Red Lentil Cottage Cheese Vegetable Bake

4 vegetable-bake meals, each one-quarter of the complete dish · Active 40 min · Total 1 hr 55 min

Skills: Beginner with ordinary kitchen equipment

Ingredients

- 1 cup dry split red lentils, rinsed (200 g)
- 2 1/2 cups water for lentils (600 ml), plus a little more if their packet requires
- 1 3/4 cups plain 2% cottage cheese, stirred (400 g)
- 2 large eggs (100 g edible contents)
- 2 large carrots, finely diced (200 g prepared)
- About 5 cups fresh spinach, washed and chopped (160 g)
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped (120 g)
- 1 can crushed tomatoes with juice (400 g)
- About 3/4 cup loosely grated cheddar (80 g)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (15 ml/about 13.5 g)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (1 g)
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt (3 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (0.5 g)

Set out

3-liter/about 3-quart baking dish, Medium saucepan, Fine sieve, Large skillet, Large mixing bowl, Knife and board, Grater, Kitchen scale, Food thermometer, Oven mitts

Allergens

Milk, Egg. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Rinse lentils, put them in a saucepan with the measured water and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer according to the packet, usually 15–20 minutes, until fully soft. Add small water amounts if necessary to prevent drying. Drain in a fine sieve and leave for 10 minutes to release steam.

2. Meanwhile heat the oven to 375°F/190°C. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook onion and carrot for 10–12 minutes, stirring, until carrot is tender. Add spinach in batches and cook for 3–5 minutes until wilted and excess liquid has evaporated. Set aside off the heat for 10 minutes.

3. Beat eggs in the mixing bowl, then stir in cottage cheese, tomatoes, oregano, salt and pepper. Fold in the warm, not piping-hot lentils and vegetables. Transfer all the mixture to the 3-liter dish and spread cheddar over the top.

4. Bake for 35–40 minutes until bubbling and the center reaches 165°F/74°C. Cover loosely if the cheese browns before the center is ready. Rest for 10 minutes, then spoon into 4 equal portions.

A useful kitchen skill

Pre-cook a dry pulse completely and let hot ingredients release steam before adding an egg binder.

A useful detail

Allow about 115 minutes including chopping, full lentil cooking, two brief steam-release stages, assembly, baking and resting; some cooking stages overlap. A soft spoonable center is expected, but it still needs the measured heat endpoint.

Keep it well

Transfer planned leftovers promptly to shallow containers and refrigerate at 40°F/4°C or below within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Use within 3 days. Freeze chilled individual portions at 0°F/−18°C for up to 2 months for quality. Thaw in the refrigerator and reheat to 165°F/74°C throughout. The curds may look a little grainier after freezing.