CURRIED RED LENTIL SOUP (8 servings)

2 cups dried red lentils
3-4 cups water
1/4 cup sherry, white wine, or dry vermouth
1 onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 carrot, cut in coins
1 rib celery, sliced
1-2 bell peppers, any color or a mix, seeded and chopped
1-2 potatoes, peeled and diced
2 cups chopped cabbage or cauliflower (optional)
4-5 cups water or vegetable broth
1 tsp ground turmeric
1 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp ground coriander
1/2 tsp ground ginger or 1/2 tbsp minced fresh ginger
1/4 to 1/2 tsp salt (use less if you have used salted veg broth)
1/4 tsp ground black pepper
Cayenne, fresh chilis, or hot sauce—to your taste

Cilantro, washed carefully and chopped (optional garnish)





In a medium saucepan, cover the red lentils with the water, bring to a boil, and simmer about 10 minutes. Let stand on the stove while you prepare the other ingredients.

In a large pot, add the sherry or other liquid and sauté the onions and garlic about 2 minutes. Add the carrots and sauté another 3 minutes. Add all the remaining ingredients, bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer, partially covered, for at least 20 minutes. Serve hot.

Note: Like so many soup recipes, this one is very forgiving. You could probably skip the step of cooking the red lentils separately, put every ingredient in the pot, bring to a boil, and simmer 20-30 minutes, and get just as good a result. If you do that, please add any salt at the end of cooking; this guarantees that the lentils will cook properly. (Always add salt only after beans are as cooked to the tenderness you want.) Taste before adding salt, especially if you have used vegetable broth that contains salt.

Variations:

You could add almost any cut-up vegetable, including leftover and frozen veggies, as long as you leave enough time for the vegetable to cook.

You could substitute yellow split peas for the red lentils, but they will have a somewhat longer cooking time.