keep it well

Refrigerate shallow portions at 40°F/4°C or below within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Keep up to 3 days or freeze up to 2 months. Reheat covered with a little water to 165°F/74°C, stirring midway. The pasta softens after freezing, but the sauce retains its texture. Pack cold with two cold sources.