



Red Lentil Stew

Serves 6 **Cooking Time** 6 to 8 hours on Low or 3 to 5 hours on High

✓ WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Deeply flavorful, exotically spiced *dal*—dishes made from lentils—are comforting, hearty Indian stews that have a porridgelike consistency when cooked. We like mild, slightly nutty-tasting red lentils, which fade to a light mustard hue during cooking, and set out to create a slow-cooked version of *masoor dal*. In order to capture the complex flavors of Indian cuisine we needed to use a handful of warm spices—coriander, cumin, cinnamon, turmeric, cardamom, and red pepper flakes—and were pleased to find these contributed vibrant flavor notes even after hours in the slow cooker. Coconut milk ensured the lentils had a creamy consistency and imparted a rich flavor, while tender carrots, peas, diced raw tomatoes, and cilantro accented the stew with colorful bursts of flavor. Though it is typically served as a side dish, we like to serve this striking, creamy dal over Easy White Rice (page 134) as a hearty, vegetarian main course. It's also nice served with dollops of yogurt.

- 2 onions, minced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon minced or grated fresh ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ⅛ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 4 cups water, plus extra as needed
- 1 (14-ounce) can coconut milk
- 1 pound red lentils (2¼ cups), picked over and rinsed
- 1 pound carrots (about 6), peeled and chopped medium
- 1 pound plum tomatoes (4 to 6), cored and chopped medium
- 1 cup frozen peas
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ cup minced fresh cilantro

1. Microwave onions, garlic, oil, ginger, coriander, cumin, cinnamon, turmeric, cardamom, and red pepper flakes in bowl, stirring occasionally, until onions are softened, about 5 minutes; transfer to slow cooker.

2. Stir water, coconut milk, lentils, and carrots into slow cooker. Cover and cook until lentils are tender, 6 to 8 hours on low or 3 to 5 hours on high.

3. Stir in tomatoes, cover, and cook on high until heated through, about 10 minutes. Stir in peas and let sit until heated through, about 5 minutes. (Adjust stew consistency with additional hot broth as needed.) Stir in cilantro, season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve.

SMART SHOPPING COCONUT MILK

Coconut milk is not the thin liquid found inside the coconut itself; that is called coconut water. Coconut milk is a product made by steeping equal parts shredded coconut meat and either warm milk or water. The meat is pressed or mashed to release as much liquid as possible, the mixture is strained, and the result is coconut milk. We tasted seven nationally available brands (five regular and two light) in coconut pudding, coconut rice, a Thai-style chicken soup, and chicken curry. In the soup and curry, tasters preferred **Chaokoh** because of its exceptionally low sugar content. Ka-Me brand coconut milk is best suited for sweet recipes. Of the two light brands tasted, we preferred the richer flavor of A Taste of Thai, though neither was nearly as creamy as the full-fat options.

