Lentil Walnut Pasta Sauce

2 generous bowls, each with half the pasta and half the lentil-walnut sauce · Active 35 min · Total 1 hr 15 min

Skills: Beginner with ordinary kitchen equipment

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup dry whole brown or green lentils (100 g)
- 2 cups water for lentils (480 ml), plus boiling water as needed
- 5 1/3 oz dry short pasta, such as penne (150 g)
- About 8 cups water for pasta (2 liters)
- 1 can crushed tomatoes with juice (400 g/about 14 oz)
- 1 small onion, finely diced (100 g)
- 1 medium carrot, finely diced (80 g)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced (6 g)
- 2 teaspoons olive oil (10 ml/about 9 g)
- 1/4 cup walnuts, finely chopped after measuring (30 g)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (1 g)
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt (3 g), divided
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper (0.3 g)

Set out

Medium saucepan for lentils, Large saucepan for pasta, 28 cm/11-inch deep skillet, Sieve or colander, Knife and board, Kitchen scale, Measuring jug, Wooden spoon, Food thermometer, 2 dinner bowls

Allergens

Wheat, Walnut (tree nut); check pasta for egg and other added allergens. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Rinse and inspect the lentils. Put them in the medium saucepan with 2 cups (480 ml) water. Bring to a boil, lower to a gentle simmer and cook for 20–30 minutes, or the packet time, until fully tender but mostly intact. Add boiling water if needed to keep them covered, then drain.

2. Meanwhile, heat oil in the deep skillet over medium heat. Cook onion and carrot for 9–10 minutes until softened. Add garlic for 30 seconds. Stir in tomatoes, oregano, pepper and half the salt. Simmer uncovered for 15–20 minutes, stirring, until thick rather than watery.

3. Bring the pasta water and remaining salt to a boil in the large saucepan. Add pasta and cook to its packet time, aiming to finish as the sauce does. Reserve 1/2 cup (120 ml) cooking water, then drain the pasta.

4. Fold drained lentils and chopped walnuts into the thickened tomato sauce. Simmer gently for 5 minutes until hot throughout at 165°F/74°C. Add the drained pasta and toss for about 1 minute, adding reserved cooking water 1 tablespoon (15 ml) at a time only if the sauce is too stiff. Divide all of it between 2 bowls.

A useful kitchen skill

Taste a cooked lentil and reserve pasta water before draining; neither a fixed minute nor extra oil solves every texture problem.

A useful detail

The total allows dry lentils to cook while the sauce develops. Different lentil ages and pasta shapes need their own final doneness checks. The estimate counts dry pasta and lentils, all walnuts and all measured oil, with no cheese topping.

Keep it well

Refrigerate promptly in shallow containers at 40°F/4°C or below within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Use within 3 days. Reheat the portion needed with a splash of water to 165°F/74°C throughout, stirring. Freeze for up to 2 months; thaw in the refrigerator. Pasta will soften further in storage.