

Masala Dhal

Masala dhal is a spicy lentil dish made with a mixture of masoor dhal (split red lentils) and chana dhal (Bengal gram).

The masala, or spice mix, varies from restaurant to restaurant as do many of the other ingredients. The recipe below is my favourite version. In some curry houses the tarka dhal turns up looking like this and can be absolutely delicious although I prefer my tarka dhal to be made only with masoor dhal.

You can adapt the method to make an egg and lentil curry. Hard boil 3 eggs for 7 minutes, slice the eggs in half and use them to garnish the dhal. The result is a hearty and satisfying vegetarian curry for two people.

ingredients

50g chana dhal – soaked in water for at least 4 hours
50g masoor dhal (split red lentils) – no need to soak
500ml water to cook the dhal
2 × 15ml spoons groundnut oil
1 × 2.5ml spoon cumin seeds
50g finely chopped onion
1 × 2.5ml spoon crushed garlic
4 × 15ml spoons [Curry Base](#)
1 × 2.5ml spoon ground coriander
1 × 2.5ml spoon turmeric
two thirds of a 2.5ml spoon *hot* chilli powder
4 pinches garam masala
1 × 2.5ml spoon lemon juice
3 pinches asafoetida (optional)
salt
[Curry Stock](#) or water to loosen the dhal
finely chopped fresh coriander leaves and thin stalks to garnish

method

1. Soak the chana dhal in plenty of cold water for at least 4 hours.
2. Wash the soaked chana dhal and the masoor dhal in a sieve under cold running water. Put the washed dhal into an 18cm saucepan (preferably non-stick) and cover with 500ml cold water. Bring the water to the boil and boil vigorously, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Skim off the foam that comes to the surface.

3. Now lower the heat and simmer gently, still uncovered, until there is only a very small amount of water remaining. You will need to stir the dhal quite frequently towards the end of the cooking to avoid it catching on the bottom of the pan.
4. Remove the pan of dhal from the heat, cover and set aside.
5. Heat the oil in a 20cm heavy bottomed saucepan over a medium/high heat.
6. Put the cumin seeds into the hot oil and heat until they start to change colour. Add the chopped onion and stir fry for about 1 minute. Add the crushed garlic and stir fry for 10 seconds.
7. Turn the heat down to medium and add 30ml Curry Base to the pan followed by the ground coriander, turmeric and chilli powder. Stir fry for 30 seconds.
8. Add the remaining Curry Base and stir fry for 1 minute. Now add the dhal and any liquid left in the pan and stir to mix all the ingredients together.
9. Add the garam masala, lemon juice and asafoetida (if using) and stir through.
10. Bring the masala dhal to the boil and simmer gently for 15 minutes stirring from time to time. Taste and add a little salt if necessary. If the dhal tastes rather "heavy" add a little more lemon juice to lighten it up a bit.
11. If the dhal gets too thick add a little Curry Stock or water to loosen the sauce. The finished dhal should neither be solid nor should it be like a soup. The perfect texture is thick but still fluid.
12. Transfer the dhal to a warmed serving dish and garnish with finely chopped fresh coriander leaves.



Please respect the work that has gone into creating and writing The Curry House. The content on curryhouse.co.uk is for private use only. Do not post this recipe to public forums or publish it on another website, in print or through broadcast media.

© David W Smith
2004 –2012
all rights reserved
Masala Dhal
[Index](#)