



Lentil soup with sausage meatballs

This savory Italian-inspired soup is filled with earthy lentils, infused with aromatic herbs and peppered with tender meatballs. Lentils are a New Year's tradition, but this soup is great anytime.

Yield: Serves 8-10

Time: About an hour

Ingredients

- 2 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 medium carrots, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 1 Tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 ½ cups dry French puy lentils, rinsed and picked clean
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ teaspoon coarse kosher salt plus more to taste
- ¼ teaspoon fresh ground black pepper plus more to taste
- 28-oz can crushed tomatoes with juice
- 1 large sprig fresh rosemary plus 1 teaspoon finely-minced rosemary
- 3 medium sage leaves
- 3 cups spinach, roughly chopped
- Optional: Grated parmesan

For the meatballs:

- ½ lb ground turkey
- ½ lb ground sweet Italian pork sausage
- ½ cup Italian style bread crumbs
- ½ cup grated parmesan
- 1 teaspoon dried Italian spices
- 1 egg

Special equipment:

- Cheesecloth
- Butchers twine (not necessary, but helpful)

Instructions

1. Heat a large heavy-bottomed pot (at least 4 quarts) over medium heat, and add the olive oil.
2. Add onions, carrots and celery and sauté for about 10 minutes until fork tender, stirring frequently to avoid sticking to the bottom. Add garlic in the last two minutes.
3. Add lentils and stir until they begin to look dry.
4. Add the bay leaf, minced rosemary, salt, pepper and the crushed tomatoes with juice to the pot and stir, then add eight cups of water. Bring to a slow boil.
5. Meanwhile, wrap the sprig of rosemary and sage leaves up in a bundle with cheese cloth and add it to the pot.
6. Once the soup is boiling, reduce the heat to medium-low. Allow it to simmer for 20 minutes. While the soup simmers, prepare the meatballs (recipe below).
7. After 20 minutes is up, add the meatballs one at a time, followed by the spinach. If some meatballs are uncovered, add enough water to cover them. Bring back to a simmer over medium heat and cook 10 more minutes.
8. Remove the bundle of sage and rosemary and the bay leaf. Serve hot with grated parmesan and black pepper.

To make meatballs:

1. Using clean, dry hands, gently mix all ingredients until just combined in a medium to large mixing bowl. Don't over mix.
2. Roll mixture loosely into smooth 1-inch balls. They should be firm enough to stay together, but don't press too hard or they'll be tough.
3. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

Notes & tips

- You can make the meatballs ahead and refrigerate until you're ready to use them.
- Leftovers freeze well for a healthy meal any time.
- This recipe is also great with brown or regular green lentils. I haven't tried it with black belugas, but that's next on the list!