

Spring French Lentil Salad

Look for Le Puy, or green lentils for the best texture in a salad. To stretch this salad for a complete meal add the optional quinoa or pairs nicely with a side of grilled fish.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

For the Salad:

- 1 cup French lentils, rinsed
- 2 dry bay leaves
- ½ teas sea salt
- ½ bunch of asparagus
- 1 small fennel bulb, outer layer removed and diced small.
- 6-8 sun dried tomatoes, reconstituted in hot water for 10 minutes then finely chopped. If they are packed in olive oil, then just drained and finely chopped.
- ¼ cup chopped almonds or walnuts
- Generous handful of chopped fresh tarragon or parsley
- 1 cup cooked quinoa, optional

For the Dressing:

- 2 sun dried tomatoes, reconstituted as above
- 1 small shallot, chopped
- ½ cup of extra virgin olive oil
- Juice and zest of 1 large lemon
- 2 teas maple syrup or honey
- ¼ teas Dijon mustard
- ¼ teas sea salt and fresh ground pepper

Preparation

1. **Make the dressing:** In a blender, combine the sun dried tomatoes, shallot, oil, lemon juice and zest, maple syrup, mustard and salt and pepper. Blend until smooth. If needed, thin out with a bit more lemon juice. It should have a nice acidic taste which the lentils and grains will soak up.
2. In a medium pot, combine the lentils, bay leaves and ½ teas of sea salt. Cover and bring to a boil, reduce to low and with the lid ajar simmer for 15-20 minutes or until lentils are just tender. Drain the lentils and discard the bay leaves.
3. In a large bowl, toss the still warm lentils and dressing and set aside.
4. Meanwhile, bring a medium pot of water to boil with a generous pinch of sea salt. Prepare an ice bath, cook the asparagus for 2-3 minutes (the green color will pop and the asparagus will be just tender). Immediately transfer to the ice bath. When cooled remove from water and cut asparagus into 1 inch pieces.
5. Toss the asparagus, sun dried tomatoes, tarragon, fennel and quinoa with the lentils. When serving sprinkle individual bowls with chopped nuts.

Tips:

Dressing the lentils while they are still warm will allow for a depth of flavor that will keep for days. Take on a picnic or add some arugula to stretch the salad into another meal.