

Smoky Lentil Stew With Leeks and Potatoes

By David Tanis

YIELD 6 servings

TIME 1 hour

Rustic with deep flavor, this stew improves after a day in the fridge. Make the whole recipe, and eat it over several days — or freeze it for later. If you can't get small Spanish Pardina lentils or French lentilles du Puy, use any size green or brown lentil. (Carnivores may want to add chorizo or jamón.) The stew is rather brothy at first, but thickens upon sitting. Thin with a little water when reheating, as necessary. For optimum results, be sure to use fruity, zesty-tasting extra virgin olive oil — it really makes a difference.

INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cups small lentils, such as Pardina or Puy (12 ounces), or use any size green or brown lentil

1 medium onion, halved, plus 2 bay leaves and 2 whole cloves

Kosher salt and black pepper

4 or 5 medium potatoes, peeled and sliced ¾-inch thick

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

2 medium leeks, white and tender green parts, chopped in ½-inch pieces

1 teaspoon chopped garlic

1 large thyme or rosemary sprig

2 tablespoons pimentón dulce or smoked sweet paprika

⅛ teaspoon ground cayenne, or to taste

Small pinch of saffron (about 12 strands), soaked in ¼ cup cold water

1 cup chopped canned tomato with juice

2 tablespoons sherry vinegar

Chopped parsley (optional)

PREPARATION

Step 1

Rinse lentils. Put them in a Dutch oven or large, heavy-bottomed pot and add 8 cups water. Pin a bay leaf to each onion half using a whole clove and add to the pot. Bring to a boil over high heat, add a large pinch of salt, then reduce heat to a simmer. Cook with lid ajar for about 30 minutes, until soft. Turn off heat.

Step 2

Meanwhile, bring a medium pot of salted water to boil, and cook the potato slices until just done, about 10 minutes, then drain and spread out on a baking sheet to cool.

Step 3

Put 3 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is wavy, add leeks and stir to coat. Season with salt and pepper. Let leeks cook briskly, stirring frequently until soft but still bright green, about 5 to 8 minutes. Turn heat to medium, stir in chopped garlic, thyme, pimentón and cayenne.

Step 4

Add saffron and soaking water, the chopped tomato and vinegar. Turn heat to high and let everything simmer for a few minutes. Pour contents of skillet into Dutch oven with lentils. Add the reserved potatoes.

Step 5

Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cook covered with lid ajar for about 10 minutes. Taste and adjust seasoning, then cook for 10 more

minutes. The lentils will be quite soft and the potatoes will start to break. Discard onion and thyme sprig.

Step 6

Finish with a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil and chopped parsley, if you wish.

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