

Persian-Style Tomato and Lentil Soup

Serves 4-6

3 Tablespoons ghee or olive oil
1 medium yellow onion (8 ounces), diced
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (5 ounces) green or brown lentils
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (3 1/2 ounces) uncooked basmati rice
1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon dried mint leaves (optional)
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt, plus more as needed
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
6 cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth, divided
 $\frac{1}{2}$ bunch (2 ounces) fresh parsley, preferably curly, leaves and tender stems, finely chopped and divided
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh lemon juice (from 2 large lemons), plus more to taste

Fresh herb sprigs, such as parsley, mint, scallions, tarragon and/or dill (optional)

Heat the ghee or oil over medium-high heat in a heavy pot until it shimmers. Add the onion and a pinch of salt, and stir occasionally until it starts to brown, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the lentils and rice, coating them in the fat. Add the tomato paste, cumin, dried mint, if using, salt, pepper and cinnamon. Add about 2 cups of the stock, and stir to dissolve the tomato paste and evenly disperse the spices. Add the remaining stock, stir well, increase the heat to high and bring to a boil. Decrease the heat to medium-low, stir, cover and simmer until the rice and lentils are cooked through, 20 to 25 minutes. (If the soup thickens more than you'd like, add water, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time.) Taste, and adjust the seasonings, if needed.

Stir in about three-quarters of the chopped parsley and remove from the heat. Stir in the lemon juice and the remaining fresh parsley right before serving.

Cooking notes:

- Onion adds a subtle sweetness but you could substitute garlic or leeks
- Yellow or red split peas would work in place of green or brown lentils
- You can use another kind of long-grain rice, or more lentils instead.
- No tomato paste? Use a 15-ounce can of crushed tomatoes, and reduce the broth to 4 cups. The soup will be less tomato-y, but will still work.
- Can be topped with crumbled feta and served with pita bread

