

Recipes

Five Spices Indian-Style Dal



Ingredients (serves 4)

- 3 medium carrots
- 250 g (about 2+1/2 cups florets) cauliflower (or broccoli if you prefer)
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder, or 10 g (2 teaspoons) fresh turmeric
- 300 g (1+1/4 cups) chana or mung lentils (dal)
- 725- 800 ml (3-3+1/2 cups) water
- 2 bay leaves
- Oil for frying
- 1 teaspoon dried red chilli flakes
- 5 Spices seasoning blend (Panch Phoron);
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon nigella seeds (kalonji or black cumin)
- 1/4 teaspoon fenugreek seeds

Instructions

1. Peel and medium-dice the carrots.
2. Cut the cauliflower into bite-size florets.
3. Deseed and medium-dice the bell pepper.
4. If using fresh turmeric, mince or grate.
5. Pick through, then rinse and drain the lentils.
6. In a stew pot, heat a little oil over a medium flame and stir-fry the bell pepper until caramelised.
7. Put in the lesser amount of water first, the turmeric and bay leaves, and bring to a boil over a high flame. Add the lentils and return to a boil stirring constantly. Reduce the flame, loosely cover, and simmer until tender, about 1 hour for chana or 30-35 minutes for mung. Skim any foam that appears. Stir regularly to prevent sticking, adding the extra water if needed to keep them loose and just covered. (Tip: to speed things up, cook the lentils in a pressure cooker; heat to high pressure and cook chana for about 8 minutes and mung for about 5 minutes. As soon as the pressure is reached, reduce the flame and set a timer. Release the pressure by placing it in the sink under a trickle of cold water.)
8. Bring a small pot of salted water to a rapid boil, drop in the carrots, return to a boil and simmer for about one minute, or until tender. Scoop out with a slotted spoon and set aside.
9. Next, drop the cauliflower into the boiling water and simmer for about one minute, or until tender. Scoop out and set aside with the carrots. Cover to keep warm.
10. Heat two tablespoons of oil in a frying pan over a low-medium flame. Put in the chillies, cumin, fennel, mustard, nigella, and fenugreek seeds. Coat with the oil, cover with a splatter guard, and gently fry until the mustard seeds stop spitting and turn a shade darker. Set aside.
11. When the lentils are tender, stir in the carrots and cauliflower, and heat through. Lastly, add the five spices and chillies. If needed, add a little hot water to loosen the lentils. Salt to taste.
12. Serve alongside brown basmati rice, chutney, and grated cucumber combined with fresh mint, yogurt, and a touch of garlic.