

Ramsey Library Staff Homemade Recipes

Hearty Greek Lentil and Spinach Soup with Lemon

My husband absolutely loves to eat soup. He also loves to eat beans, pumpkin and dark leafy greens. So it came as no surprise when he printed out a story and recipe he had read about in the Washington Post in early March (I know - it feels like that was ages ago). The story was about a retiring nurse manager from Seattle who had eaten the same soup for lunch for 17 years!

This soup had everything my husband looks for in a recipe: ingredients we probably already have on hand, a description which piques his interest (in this case the word 'Greek') and a compelling backstory.

We decided to give this recipe a try on Tuesday night - and then life happened! Even though we're all working from home, no one was done with their work day until about 6:30 pm. That's a late hour to start a bean soup. Thankfully we have an Instant Pot.

What I'm sharing below is the revised recipe as I improvised it to make it an instant pot recipe (click on the link above for the original story and recipe). I cut back on the potatoes and butternut squash, because I feared overwhelming my instant pot, and substituted cayenne pepper for a jalapeño pepper. Otherwise I stayed true to the original recipe.

The texture of the resulting soup from the instant pot is probably different from the original recipe, but we found it creamy, bright, flavorful and satisfying. We were eating it, with a side of cornbread, by 7:20 pm!

Ingredients

- 1 lb brown lentils or large green lentils, rinsed and picked through
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 ribs celery, with leaves, sliced
- 4 large garlic cloves, minced, or to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large russet potato, peeled and cut into 1/2 inch dice (recipe said 2 potatoes)
- 10 ounces frozen chopped spinach (recipe said 10 ounces fresh baby spinach)
- 1/2 small squash, peeled, seeded and cut into 1/2 inch dice (recipe said 1 squash)
- 9 cups vegetable broth or water (recipe said 10 cups)
- 2 teaspoons whole coriander seeds
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cumin seeds
- 2 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano

2 bay leaves

2 teaspoons kosher salt, or more to taste

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper, or more to taste (recipe calls for 1 Jalapeño)

1/3 cup fresh lemon juice

2 lemons

Set the instant pot to sauté and heat the olive oil, then sauté the onion and celery stirring frequently, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and stir.

Add the diced potatoes, butternut squash and spinach, stirring them into the other vegetables.

Add the rinsed lentils, water or broth, coriander seeds, oregano, bay leaves, cumin seeds, salt, cayenne and black pepper. Stir to combine.

Place and seal the lid on the instant pot, set the vent to sealed, and program it to pressure cook for 5 minutes.

When the instant pot cycle ends, turn off the pot and let the soup sit undisturbed for about 5 minutes. Then release the pressure, hard style, by forcing the vent to release the steam (I normally avoid doing this, but I was pressed for time). PLEASE BE CAREFUL WHEN YOU FORCE THE RELEASE OF STEAM FROM A PRESSURE COOKER. FOLLOW MANUFACTURER INSTRUCTIONS.

When the instant pot is de-pressurized, open the lid, add the fresh lemon juice, stir to combine and taste the soup. Since I had used water, I found it needed a little more salt, but otherwise the vegetables and lentils were cooked, and the soup was ready.

Serve with a slice of lemon on each bowl, and additional lemon wedges on the table.

