

Dal Makhani / Ma ki Dal / Creamy Black Lentils

Serves: 2-3

Ingredients:

Whole Black Lentils or Whole Urad Dal (with skin): $\frac{3}{4}$ cup [Can be replaced by: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Kidney Beans (Rajma) + $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Black Dal]
Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
Ginger finely chopped: 1 tbsp
Garlic finely chopped: 1 tbsp
Tomato puree: 1 cup (see below)
Chilli powder: $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp (or as per taste)
Cooking cream: 2 tbsp for cooking + 1-2 tsp for Garnishing
Kasoori Methi: 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ loosely packed tsp
Garam Masala powder: $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp
Butter: about 1 tbsp
Salt: to taste

How I did it:

- 1) Clean and wash the *Dal*. Soak it covered in hot water for 30 mins.
- 2) Meanwhile, prepare the Tomato Puree: Put 2 medium sized tomatoes in a pot with sufficient water to almost cover the tomatoes. Bring the water to boil until the skin of the tomatoes starts to break. Remove from water, put in another pot with tap water and a couple of cubes of ice. When the tomatoes cool down, remove the skin. Blend it in a paste without adding any water. This gave me roughly 1 cup of tomato puree which I needed for this recipe.
- 3) When the *Dal* is soaked (i.e. 30 mins later), throw away the water. In a pressure cooker, add the *Dal* with $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp of salt and 3 cups water. When the first whistle blows (or steam builds up), cook on low heat for 15 mins. If you are not using a pressure cooker, cover and boil in a pot until the dal becomes soft.
- 4) Meanwhile, wash the *kasoori methi* with a little water. Soak it in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of hot water for about 10 mins.
- 5) When the *Dal* is cooked, let the steam from the pressure cooker come out on its own. If a lot of the liquid has evaporated, add more water. I didn't have to add any. Now on medium heat and without the lid on, boil the *Dal* by stirring it continuously and mashing it gently against the pressure cooker wall using the back of your ladle (see pictures below). Keep doing this vigorously for about 8 mins or until the *Dal* starts to have a creamy texture. This step is important to get a creamy consistency.
- 6) Heat a heavy bottomed pot or non-stick *kadhai*. On low heat, add butter. When the butter melts, add the cumin seeds. As they begin to sputter, add the chopped garlic. When it starts to turn brown (Note: this happens very quickly), add the tomato puree, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp of salt and the chopped ginger.
- 7) On medium heat, cook the *masala* for 6-7 mins. When the *masala* becomes like a lump, add the chilli powder. Keep stirring to ensure *masala* doesn't get burnt. The *masala* should be done in another 2-3 mins. You will notice the color of the *masala* become darker and shiny due to the oil that surfaces on it. If the *masala* starts to stick, sprinkle a little water and scrape it off using the spatula.
- 8) On low heat, add the above prepared Dal to the pot with the *masala*. Stir the *Dal* and the *masala* well so that there are no lumps of *masala* and it's evenly combined.
- 9) Now add the cooking cream. The color of the *Dal* will become slightly lighter. Cover and simmer for 10 mins, stirring every 1-2 minutes, gently mashing it with the back of the ladle to help achieve the creamy consistency.
- 10) Next add the *kasoori methi* along with the soaked water. Continue to cook for another 5 mins on low heat, stirring in between. By now, the *Dal* should have become darker in color than what it was when you added the cream.
- 11) Check for salt. Adjust if needed. Add *garam masala* powder and give it a good stir. Cook for a further 2-3 mins before turning the heat off. Let it sit for 5 mins to help combine all the flavors. It's now ready to serve.
- 12) Garnish with some fresh cream and enjoy with hot Rotis / Parathas / Rice or any bread of your choice and some onions and green chillies on the side.

Notes:

- 1) Dal has a tendency to become thick as it is left to cool. You may need to add some hot water (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) and make it warm before serving.
- 2) Optional: I've done it sometimes and it tastes great - Add a tbsp of butter just after turning the heat off. Tastes heavenly! I don't do that usually unless I am feeling particularly ecstatic on a given day! ;-)