# Dal or Lentils Recipes

Dal, a staple of the Indian diet, is eaten with white rice or rotis (tortilla-type Indian bread). Indians use a variety of lentils to make dal. They cook dal with leafy greens or other vegetables and even meat. The recipes differ based on the region or sub-culture of India. The four recipes included here were put together by Mabel's family members who come from the southern state of Telangana in India.

**A few tips to bear in mind before you cook dal:**

- Soaking lentils for 30 minutes before cooking or even overnight is recommended. Some experts believe it helps with better absorption of nutrients.
- A pressure cooker is commonly used in Indian households to cook lentils. You can also use an Instant Pot. If you don't have one, simply boil the lentils on low heat. This will take longer than using a pressure cooker.
- Buy Indian spices (chili powder, coriander powder, mustard seeds, and dry red chilies) and ingredients (green chilies and curry leaves) from an Indian grocery store as they can be harder to find in a regular grocery store.
- To reduce the spice level, cut down on the green chilies. You can substitute them with ½ tsp of chili powder. Increase the quantity as you adjust to the taste and spice levels.
- Generally, cooking dal consists of two separate steps. First, you cook the dal till it is soft in a pressure cooker. Second, you separately fry spices and vegetables in oil. Known as tempering, seasoning, or tadka, you add this to the cooked dal.
- Sunflower and safflower oils are commonly used in Indian cuisine but feel free to use an oil of your choice. Make sure the oil has a high boiling point because tempering requires hot oil.
- Wait till the mustard seeds splutter in hot oil before adding other ingredients to prevent them from tasting bitter.

*Pictures and corresponding videos were produced by friend and food blogger Deepthi Triveni.*

## Basic South Indian Dal

BY MALLIKA SAMSON (MABEL'S MOM)

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup toor dal
2.5 cups water
2 tomatoes, halved
1 onion diced
2 green chillies
¾ tsp turmeric powder
2 tbsp cilantro, chopped
5 crushed garlic pods

For tempering or tadka
½ tsp mustard seeds
½ tsp cumin seeds
2 red chillies, slit in half
10 curry leaves
Salt to taste
2 tbsp sunflower/safflower oil
A pinch of Asafoetida
Salt to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Wash dal and presoak for 10-30 minutes.
- Pressure cook dal with water, tomatoes, onions, garlic, green chilies for 6 whistles.
- Set the cooker aside for cooling, Open the lid and mash the dal mixture to a smooth consistency.
- In a separate pan or wok, add oil. To this add mustard seeds, cumin seeds, curry leaves and Asafoetida.
- You can transfer the dal to the pan and let it settle in for 2-3 minutes.
- Add salt to taste and garnish with cilantro.

**WATCH A 30-SECOND VIDEO ON HOW TO MAKE THIS DAL HERE:**

**HTTPS://BIT.LY/SOUTHINDIANDAL**

# Dalcha

## Lentils with Meat

BY SHAILAJA JAYAKAR (MABEL'S AUNT)

### INGREDIENTS

2-3 tbsp sunflower/safflower oil
1 cardamom
2-3 cloves
1lb mutton/chicken with bones
1 red onion, sliced
1 tbsp ginger paste (or crushed)
1 tbsp garlic paste (or crushed)
2 tsp coriander powder
1 tsp cumin powder
¼ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp red chilli powder
Salt to taste
½ cup chana dal (also called Split Bengal Gram or Split Chickpeas)
½ cup toor dal
1 cup water
1 tsp lemon juice
1 large tomato, diced
2-3 tbsp cilantro, chopped.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Wash and soak the dal for 30 minutes.
- In hot oil, add the onions and fry until golden brown.
- Add the ginger & garlic pastes and fry for a minute.
- Add tomato and cook for 10 minutes on medium heat.
- Add the meat and cook for 15 minutes or, until the meat is nicely coated with the gravy.
- Add coriander powder, cumin powder, salt, chilli powder, turmeric powder, cardamon, and cloves and stir.
- Add the soaked lentils and cook for 10 minutes.
- Transfer to a pressure cooker, add water, and cook on high for 10 minutes.
- Reduce heat to low and cook for 30 minutes.
- When the cooker cools down, release the pressure, and open the lid.
- Add lemon juice and garnish with cilantro.

# Palak Dal

## Lentils with Spinach

BY SANGEETHA SAGAR (MABEL'S AUNT)

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup toor dal
1 ½ cup spinach, cleaned and chopped
4-5 green chillies
2 tomatoes, finely diced
1/2 tsp turmeric powder
1 small red onion, diced
3-4 garlic pods crushed

For tempering or tadka:
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 string of curry leaves
2 dry red chillies
2 tbsp ghee
1 tbsp coriander powder
Salt to taste
1-2 tbsp cilantro, chopped

### INSTRUCTIONS

- In a pressure cooker, cook dal, turmeric powder, onions, tomatoes, and green chillies for 5-6 whistles or, until dal is soft.
- Once the cooker is cooled, mash the dal mixture.
- In a wok, add ghee. To hot ghee add the mustard seeds,cumin seeds, garlic, dry chillies, curry leaves, and coriander powder.
- Add chopped spinach. Stir fry for 5-6 minutes till the spinach is cooked and reduce heat to medium.
- Add tomatoes and cook until tomatoes are soft, about 10 minutes, with the lid closed on low flame.
- Add the mashed dal and stir.
- Add salt to taste and garnish with cilantro.

**WATCH A 30-SECOND VIDEO ON HOW TO MAKE THIS DAL HERE:**

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HTTPS://BIT.LY/MOONGDAL

# Moong Dal Mughlai

BY ROSY SUDHAKAR (MABEL'S AUNT)

## INGREDIENTS

½ cup split moong dal (also called green gram)
½ cup whole moong dal
1 tbsp butter
1 red onion, sliced
4 tomatoes, diced
2 green chillies
2 tsp ginger-garlic paste
1 tsp red chilli powder
1 bay leaf
3 cloves
1 1-inch cinnamon stick
2 cardamoms
6 black peppercorns
½ cup yogurt
1-2 tbsp cream
Salt to taste
1-2 tbsp cilantro, chopped

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Soak split green gram for an hour in water. Cook in a pressure cooker for 5-6 whistles until soft.
- Soak whole green gram overnight in water. Cook in a pressure cooker for 3-4 whistles. The dal should not be completely soft but somewhat maintain its grainy texture.
- Puree tomatoes and green chilies and set aside.
- Fry sliced onions in oil until golden brown and set aside.
- In a wok, add butter. When the butter melts, add the bay leaf, cloves, cardamoms, peppercorns, and cinnamon stick.
- Add ginger-garlic paste, chili powder, and fry for 4-6 mins on low flame.
- Add salt to taste.
- Add the tomato-green chilies puree and saute until the butter floats to the top.
- Add the dal and dal water from the cooker.
- Add yogurt, mix well, and cover to cook on low heat for 5 minutes.
- Turn off the heat and add cream.
- Garnish with cilantro and fried onions.