



Spicy Shepherd's Pie

Plant based lentil filling with mashed "potato" cauliflower topping

Lentil Filling:

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 2 Tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon red chili flakes
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 Tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 cup dried green or brown lentils
- 4 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- 3 Tablespoons currants
- 2 cups frozen green peas, defrosted

Mashed Cauliflower Topping

1 whole cauliflower, trimmed, cut into pieces, process into small bits
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper or to taste
1/4 teaspoon salt or garlic salt to taste
3 Tablespoons unsalted butter
1 Tablespoon olive oil
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Prepare Lentil Filling: Heat a medium saucepan over medium-high. When hot, add olive oil and onions; cook, stirring often until onions are light brown and caramelized about 5 minutes. Add bell pepper; cook 2 minutes. Turn the heat down to medium. Add tomato paste, garlic, chili flakes, salt, oregano, cumin, and cornstarch. Mix well; cook about 1 minute. Add lentils, broth, mix well; bring to a boil; then simmer on medium low for 20-25 minutes until lentils are fully cooked and tender, adding water as needed. Add currants, and peas towards the end; cook until mixture is very thick. Remove from heat; set aside.

Bake in the Oven: Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease 8-inch square pan or dish. Place cauliflower pieces in food processor; process forming into very small bits (that look like rice.)

Prepare Cauliflower Mash: Place the cauliflower bits in large microwave safe bowl; toss with ground pepper and plain or garlic salt. Cover; cook in microwave oven on high power for about 3 minutes; remove, stir; add butter, and oil; return to microwave oven; cook for 1 to 2 minutes or until cauliflower is very soft. Cool mixture until can be handled; spoon cauliflower into food processor, process to combine ingredients; add Parmesan cheese; process and then puree mixture until very smooth. Taste to adjust seasoning.

To Assemble the Pie, spoon lentils evenly into prepared pan; spoon mashed cauliflower over the top; spread into an even layer with a spatula or butter knife to cover the filling.

Bake in preheated 350 degrees F. oven for 15-20 minutes or until top is browned in spots or if desired, broil for a minute to brown the top quicker.

Serve hot. Yield: serves 4

Cook's Note: I prepared the cooked cauliflower in my microwave to limit the amount of pots used for the recipe. It can also be cooked on the stove top.

Recipe Inspired by: Vasudha Viswanath, *The Vegetarian Reset*, The Collective Book Studio, 2023. *Shepherd's Pie* p. 110.

About the Recipe: Give this classic recipe a plant-based style using hearty lentils and soft "mashed potato" textured cauliflower topping. Prepare it ahead and refrigerate it for easier slicing and serving. Warm in the microwave until hot.