

SPAGHETTI WITH LENTIL MARINARA



Ingredients

- 1 cup dried green or brown lentils (or 2–3 cups cooked lentils)
- 1 tbsp avocado oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 carrot, peeled and diced (optional, for extra sweetness)
- 1 celery stalk, chopped (optional, for added flavour)
- 1 (28 oz) can crushed tomatoes (or diced tomatoes if you prefer more texture)
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried basil (or fresh)
- ½ tsp dried thyme (optional)
- 1 tsp red pepper flakes (optional, for a little heat)
- 1–2 tsp maple syrup (optional, to balance acidity)
- salt and pepper to taste
- fresh basil or parsley, chopped (optional, for garnish)

Instructions

1. **Cook the Lentils (if using dried):** Rinse the lentils under cold water and remove any debris. In a medium pot, bring 3 cups of water to a boil. Add the lentils and a pinch of salt, then reduce the heat and simmer for about 20–25 minutes, or until tender but not mushy. Drain any excess water and set the lentils aside.
2. **Prepare the Marinara Sauce:** Heat the avocado oil in a large pan over medium heat. Add the chopped onion, carrot, and celery (if using). Sauté for 5–7 minutes until the vegetables are softened. Add the minced garlic and sauté for an additional 1–2 minutes until fragrant.
3. **Add Tomatoes and Seasonings:** Stir in the crushed tomatoes, tomato paste, oregano, basil, thyme (if using), and red pepper flakes (if using). Simmer the sauce on low heat for 15–20 minutes, stirring occasionally. This will allow the flavours to meld.
4. **Add Lentils:** Stir the cooked lentils into the sauce. Let the mixture simmer for another 10–15 minutes, allowing the lentils to absorb the flavours of the marinara sauce.
5. **Taste and Adjust:** Taste the sauce and adjust the seasoning with salt, pepper, and maple syrup (optional). The maple syrup helps cut through the acidity of the tomatoes.
6. **Serve or store:** Serve the lentil marinara over your favourite pasta (whole wheat, gluten-free, or zucchini noodles), or use it as a filling for stuffed peppers, lasagne, or as a hearty topping for roasted vegetables. Garnish with fresh basil or parsley if desired. Store leftover lentil marinara in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 4–5 days or freeze for longer storage.

