

LENTIL AND SWEET POTATO SALAD

6 generous servings

This recipe calls for a cooked small sweet potato. 3-4 minutes on full power in the microwave will do the trick. (Don't forget to poke the potato several times with a small knife before microwaving.)

- 2 cups green (Puy, if possible) lentils (can sub with brown or other green lentils as needed), well rinsed--certified Gluten-Free, if needed
- Bay leaf
- Olive oil
- 2 small leeks, sliced thinly (white and light green parts only)
- 1 fennel bulb, trimmed, cored, and sliced thinly
- Kosher salt, fresh ground pepper, crushed red pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 3 cloves garlic, minced, divided
- 1/4 cup white wine
- 2 tablespoons minced red onion
- 1/2 cup each chopped red and yellow or orange sweet bell peppers
- Handful of chopped fresh parsley plus a bit extra for garnish
- 1 small baked or microwaved sweet potato, cooled, peeled, and small diced
- 1/3 cup each diced zucchini and carrot
- 1/4 cup each good-quality red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or to taste
- 2 tablespoons Dijon-style mustard, certified Gluten-Free, if needed
- 1/2 lemon, optional
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Bring 4 quarts of salted and peppered water along with the bay leaf to boil in a 6-quart pot and add rinsed lentils. Boil for about 20 minutes or until lentils are cooked al dente--just done, but not mushy. Drain, return to pot, and while still warm drizzle with a tablespoon or so of oil, stirring. Set aside.

In the meantime, in a large, deep skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium flame and add the leeks and fennel. Season with 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper, an 1/8 teaspoon of crushed red pepper, and the thyme. Sauté, stirring often, until tender -- about 10 minutes. Add *1/2 of the garlic* along with the wine and cook another couple of minutes until the wine is reduced a bit.

Pour the cooked lentils from the pot into the skillet with the vegetables and stir in the rest of the garlic, the red onion, the bell

peppers, parsley, sweet potato, zucchini, and carrot. Mix well. Season with another 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper and stir again. Taste and adjust for seasonings.

Drizzle lentil mixture with the red wine vinegar and the 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil; stir well. Stir in the mustard. Taste and adjust again for seasonings, including oil, vinegar, and mustard. A bit more crushed red pepper might be needed if you like things a bit on the hot side. Squeeze lemon over all, if desired.

Serve warm, at room temperature, or cold garnished with parsley. If serving cold, you may need to stir the salad and add a little more oil and or vinegar to moisten it.

Cook's Note: For vegetarians or omnivores, add 1/4 cup chopped cheese of some sort; I like Parmigiano-Reggiano for these sorts of salads. For omnivores, a bit of minced ham--say 1/4 cup-- stirred in and cooked along with the fennel and leeks would be perfect.

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