

Dal w/ Cumin & Green Onions

Swick

Serves 1 | Active Time: 30 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour

Chef's Notes

If masoor dal is not available, try other split lentils, such as mung dal (mung beans) or toor dal (pigeon peas). Keep in mind that each legume has a different cooking time. For example, mung dal cooks relatively quickly.

For this plant-based version of masoor dal, neutral-flavored vegetable oil is used to sauté the spices. The traditional recipe calls for ghee.

An oil-free version can be made by omitting the oil. But, note that the flavor distribution will be a little different without the oil.

After making this recipe, try changing the amounts of cumin, green onions, and cayenne for your family's version.

And, finally, a cultural note on the term "dal." Generally, dal refers to the split version of a lentil that is the base ingredient of a dal preparation. However, a dal preparation is also defined by its soft, loose consistency. So, exceptions to the "split lentil" generalization are preparations that call for whole legumes but are bound with a "gravy" or sauce (that includes some mashed legumes) that provides a loose consistency to the finished dish. A common example is rajma dal made from whole kidney beans.

Step 1: Preparing Basic Masoor Dal - The Base

- 1 cup masoor dal (split), washed and drained
- 4 cups water
- 1/4 tsp turmeric, ground
- 1/4 tsp asafoetida
- 1 tsp salt

Prepare your mise en place.

Put the masoor dal (split red lentils) and 4 cups of water into a heavy-bottomed vessel and bring to a boil.

Skim froth that develops on the surface.

Add the turmeric and asafoetida, and allow the dal to gently cook until tender, about 45 minutes. The dal should be very soft. Add the salt.

This "Basic Masoor Dal" base preparation can be used immediately or refrigerated for later use. Use within 4 days. To reheat the dal, stir in a small amount of water to loosen the consistency. Proceed with your chosen recipe.

Step 2: Finishing the Masoor Dal with Cumin and Scallions

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1/2 tsp cumin, whole seeds
- 1 each green onion, thinly sliced into small "rounds"
- 1/4 tsp hot chile powder or to taste

Hold the basic masoor dal base preparation over low heat.

Heat the oil in a small pan over moderately high heat. Put in the cumin seeds and allow them to sizzle for 5-10 seconds.

Add the green onions and sauté until lightly caramelized.

Stir in the hot chile powder.

Pour this mixture over the basic masoor dal and stir it in.

Note that this final step, called “forni” (Marathi) or “tadka” (Hindi), is a finishing technique commonly used in Indian cooking.