

شوربة عدس *Shurbat Addes*

THICK AND HEARTY RED LENTIL SOUP WITH GARLIC AND CORIANDER

This satisfying and healthful dish harks back to one of the oldest “cookbooks”—the Five Books of Moses. There we learn that Esau, the son of Isaac and twin brother of Jacob, regularly enjoyed his favorite dish, a “pottage of lentils.” This meal—chock-full of beneficial nutrients and hardly any fat—was perfect for restoring Esau’s strength after long days spent hunting. It was also decisive in bringing about one of the greatest coups in ancient Middle Eastern history: Jacob tried his hand at this recipe and persuaded Esau to exchange his right to inherit the land of Canaan for a kettle full of the soup (it was that good!). Though *shurbat addes* is probably not exactly true to Jacob’s original recipe, there is a good chance that it is very close—northern Syria grows many fruits and vegetables that were cultivated in the ancient land of Canaan.

The tricky part of this otherwise simple recipe is achieving the correct consistency. This soup should be smooth and thick but not lumpy. If the soup is too thick, add water in small measures.

2 cups red lentils

6 garlic cloves, peeled

1 teaspoon coriander seed

1 tablespoon kosher salt

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Chopped fresh cilantro
for garnish

Ground cumin for garnish

¼ teaspoon Aleppo pepper or ⅛ teaspoon
crushed red pepper (optional)

Fresh lemon wedges for serving

1. In a medium stockpot or large saucepan, combine the lentils with 2 quarts of water. Bring to a simmer over low heat and cook until the lentils begin to disintegrate into a puree, about 40 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, with a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic, coriander seed, and salt into a paste. (Alternatively, you can gently smash the garlic, grind the coriander seed in a pepper mill or crack it, then combine the garlic and coriander seed with the salt.) In a medium saucepan, sauté the garlic-coriander paste in the vegetable oil over medium-high heat for 1 to 2 minutes, or until soft.

3. Add the garlic-coriander paste to the lentil mixture, and simmer for 20 minutes. Before serving, garnish the soup with a few sprigs of cilantro and a sprinkling of cumin and Aleppo pepper, if desired. Serve with the lemon wedges on the side. This soup is ideal with toasted Syrian bread broken into small pieces for dipping.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings