

A HOUSE IN THE LEBANESE MOUNTAINS: Recipes & Stories from Beit Trad

by Sarah Trad

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Adas B'hamod

LEMON & LENTIL SOUP

Ask any Lebanese person what their favorite soup is and they will tell you it's this one: lentil soup with Swiss chard and lemon. We make ours very lemony at Beit Trad! Like all soups and stews, it tastes even better the next day.

SERVES 6

5 ½ oz Swiss chard (about 4 stalks)
fine sea salt
1 potato, about 9 oz
7 oz dried green lentils
1 onion
4 garlic cloves
1 bunch coriander or cilantro, about 1 oz
½ cup olive oil
3 ½ fl oz lemon juice (from about 2 ½ lemons)
½ teaspoon white pepper

DO SOME PREP:

Thoroughly rinse the Swiss chard stalks, then stack them on top of each other on a chopping board. Cut off the lower thick white stems and reserve for another purpose (see Note at end or recipe).

Roll the leaves together, then slice into ½-inch strips. Place in a large bowl, cover with water and 1 teaspoon fine sea salt, swish them around, then drain. Repeat once more. (The salt in the rinsing water helps draw out any grit or dirt trapped in the leaves and also softens them slightly, making them more tender and palatable.)

Peel 1 potato and cut it into ½-inch cubes.

TO START THE SOUP:

Rinse the green lentils in a fine-meshed sieve under cold running water. Place them in a large pot, pour in 5 1/8 cups fresh water, and bring to a boil.

Once boiling, add the Swiss chard strips and potato cubes. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, partially covered with a lid, for 20–30 minutes, until tender.

TO SAUTÉ THE AROMATICS:

While the soup is simmering, finely chop 1 onion. Peel and grate 4 garlic cloves, and wash and roughly chop 1 bunch coriander or cilantro

In a skillet, heat ½ cup olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion with a sprinkle of fine sea salt and cook, stirring now and then, for 5-8 minutes, until translucent.

Add the grated garlic and cook for 30 seconds, then stir in the chopped coriander for another 30 seconds. Turn off the heat.

TO FINISH THE SOUP

Remove the lid from the soup pot. Increase the heat to high and leave to boil for about 5 minutes, to slightly thicken the soup.

Meanwhile, squeeze 2 ½ lemons into a small bowl.

Reduce the heat to medium-low. Stir in the sautéed onion mixture, lemon juice, 3 teaspoons fine sea salt and ½ teaspoon white pepper. Simmer for 2-3 minutes, then turn off the heat. Season to taste with more salt or lemon juice as needed.

Ladle the warm soup into bowls and serve.

NOTE:

You can use the thick lower stems of the Swiss chard to make a wonderful dip, similar to the roasted eggplant dip known as mutabbal—and just as delicious! Just boil the stalks until tender, drain, cut into small chunks, then blend with tahini, lemon juice, and salt.