

# Lentils with Balsamic Vinegar



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This is a great side dish, or with rice, and maybe a sliced sausage or two, a main dish. You can make it completely vegetarian starting off with olive oil, and simmering with vegetable stock or water, or, if you don't mind a little meat, start off with a few slices of bacon and simmer in chicken stock. Add more stock or water if you want it more soupy, or hold back and monitor it while it simmers if you want it dryer. It's based on a recipe I half-remember from *Cooks Illustrated*. It uses french lentils, which are the little dark green ones, sometimes called "puy lentils," since they hold their shape better. You can either buy them prepackaged, or head over to the bulk aisle, and buy it by them by the pound.

*2 T olive oil, or the drippings from 3 slices of bacon, fried*

*1 small onion, diced (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)*

*2 cloves of garlic, chopped or sliced*

*2 carrots, diced (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)*

*1 bay leaf*

*1 teaspoon dried thyme*

*1 cup french green lentils*

*1 16 oz can of tomatoes, whole or diced*

*1-2 cups chicken stock, vegetable stock, or water*

*1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar*

*salt and pepper*

**Resist the urge to add salt in the beginning, which tends to make the lentils tough.**

If you're starting with the bacon, chop into  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch slices, and render the drippings in a medium sized saucepan (one that you have a tight lid). Remove the bacon once it's browned and reserve for later – OR – heat the olive oil and add the onions and carrots, allowing the onions to become translucent, and the carrots to soften a little. Add the garlic, the spices, the lentils, and the tomatoes, along with a little of the juice. Clamp on the lid and lower the heat, and let the mixture steam, stirring occasionally, for about 20 minutes. Add the stock or water, and let simmer for 20 or 30 more minutes, until the lentils are tender. Just before serving, add the balsamic and the salt and pepper (and top with the reserved bacon if you haven't already eaten it all while you were cooking.)

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## **Easy Chicken Stew**

**Saw this recipe for a chicken stew with wine demonstrated on a cooking show last weekend, and thought I'd give it a go.**

The results were ok, but I think it could use some tinkering, as the broth was a little too astringent for my taste. The recipe called for oyster mushrooms, but one of us is allergic, so I replaced them with carrots. The recipe also called for serving it over buttered noodles, but I chose to add an Israeli couscous and grains mix that Trader Joes sells. The

leftovers taste even better the second day.

*4 oz bacon, diced*

*2 leeks, cleaned and chopped*

*8-12 boneless, skinless chicken thighs*

*3 bay leaves*

*1t fresh thyme*

*2 carrots, sliced*

*1 bottle riesling wine*

*salt and pepper to taste*

*couscous*

Brown the bacon in a dutch oven. Add the leeks and soften. Add the chicken thighs – no need to brown the thighs. Add the rest of the ingredients, except for the couscous, and bring to a boil, then let simmer for 45 minutes. Add the couscous and cook for another 15 to 20 minutes.