

Parsi Dhansak

'Dhansak' a Parsi Cuisine specialty filled with aromatic Indian spices and inspired by ancient Persian cooking method, manages to draw attention to its impressive manner of bringing hearty vegetables, a meat of choice and wholesome lentils together in one delicious pot of goodness.



Prep Time
15 mins

Cook Time
45 mins

Servings: 4

Ingredients

Dhansak Tempering Base or 'Vaghar' (as we call it)

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon ginger garlic paste or ½ tsp each minced garlic and grated ginger
- 2 teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup jaggery or 2 tablespoons regular or brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons tamarind paste lemon or lime juice
- 2 cups chicken stock or replace with water

Dhansak Spice Blend Using Ground Spice - Simple Version

- 2 teaspoons Garam Masala replace with ½ teaspoon each ground - cardamom, cinnamon, nutmeg and black pepper
- 1½ teaspoon ground red chili or Cayenne pepper reduce by ½ teaspoon for less spicy
- 1½ teaspoon ground cumin reduce by ½ teaspoon for less spicy
- 1½ teaspoon ground coriander reduce by ½ teaspoon for less spicy
- 1½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon turmeric

Dhansak Lentil, Vegetables and Meat

- ½ cup toor lentil or yellow pigeon peas
- ½ cup split yellow moong lentils can be replaced with toor lentils
- 1½-2 cups vegetables of choice, cut in cubes Use a mix in equal parts of your choice from: butternut squash, pumpkin, potatoes, sweet potato, yam, zucchini, eggplant, red onion, gourd, squash, spinach, fenugreek, kale. Max of 4 vegetables is good.
- 1 lb chicken or mutton/lamb bone in and skinless, or boneless and cut in large chunks
- 2 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon ghee or butter
- chopped cilantro for garnish

Instructions

Stovetop One Pot Method

1. Heat oil in a large pot. Fry onion and ginger garlic paste till the onion is pink.
2. Add all the spices and salt, along with the jaggery/sugar, tamarind/lemon/lime and stock or water. Cook the spices well for 3-4 minutes. You will have a deep brown color.
3. Add the lentils and vegetables along with 7 cups of water. That's one of the reasons why you need a large pot.
4. Cook covered, adding more water only as required, until the lentil and vegetables are soft enough to blend. Use a hand blender to grind to a thick chunky preparation, a large pot helps with any splatter.
5. Add the meat, and more water if the Dhansak is too thick. Cover and let the meat cook through.
6. Add the finishing elements. Cider vinegar, cilantro and butter or ghee. Check for salt, adding more if required. Let the flavors blend over low heat for 5 minutes.
7. Serve Parsi Dhansak ladled over steamed caramelized rice along with Kachumber chopped salad.

Notes

1. Dhansak spice blend can be found at specialty Indian and spice stores. Each type of blend and brand is very distinct. If using, replace all the spices with about 3-4 tablespoons of the blend. Start low since some blends can be very spicy.
2. Dhansak can be made in two pots. The tempering can be made separately and the lentil and vegetables can be boiled separately in a pot or pressure cooker, crushed and then the meat can be added. Finally you can merge all the elements.
3. Slow cooker and instant pot is a nice way to cook Dhansak if you prefer using them.