



Lentils from the beginning

3000ml *sand*

3000ml *clay*

3000ml *vegetable matter*

200ml *soil (the inoculum)*

100g *hair*

100g *sugar or honey*

1000ml *liquid*

100 *red lentil seeds*

Recipes and scores assume things. For instance, that you have access to a supermarket or have training in music (and that you have a clean space to work and time to spend). A recipe might also assume you have to grow the plants from the beginning. Autotrophs, like plants and cyanobacteria, can make food out of sunlight; we eutrophs (animals) have to make food from autotrophs (or other eutrophs), starting with planting seeds in a hospitable soil.

You're going to need a couple of things from the outside world. One: some sand, from a beach, playground or hardware store. Second thing is what we call an inoculum, a small amount of already existing soil that you can dig up anywhere you see plants and trees growing or grass. You need that because that's going to introduce microbial and fungal life into your soil, the way a sourdough starter releases culture into dough. If you don't have a place to dig up clay, bentonite clay from a health food store is your best bet.

Mix the sand, clay and inoculum in a large bowl, tub or urn.

Blend your vegetable matter. Add the hair, snipped or ground finely. If it's yours, this adds your own DNA to the soil, too. Add the sugar or honey.

Now add the liquid (water, or any non-toxic waste liquid you have to hand, for example water used to boil rice, or urine).

Mix until all is amalgamated.

Now keep it from drying out or becoming wet and muddy, turn over to aerate every so often, and if you want, add some worms. In a month, you will have an excellent-quality soil.

Plant your lentil seeds 1cm deep in this soil, in a warm place. After they germinate take them outside. Water them weekly with 2 cm of water and keep the lentils in sun as much as possible. After three months you will have lentil vines with pods. Your soil will be infused with nitrogen and enriched by the lentil plants. You could try growing chili peppers in it next, or wild garlic, or tomatoes. Pick the lentils from the pods and use the vines and pods as more vegetable matter to make more soil.

Now add 1 cup of lentils to a pot, with 3 cups of water (you can also have aromatic vegetables in here, like onion, carrot, fennel, or put in chopped tomatoes). Boil, and simmer for 30 minutes. Add some salt, and then, in a small pan, heat 2 tablespoons of fat (oil, butter, or lard). When the fat is very hot, add spices—the classic is 1 teaspoon cumin seeds, 3-4 dried chilies, and a clove of sliced garlic—and sizzle until the seeds are blackened. Pour all this into your Dal. Eat.

Asad Raza

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