



## Lentil Soup

*Serves 4-6 as main course*

Pancetta, two quarter-inch slices, diced (or substitute 2-3 slices of bacon)

One large onion (I usually use a sweet onion) or 3 shallots or combination, chopped

Red pepper flakes, a couple good shakes or more, as you please

Cumin, one Tablespoon

Smoked Paprika, one and a half teaspoons

Celery, two stalks diced

Carrots, 1 cup diced

Chicken stock, 3 cups (you can sub vegetable broth or water)

Water, 3 cups (if you prefer, sub more stock here or change the ratio of stock:water)

Brown rice, three-quarters of a cup (rinsed & picked)

Red lentils, one cup (rinsed & picked)

Sea salt

Fresh cilantro, to garnish

In large pot, sauté pancetta (or bacon) over medium-high heat until it renders its fat and is becoming crunchy. Remove pancetta to bowl lined with paper towels and set aside. Add onion/shallots to pot at medium heat, along with pepper flakes, cumin and smoked paprika. Stirring occasionally, sauté for about 5 minutes. Add celery and carrots, and continue to sauté for 5 minutes more. (You may need to add some olive oil or butter to the sauté if it starts to become too dry.) Once the vegetables are soft and the onion is browned, add the stock and water and bring to a boil. Add brown rice and red lentils. Bring to a boil again, and then reduce to simmer. Simmer, covered, until the rice is thoroughly cooked, about 35-40 minutes. Note: the red lentils will lose their shape during cooking. As you approach the end of the simmering time, taste and add salt as needed. The soup tends to taste very flat until appropriately salted. I also like to add the pancetta back to the soup during the simmering portion, which contributes saltiness and additional texture to the soup – just be careful with salting if you return the pancetta to the soup, since you don't want a salt overdose! Serve with a healthy amount of cilantro garnish.

*Cooking notes:*

If you prefer to skip the meat portion of this recipe, simply sauté in olive oil and/or butter, and use vegetable broth and/or water.

I like to run my veggies through the food processor for quick and easy chopping. You could actually combine the onion, celery and carrots in processor until they're a nice veggie slush, and add to the pot together.

I love cumin and smoked paprika. The amounts listed are merely suggestions. I typically load 'em up in this soup.

I usually add the chicken stock and about 2 cups of water and bring to a boil. I then add an additional cup of water or more during the simmering phase, if the soup starts to look too thick. I have let this soup simmer for hours – just be sure to keep an eye on the liquid level and add water or stock as needed.

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