

Simple, practical

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Beef Lentil Stew

Rich, it all started with me raiding my dad's freezer. With his supervision, of course. He had a 3 pound package of beef, already cubed for stew into about one inch pieces. It is important to note that while it may have said "stew meat," it was definitely high quality, because it was tender and tasty beyond other stew meat that I have tasted (and hence don't often buy). But this was from a grass fed steer raised by my sister's husband.

When I saw it, I immediately thought of making beef lentil stew, which is odd because I only cook with lentils about once every 5 years, when I forget that my husband doesn't care for them... but it could be that getting the meat from my parents house triggered memories of German meals from my childhood. From

recipes I don't have. I proceeded anyway, and, as you may remember, it turned out very well!

Ingredients

3 pounds cubed beef stew meat
1 cup diced onion
1-2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cups dry lentils
2 slightly rounded teaspoons sea salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon home dehydrated garlic
6 cups water
2 tablespoons beef base
1/2 cup dehydrated tomato flakes or leather
3 cups circle sliced carrots
4 cups sliced (frozen, in this case) zucchini
1 and 1/2 cups milk
1 cup cream
~ 1/2 cup cornstarch

Per usual, I sauted the onion in the olive oil until mostly tender before adding the meat and seasonings (salt, pepper, garlic). Once those were in the pot, I continued to cook on medium-high heat until the outside of the meat was browned and just beginning to get crisp spots, but hoping to still leave some pink on the inside for now.

With that done, I added the water, lentils, beef base, tomato flakes, and carrots. I brought this just to a boil, then turned it down to simmer and cooked it about 2 hours, or until the lentils were soft.

I could probably have added the zucchini then, too, but I didn't remember it at first. After the carrots were basically tender, I put in the whole frozen 4 cup chunk, working at it every once in a while to help it come apart as it thawed in the hot pot.

While this thawing was going on, I shook the milk together with the cornstarch, in my special Tupperware shaker because I have one. When the

zucchini was completely thawed, mixed in, and warmed, I gradually stirred in the blended cornstarch-milk mix.

Lastly, I added the cream and was very glad I did. I heated this just long enough to make sure the stew was all a consistent temperature, but not long enough to make the cream curdle.

The stew was heartily approved by my father, whose opinion I value since he has been spoiled by my mother's cooking. My husband gave me a "I am surprised. This is quite good" sort of evaluation. He is always appreciative of my cooking, but remember the lentils... I liked it quite a lot myself, and can't decide if I need to wait until cooler fall weather to fix it again. Probably not. It doesn't get really warm around here until July, so there might still be some spring days when a pot of hot stew is just the thing. The kids all raved about it, but sometimes I just think they are glad to be home. Still, they ate their fill. Freshly baked biscuits are a great addition to it.