

Chana Dal with Spinach and Tomato {Madhur Jaffrey}

Ingredients

285g × chana dal, washed in several changes of water and drained

½ tsp × turmeric

1½ tsp × salt

3 tbsp × ghee

⅛ tsp × ground asafoetida

½ tsp × whole brown mustard seeds

½ tsp × whole cumin seeds

1-2 × dried hot red chillies

7-8 × fresh curry leaves

1 × large onion (225g/8oz), peeled and chopped

2 × cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

1½ tsp × peeled and finely grated fresh ginger

285g × good-sized tomatoes peeled and chopped

140-180g × spinach, chopped

Freshly ground black pepper

Method

Put the dal in a medium pan along with 1.2 litres water. Bring to the boil, skimming off the froth as it rises to the top. Do not let it boil over. Stir in the turmeric, cover partially, lower the heat and cook for 1¼ hours. When done, mix in the salt.

While the dal cooks, heat the ghee in a small, preferably non-stick frying pan and set over a medium-high heat. When hot, add the asafoetida and, a second later, the mustard seeds. As soon as the seeds start to pop, a matter of seconds, add the cumin seeds. Stir for 5-6 seconds, then add the red chillies and fry until they darken. Throw in the curry leaves, stir once and add the onion. Sauté for about 7-10 minutes, or until the onion starts to brown.

Add the garlic and ginger and stir for another 1-2 minutes. Now add the tomatoes and stir for 5-6 minutes, until they soften, mashing them down with the back of a wooden spoon as you do so. Add the spinach and 120 ml water. Stir and bring to a simmer. Cover and cook gently for 10-12 minutes, or until the spinach wilts and is very soft.

When the dal has finished cooking, add the spinach mixture and stir well. Check the seasoning and add the chilli powder if you need it. Grind black pepper over the top. If the dal feels too thick, you can stir in a little water.