Tomato-Lentil Dipping Pot with Cheddar Flatbread Fingers

About 1.5 L thick dipping pot plus 12 cheddar-flatbread fingers; 1 finger and one-twelfth of the pot per buffet portion | Active 45 min | Cook 65 min | Total 105 min (warm service) | Cold-travel planning: 225 min; follow the stated cooling endpoint and finishing route.

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp (15 ml/14 g) olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely diced, 150 g prepared weight
- 2 medium carrots, finely grated, 150 g prepared weight
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped, 6 g
- 1 tsp (2 g) smoked paprika
- 3/4 cup (150 g) dry split red lentils, picked over and rinsed
- 1 large can chopped tomatoes, 28 oz/800 g
- 1 3/4 cups plus 2 tbsp (450 ml) low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1/2 tsp (3 g) fine salt
- 1/4 tsp (0.5 g) black pepper
- 4 medium ready-to-eat flour tortillas, about 8 in/20 cm, 7 oz/200 g total
- 4 1/4 oz (120 g) cheddar, finely grated

Set out

Large 3 L saucepan with lid, Grater, Spoon, 12 in/30 cm nonstick skillet, Spatula, Knife and board, Food thermometer, Twelve small bowls or side plates, Ladle, Shallow cooling containers and cooler with ice packs, Twelve small spoons for the substantial sauce portions, Oven, rack and sheet only if briefly holding finished fingers hot

Allergens

Wheat, Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat oil in the saucepan. Cook onion and carrot over medium heat 7-8 minutes until softened. Add garlic and paprika and stir 30 seconds. Add the rinsed split red lentils and all 450 ml stock. Bring to a gentle simmer, cover and cook 18-25 minutes, or the full packet time if longer, stirring along the base frequently until the lentils are completely soft and beginning to break down. Keep the heat gentle and the lid on between stirs to limit evaporation. Only after they are fully tender, add all the tomatoes, salt and pepper. Simmer uncovered 8-12 minutes, stirring, until thick and spoonable.

2. Divide cheddar over one half of each tortilla, 30 g per tortilla. Fold the uncovered half over the cheese. Heat the dry nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Cook two folded tortillas at a time, if they fit without overlap, for 3-4 minutes per side until the cheese is melted and the bread is golden; repeat with the other two. A smaller pan requires four separate batches and extra time.

3. Rest each toasted half-moon 1 minute on the board, then cut into 3 broad fingers, 12 total. Serve promptly after both batches; if a longer brief hold is needed, use a low oven and verify the fingers stay at least 140°F (60°C). Stir the hot pot and check it reaches at least 165°F (74°C) before serving, holding at least 140°F (60°C).

4. Divide all the sauce among twelve small bowls or plates and give each portion one cheese-filled finger and a small spoon for the thick sauce. If guests serve themselves, use a clean ladle and ask them to take their sauce portion before dipping. Do not return bitten bread to the shared pot.

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Bring it

Take sauce cold in shallow leakproof containers and fingers cold in a separate box, all at 40°F (4°C) or below. Include twelve small bowls or plates and a ladle. During packing, travel and display, keep cold food at 40°F (4°C) or below and hot food at 140°F (60°C) or above. Allow no more than 2 hours combined outside those controls, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C). Discard food beyond that limit.

Finish at the gathering

Reserve a stove and saucepan for about 12-18 minutes to reheat the sauce to 165°F (74°C). Reheat fingers in a 375°F (190°C) oven for about 10 minutes to a 165°F (74°C) cheese center. If the host cannot supply heat, transport only with equipment verified to keep both foods at least 140°F (60°C), or choose another dish.

Make it yours

This suits a housewarming or community supper when small bowls and a ladle are welcome. Call the dish a dipping pot, not a bottomless fondue; twelve measured portions keep the table practical.

Ingredient labels

Check tortillas and stock for soy, sesame, celery or other additions. This is a modern lentil dipping dish, not an authenticity claim for a named regional preparation.

A useful detail

The 105-minute warm-service total includes preparation, the full stock-first lentil simmer, the separate 8-12-minute tomato stage, two sequential tortilla batches and portioning. The tortillas can cook during the final lentil and tomato stages. Old lentils, a longer packet time or a smaller skillet extend the clock; full tenderness controls. For cold transport, plan a further 90-120 minutes of refrigerator chilling in several shallow containers, about 225 minutes overall, and longer until both sauce and fingers are at 40°F (4°C) or below. The dip remains thick and spoonable rather than reduced to an arbitrary fixed weight.

Another way

Use 120 g grated mature Gouda instead of cheddar.

Replace smoked paprika with 1 tsp (2 g) ground cumin. Add it with the garlic so it does not remain a raw dry powder.

Keep it well

Cool sauce in shallow containers and refrigerate at 40°F (4°C) or below within the combined party limit. Keep cooked tortilla fingers separate and use both within 3 days. Reheat sauce and filled fingers to 165°F (74°C), checking the cheese center as well as the sauce. Respect the combined travel-and-display limit in “Bring it.”