

Pasta With Lentils

1 pound lentils
1 onion chopped fine
2 carrots minced
1 celery stalk minced
1 whole clove garlic
2 cups shredded escarole
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 bay leaf
¼ cup minced parsley
2 teaspoons fresh or dried thyme
1 pound pasta
Salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste

Rinse the lentils and remove any stones or foreign objects, Place in a large kettle with at least 2 quarts of cold water. Bring to the boil, and boil for 5 minutes. Turn down the heat to a simmer and add the vegetables, the olive oil, and the herbs. Simmer for 2 to 3 hours until the lentils are very tender and the mixture becomes a nice thick sauce. Be sure to stir the lentils frequently because they can easily burn on the bottom of the pot. You may have to add water from time to time, if the lentils absorb too much of the water. Sometimes I add a little water even at the end of the cooking. You want a sauce that's neither too thick nor too soupy.

Remove the whole garlic clove and the bay leaf. Taste for seasoning. I find it takes an ample quantity of salt and pepper to achieve a good flavor.

Cook the pasta just until al dente. Drain and mix some of the lentil sauce with pasta. Serve in bowls with another ladleful of sauce on the top. Accompany with a crisp green salad.