

Chicken Sambar

Serves 4/5

- 265g chana dhal lentils/yellow split peas (dried). See below notes regarding soaking the lentils
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- 2 pints of boiling water for the lentils, plus 300ml for the curry
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- 1 tsp sea salt
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- 4 cloves of garlic
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- 2" piece of ginger
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- 1 or 2 red chillies, depending on your heat tolerance. I use Birdseye
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- 3 or 4 tomatoes, depends on the size, do not use salad tomatoes
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- 1 tbsp. oil, I used sunflower oil.
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- 1 tbsp. black mustard seeds
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- 6-8 curry leaves
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- 1 onion, diced
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- 2 tbsp. coriander powder
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- 1 tbsp. cumin powder
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- 1 heap tsp. turmeric powder
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- 2 tsp. fenugreek powder
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- 1 tsp. crushed black peppercorns
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- 8-10 skinless chicken thighs, bone in
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- 1 tbsp. tamarind paste
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- 1 extra large lemon, unwaxed, or 2 small
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- 30g fresh coriander, chopped
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- Salt

Rinse the lentils well, place them in a colander or bowl, and rinse them in cold water three to four times.

Place the lentils in a pan with boiling water and salt. Bring the mixture back to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium and let it simmer. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking, and add more water if needed. The goal is for the lentils to become soft and almost mushy, while the liquid thickens. Do not drain this water, as it will serve as the sauce for the curry.

While the lentils are boiling, prepare your curry; blend the garlic, ginger, chilli and the fresh tomatoes, then set aside.

Heat the oil in a deep pan, add the mustard seeds and the curry leaves. The mustard seeds will start to pop; when they do, add your onions and turn the heat to medium. Cook the onions until they are soft, then add the dry powders and crushed peppercorns and stir.

Add the tamarind and the tomato garlic mix and cook for 8-10 minutes, until the tomato thickens and reduces and gets darker in colour.

Season the chicken and add to the pan, coat in all of the masala spices.

When the chicken turns white add 300ml of hot water, or just enough to cover the chicken. Avoid putting too much liquid in, as we still have to add the lentils. Cook on low for 10 minutes.

Chop half of the lemon into wedges and add to the pan; squeeze in the juice of the other half. Put a lid on and cook on a medium heat for 25 minutes.

Whilst this is cooking, check your lentils. If they are still a little hard, add more water if needed and keep it bubbling away. Once the lentils are nice and soft, set aside along with any excess liquid.

After the 25 minutes, the chicken should be tender.

Add the lentils and liquid, mix well and season with salt to taste.

Add chopped coriander and mix well.

The lentils should be mushy and the lemons should be soft enough to eat whole.

Serve with rice and Indian breads.