

Meghla's Palong Shak Dal

I used to think I could prepare a pretty good dal. That was until I watched my new Bangladeshi friends, Meghla and Aziza. These women embody the kitchen magician I long to be. The simple, yet important steps they added to the cooking process are what gave the dal and everything they cooked the depth in flavor you can only get from a master. Now all I want is more dal, and I am certain you will feel the same. Below I did my best to capture their instructions.

Ingredients

- 1 cup Masoor dal (red lentils)
- 4 cups fresh organic spinach leaves
- 4 tablespoons sunflower oil, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ finely chopped red onion
- 1 whole dry red chili
- 1 teaspoon whole cumin
- 1 teaspoon ginger paste or freshly grated ginger
- 1 teaspoon garlic paste or finely minced garlic cloves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground turmeric
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon coriander powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red chili powder
- Salt, to taste

Directions

1. Wash and chopped the fresh spinach. Set aside.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons oil and slowly saute the chopped onion in a heavy bottomed cooking pot.
3. When the onion is soft and translucent add turmeric, coriander, chili powder and dal, stirring well to coat the dal with the oil and spices.
4. Add water to generously cover, placing spinach leaves on top, and bring to a quick boil.
5. Cover with a lid, decrease the heat to low, allowing the

lentils to gently simmer until tender and the spinach to steam for 20 minutes.

6. In a skillet on a separate burner, heat remaining oil. Add whole cumin first, allowing it to pop, then add whole chili, ginger and garlic. Keep the heat low so nothing burns, yet just enough to bring all of the flavors out. This will be your tarka to deepen the flavor of the dal.
7. Check dal after 10 minutes to see if more water is needed and continue cooking until it is soft. When cooking is complete, turn off the heat, add tarka and salt, stirring well, adjusting seasoning to your taste.

Enjoy!d