Beef and Brown Lentil Cottage Pie

2 generous servings, each with half the beef-lentil filling and potato topping · Active 45 min · Total 1 hr 40 min

Skills: Beginner with ordinary kitchen equipment

Ingredients

- 9 oz raw ground beef, 90% lean/10% fat (250 g)
- About 1 cup fully cooked unsalted whole brown lentils, drained (200 g)
- 1 lb 2 oz potatoes with skin, scrubbed and diced (500 g)
- About 6 cups water for potatoes (1.5 liters)
- 1/3 cup reduced-fat 2% milk (80 ml/about 83 g)
- 2 teaspoons unsalted butter (10 g)
- 1 small onion, finely diced (100 g)
- 1 medium carrot, finely diced (80 g)
- 1 garlic clove, minced (3 g)
- 1 teaspoon olive oil (5 ml/about 4.5 g)
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour (10 g)
- 1/2 can crushed tomatoes with juice (200 g)
- 1/2 cup water for filling (120 ml)
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano (0.5 g)
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt (3 g), divided
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (0.6 g), divided

Set out

2-liter/about 2-quart baking dish, approximately 8-inch/20 cm square and 2-inch/5 cm deep, Large skillet, Saucepan for potatoes, Colander, Potato masher, Fork, Knife and board, Kitchen scale, Measuring jug, Food thermometer, Baking tray under dish if needed for drips, Oven mitts

Allergens

Milk, Wheat. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat the oven to 400°F/200°C. Put potatoes in the saucepan, cover with the measured potato water and bring to a boil. Simmer for 15–20 minutes until fully tender. Drain, let steam escape for 1 minute, then mash with milk, butter and half the salt and pepper. Keep covered.

2. Meanwhile heat oil in the skillet over medium heat. Cook onion and carrot for 8–10 minutes until softening. Add beef and break into small crumbles. Cook for 7–9 minutes until no raw patches remain and a thick gathered portion reaches 160°F/71°C, checked without touching the pan. Add garlic for 30 seconds.

3. Stir in flour for 1 minute. Add tomatoes, filling water, oregano and remaining salt and pepper. Simmer for 8–10 minutes, stirring, until thick enough to hold a brief spoon channel. Fold in cooked drained lentils and heat for 3–4 minutes until hot throughout.

4. Transfer filling to the 2-liter dish. Distribute small spoonfuls of mash across it, spread gently to the edges and roughen the top with a fork. Bake for 20–25 minutes until bubbling and the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Use a tray underneath if the dish is near its rim.

5. Rest for 5–10 minutes, then divide the whole pie into 2 generous portions, each with half the filling and topping.

A useful kitchen skill

Reduce a filling before adding its lid, then verify the center of the assembled dish rather than judging only its browned top.

A useful detail

This two-serving pie is deliberately substantial. The estimate retains the raw 90/10 beef's full composition rather than assuming an unmeasured fat drain. Lentils start cooked and drained; their preparation is outside the 100-minute total.

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 or the original lentils' remaining safe storage window, whichever is shorter. Reheat one portion to 165°F/74°C throughout. Freeze individual portions for up to 2 months and thaw in the refrigerator. Do not leave a deep whole pie on the counter to cool completely.