

Middle Eastern Lentils & Rice w/ Crispy Onions

Swick

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

Step 1: Step 1: Preparing Your Mise en Place

- 1 onion
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 1/2 cups brown lentils
- 1 cup long grain brown rice*
- 4 cups water**
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground allspice

To prepare your mise en place, finely dice the onion and mince the garlic.

Next, wash and drain the lentils and rice (separately). *Note: Long grain white rice is generally used instead of brown rice. However, the brown rice adds a nice flavor and makes the dish more nutritious.

Lastly, gather the water (or stock) and all of the spices and preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).

**Note: Depending on the rice used, you may need more or less water. This recipe is based on using brown rice, but even then, many brands of brown rice will vary in the amount of liquid needed to cook that particular rice.

Step 2: Step 2: Cooking the Dish

- 2 tbsp coconut oil or grapeseed oil
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper

To cook the dish, heat a large pan or Dutch oven over medium-high heat and then add the oil. Add the onions and cook until they start to soften and brown slightly, about 5 to 8 minutes.

At that point, turn the heat to low and add the garlic. Stir for about 30 seconds. Then add the spices and cook for another 30 seconds, or so. Next, add the brown rice and stir to combine. Add the water and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low and continue to simmer for about 10-15 minutes. Then add the lentils, stir and return to a boil, then turn the heat to low, cover and let cook for approximately 20 to 30 minutes, or until the rice and lentils are cooked through. If after 30 minutes the rice and lentils are not quite cooked, but there is no liquid left, add a bit more liquid and continue to cook.

(*Note: if using white rice, add the lentils to the onions first and let cook for approximately 15 minutes before adding the rice, as you want them both to be done at the same time). The exact time, will depend on the type of rice used.

Meanwhile, you can go ahead and prepare the onions from Step 3.

Once all of the liquid has been absorbed and the rice and lentils are tender, turn off the heat and taste for seasoning. Season well with salt and pepper. Because salt was not added at the beginning (so the lentils cook properly), you will need to use more salt than just a final seasoning.

At this point, let rest for approximately 10 minutes, or so.

Step 3: Step 3: Preparing the Onions

- 5 onions
- 2 tbsp coconut oil or grapeseed oil

To prepare the onions, cut in half and then cut each half in half width-wise — this just makes for smaller slices. Next, slice the onions and then separate the slices with your hands, to break up the pieces. Place the onions onto a large baking tray that has been lined with parchment or aluminum foil.

If using coconut oil to coat the onions, you can either first melt the oil and pour over the onions, or you can simply smear the oil in your hands and toss the onions right on the tray. The heat from your hands will melt the oil enough so that it nicely coats the onions.

Place the onions into the hot oven and let cook for about 45 minutes, tossing often. If necessary, continue to cook and toss until the onions are nice and golden with some blackened crispy bits. *Note: the closer the onions get to be done, the more frequently they will need tossed.

Alternatively, the onions can be sautéed on the stovetop.

*Note: The onions can be prepared ahead of time. And be aware that preparation time can vary depending on the quantity of onions and the size of the cut.

Step 4: Making the Lemon Vinaigrette (Optional)

- 1 sm clove garlic
- 2 tbsp fresh mint*
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice (2 to 3 lemons)
- 2/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- sea salt, to taste

*Note: This vinaigrette makes 1 cup. You likely won't use all of it—any leftovers will keep for a few days in the refrigerator.

To make the vinaigrette, first crush the garlic with a bit of salt. Add this to a small jar (or bowl). Next chop the mint and add to the jar.

*Note: Dried mint can be used instead of fresh mint. If using dried, use half the amount, or to taste.

Next, squeeze the lemons and add to the juice, along with the olive oil, to the jar. Add a pinch of salt and shake to combine.

Taste for seasoning, adding more salt, if needed.

Step 5: Step 4: Serving the Dish

- 1/2 to 1 cup fresh herbs (cilantro, mint, parsley)
- sea salt, to taste
- freshly ground black pepper, to taste

To finish the dish, chop the herbs. You can add as much of each herb as you like, but equal parts cilantro, Italian parsley and mint is a nice combination. If you don't have all three types, this dish is also nice with just one type of herb.

Lastly, add half of the onions to the lentil mixture and fold to combine.

To serve the dish, drizzle with some of the lemon-mint vinaigrette and top with a handful of the crispy onions. Note that this dish can be served on individual plates or family-style.

Additional Topping Ideas: While it may not be “traditional”, this dish is also very nice served with additional toppings such as diced tomatoes and avocados.