

Recipe for Fr Irenei's mass-quantity 'Lenten Lentil Stew, Monastic Style'

Ingredients:

- Lentils (about 4 one-pound bags should serve 20; sometimes I add a fifth)
- 5 or 6 *large* zucchini
- 10-12 tomatoes (more if they are smaller)
- 2 lemons
- Vegetable stock (in paste form is best)
- (Optional: about 12 large cloves of garlic, chopped fairly finely)
- 5-8 Bay Leaves
- Doves of powdered rosemary, thyme and some dried parsley. No pepper – this is a monastic recipe!

Instructions:

Bring enough water to cover the lentils to a boil in an enormous pot (lentils expand – large pots are available on loan if needed: please ask). Add the dry lentils. It is good practice to keep a kettle boiling on the side, to add hot water as needed. Keep the water level a little higher than the lentils themselves as they expand (keep adding water), and stir regularly or the lentils on the bottom will burn. Keep things boiling (though not overly hot). To determine how things are cooking, use the scientific method of trying the lentils every so often. When they are about done (15 minutes or so), lower the temperature so the pot is just slightly bubbling, and stop adding water. Throw in all the chopped garlic, if you are adding this; and add all the Bay Leaves. Add quite a large amount of the vegetarian stock paste. There is no precise amount, only a method: stir it in and taste. The taste you are aiming for at this stage should be slightly *less* that getting it seasoned right. Leave it fairly bland at this stage.

While the above is happening, chop all the zucchini (do not peel) and tomatoes. Fairly large chopping will due (quarter the zucchini length-wise, then chop them into 1/4-inch slices. Don't make them too thin or they will simply dissolve; similarly with the tomatoes). Once the lentils are done with their heavy boiling, add all the vegetables and stir together. Let things bubble for a while. If the stew starts looking too dry, add a little more water (add slowly: one doesn't want soup). After everything has simmered together for 20-30 minutes, start seasoning to taste. Add plenty of the herbs (about four heaped teaspoons of powdered rosemary and thyme, and quite a lot of parsley), and the juice of both lemons. Stir, try it - and add more vegetable stock until it tastes right. (Try not to add excess salt: the vegetarian stock paste contains enough; and if one needs more, try using more lemon juice instead.)

All in all it can be done from start to finish in about an hour or hour and a half.

(Note: on fasting days where oil is permitted, this recipe can include about one cup of good olive oil (or more, depending on the quantity). Add it towards the end, when you are refining the seasoning. The recipe can also include onions (about 3-4 large onions, finely chopped): but these need to be sautéed separately before being added to the mix, or they will not soften—for this reason, it is customary only to add onions on days when oil is permitted, since oil is needed for the sautéing).