Lentil Tomato and Mozzarella Picnic Bowl

2 generous picnic bowls, each with half the lentils, tomato, cucumber and mozzarella · Active 20 min · Total 2 hr

Skills: Beginner with ordinary kitchen equipment

Ingredients

- 2/3 cup dry brown or green whole lentils (120 g), sorted and rinsed
- 3 3/4 cups drinking water (900 ml), for boiling and draining
- Whole-milk mozzarella, drained and diced (120 g/about 4 1/4 oz)
- About 2 cups chopped ripe tomatoes (250 g)
- 1/4 large cucumber, diced (100 g, skin on)
- 2 teaspoons olive oil (10 ml/about 9 g)
- 1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar (15 ml/about 15 g)
- 1 teaspoon prepared yellow mustard (5 g)
- About 12 basil leaves, torn (6 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt (1.5 g)
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper (0.3 g)

Set out

2-litre/2-quart saucepan, Fine sieve, Shallow cooling container, Refrigerator, Kitchen scale, Knife and board, Large bowl and spoon, 2 covered picnic bowls

Allergens

Milk, Mustard; check prepared mustard for additional allergens. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Put lentils and water in the saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce to a gentle simmer and cook for 20–30 minutes, or the packet time, until tender through the center while mostly intact. Add more drinking water if needed to keep them submerged. Drain well.

2. Spread lentils in a shallow container and refrigerate promptly. Allow about 60–75 minutes, or longer until cold at 40°F/4°C or below. Do not leave them at room temperature to finish cooling.

3. Whisk oil, vinegar, mustard, salt and pepper in the large bowl. Add the cold lentils, tomatoes, cucumber and drained mozzarella. Turn gently so the cheese stays in cubes.

4. Divide between 2 bowls, adding half the torn basil to each. Serve cold or cover and refrigerate immediately for transport.

A useful kitchen skill

Taste a lentil for its center rather than judging only its swollen appearance, then cool the pulses before introducing fresh cheese.

A useful detail

The 2-hour total includes cooking and refrigerator cooling. Older lentils may need more simmering; wait for tender centers and cold food rather than treating the estimate as a timer that guarantees readiness.

Keep it well

Keep at 40°F/4°C or below and use within 2 days or the shorter cheese label. Refrigerate promptly in shallow containers, within 2 hours or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Pack in an insulated bag with two cold sources and keep refrigerated when possible. Add fresh basil near eating time.