Slow-Cooker Creamy Tomato Lentil Soup

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Total Time	4 hours 10 minutes
Prep Time	10 minutes
Cook Time	4 hours
Rating	★★★★★ (4,967)

A summer soup is not an oxymoron. Take this lively lentil soup, rich and aromatic from both fresh and cooked tomatoes, and basil. Adding fresh tomatoes and basil at both the beginning and end of cooking ensures you get both their mellow, sweet side as well as their fresh, zingy side. The tomato paste and cream lend their sturdy flavors in a way that's reminiscent of vodka sauce, while the lentils almost melt away into the background. The slow-cooker is actually a great warm-weather tool, because it doesn't heat up your kitchen the way the oven does, and it uses very little energy. This soup holds very well on warm before you add the finishing ingredients, making the timing flexible and weeknight-friendly.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

1 pound 12 ounces tomatoes, roughly chopped, divided (see Tip)

1 ½ cups red lentils, rinsed

4 garlic cloves, smashed and chopped

1 large basil sprig plus 1 cup roughly chopped basil

¼ cup tomato paste

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon kosher salt (such as Diamond Crystal)

PREPARATION

Step 1

1 ½ teaspoons sugar

1 teaspoon dried oregano

Black pepper

Juice of 1 lemon

¾ cup heavy cream

In a 6- to 8-quart slow-cooker, combine 5 cups water, about 1 pound of the tomatoes (no need to be exact) along with any juices, the lentils, garlic, basil sprig, tomato paste, olive oil, salt, sugar, oregano and several generous grinds of black pepper. Cook on high for 4 hours.

Step 2

Remove and discard the basil sprig. (It's OK if it falls apart.) Whisk the soup vigorously to help the tomatoes and lentils fall apart and become smooth.

Step 3

Stir in the remaining tomatoes and chopped basil, plus the lemon juice and the cream. Taste for seasoning and add more salt or pepper if necessary. The soup will thicken as it cools; add more water as necessary for the texture you like.

TIP

Feel free to use any kind of tomato that you have on hand: Almost-falling apart beefsteaks would be lovely, as would cherry tomatoes or plum tomatoes. (If you use all cherry tomatoes, just be aware that there will be more tomato skin in the soup, so choose thinner skinned varieties, like Sungold, if you can.) Outside of tomato season, use a 15-ounce can of tomatoes to start, and finish with chopped cherry or grape tomatoes, which tend to be better than other varieties out of season.

Private Notes

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