

## Lentil Minestrone With Greens

First, a tip of the chef's hat to the New York Times. Their recipes have provided one of the best parts of dining at our house through the pandemic, and this recipe is based on theirs:

<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1013991-lentil-minestrone-with-greens?action=click&module=RecipeBox&pgType=recipebox-page&region=lentil&rank=0>

### Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil. St. John's olive oil ministry oil works best!
- 1 large onion, chopped
- Chopped carrots, or a potato or two, or almost any other vegetable you'd like to include or need to get out of the fridge before it perishes
- 4 minced garlic cloves
- 1 14-ounce can diced tomatoes, with their liquid
- 1 pound lentils (brown or beluga), washed and picked over, or two cans of cooked lentils
- About 10 cups water
- Spicing to taste. You can make this a spicy stew, with peppers or hot sauce or both, or go for something subtler. The NYT version calls for "a bouquet garni made with a bay leaf, 2 sprigs each thyme and parsley, and a Parmesan rind." But since we are uncertain what a "bouquet garni" is, don't want to buy our groceries at a florists' shop, and certainly don't have any Parmesan rinds in the bottom of our own fridge, we haven't tried this.
- 6 cups of roughly chopped kale, chard, mustard greens or the like. Six cups may sound like a lot, but if you haven't used them before you'll be surprised at how a half-pound of kale cooks down.
- Salt and pepper
- ½ cup of short pasta — macaroni or rotini, for instance. It's optional, but you can also throw in more if it sounds good. Just add more water.
- Freshly grated Parmesan or plain yogurt — skip this if you're going for vegan, or if you're concerned about the effects of dairy farming or treatment of dairy animals. Buying cheese or yogurt at the local farmers' market may address the latter concern.

Heat the olive oil in a big pot over medium heat, and add the onion and carrot if you're using it, or any other vegetable that appreciates five minutes in hot olive oil. Stir and cook until the onion is tender, and add half the garlic and a pinch of salt. Give that just a minute or two and pour in the can of diced tomatoes and their liquid. Now turn up the heat and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring. It should cook down some, and smell pretty good.

Add in the lentils, water and herbs. (Or hit it with a good dose of hot sauce if you're going that route!) Bring to a boil, then reduce down to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes.

If you went for canned lentils instead of dried, use only about four cups of water, and 10 minutes simmering at this point.

Now add in the greens, the rest of the garlic, and any other spice you'd like. Another 10 minutes of simmering and add in the pasta, if using any. Bring back to a low boil and cook for the amount of time specified on the pasta box. If the stew seems too thick (a subjective call) or is threatening to burn on the bottom, add more water.

Finally, divide into servings and top with the cheese or yogurt, if using.