

French Lentil Soup with Sausage

Makes 6 servings

Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 medium carrots, finely chopped (or if you prefer, sliced diagonally)
- 2 celery ribs, finely chopped (of sliced)
- 1¼ cups French Green Lentils (can use other types of lentils if not available)
- 4 cups organic chicken stock
- 2 cups water (6 cups if not using chicken stock)
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons (or more to taste) chopped fresh thyme
- 4 oz smoked sausage (I used an organic chicken sausage)
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, or to taste (this is important...really makes the soup!)



Directions:

1. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a 4-quart heavy pot over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then sauté onion, stirring occasionally, until they just begin to brown, about 6 minutes. Add carrots and celery and cook, stirring, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add lentils, water/stock, thyme, salt, and pepper and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, until the lentils are tender but not mushy (about 30 minutes but check after 20 minutes).
2. While lentils are cooking, heat remaining tablespoon oil in a 10-inch nonstick skillet over high heat until hot but not smoking, then brown sausage on all sides, about 5 minutes. Cool sausage slightly on a cutting board, then cut into ¼ to ½ -inch-thick diagonal pieces. Add sausage to soup and stir in vinegar.

Garnish with a branch of thyme or sprig of parsley. Could also add a dollop of lowfat sour cream. Add a salad, some crusty bread and a glass of Malbec...and you've got a great winter dinner for friends or family!