



Lentil & Vegetable Stew (Dhansaak)

Serves 12-14



[The San Francisco Chronicle](#) comments: "This wonderful Indian dish comes from *American Masala* by Suvir Saran (Clarkson Potter, 2007). The recipe originates in the Parsi Zoroastrian community in Gujarat on India's West Coast. It takes some time to prepare, but you can make it ahead. It's actually at its best a couple days after cooking, when the spices have had a chance to come through."

Spice blend:

- 1-inch piece cinnamon stick
- 6 green cardamom pods
- 1 tablespoon coriander seeds
- 2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/2 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
- 1/4 teaspoon fenugreek seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon whole cloves

Herb paste:

- 1/2 cup loosely packed fresh cilantro
- 1/2 cup loosely packed fresh mint leaves
- 3-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 jalapeno (cored and seeded if you prefer a milder flavor), roughly chopped
- 3 dried red chiles
- 5 garlic cloves, peeled and roughly chopped

Stew:

- 1/4 cup + 3 tablespoons canola oil or extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 2 red onions, finely diced + 1 red onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon + 2 teaspoons kosher salt, or to taste
- 1/4 pound chopped turnips
- 1/4 pound halved radishes
- 1 1/4 pounds chopped sweet potatoes or sugar pumpkin
- 2 1/2 cups mixed lentils, such as whole brown masoor dal, salmon-pink washed masoor dal, yellow split peas (channa dal)

For the spice blend: Grind all the ingredients in a coffee grinder or small food processor until powder-fine and set aside.

For the herb paste: Combine all the ingredients in a food processor. Add 1/4 cup water and blend until smooth. Set aside.

For the stew: Place 1 cup of water next to your stovetop. Heat 1/4 cup oil and the cumin seeds in a large pot over medium-high heat until the cumin is toasted and browned, about 2 minutes. Add the finely diced onions and all of the salt and cook until the onions are deep brown, 12-15 minutes. Stir often and splash with water, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot when the onions begin to stick. Add whatever water remains from the cup and cook until it evaporates, about 3 minutes.

Add the turnips, radishes and sweet potatoes and cook 3 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium, add the lentils and 3 tablespoons of the spice blend and cook for 2 minutes, stirring often. Add an additional 8 cups of water, bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring often.

Meanwhile, heat the remaining 3 tablespoons of olive oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat for 30 seconds. Add the herb paste and cook it for 2 minutes while stirring. Once the lentils have cooked 30 minutes, add the cooked herb paste and the chopped onion to the pot. Bring everything to a boil and add the remaining spice blend. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover and cook until the vegetables are soft, about 30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes. Taste for seasoning and serve.

Per serving: 200 calories, 9 g protein, 27 g carbohydrate, 7 g fat (1 g saturated), 0 mg cholesterol, 781 mg sodium, 7 g fiber.