

Lentil Stew with Merguez Sausage

Most lentil stew is fairly bland. This recipe spices it up a bit by including a hot pepper blend and lamb merguez sausage. It's easy to make, and you can readily adapt it to be either more or less spicy, depending on your personal preferences.

Our lamb merguez sausage is packed in lamb casings and is free of pork or pork products. It is a touch less spicy than hot Italian sausage, with a deeper flavor, supplied by the Moroccan spices used.

Apart from the merguez sausage, there are a couple of additional "secret" ingredients. One is to use canned fire-roasted tomatoes (diced). If you've never tried them, you're in for a treat. We buy the Wegmans brand but any brand will do. The other is to use some of Penzey's spices. Penzey's is a great company, very progressive, and they make fabulous products that you can order online. Their website is: <https://www.penzeys.com/>

Ingredients:

- 2 Tb extra-virgin olive oil
- 1-1.5 lb lamb merguez sausage
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 3-4 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 large Spanish or Vidalia onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced (use more if you're a garlic lover)
- 1 Tb tomato paste
- 1 ½ Tb Herbes de Provence or Italian seasoning
- 1 tsp Penzey's Mural of Flavor spice mix
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp Penzey's Resist spice mix.
- ½ tsp red pepper flakes (increase according to your tolerance for spiciness)
- 1 28-oz can diced fire-roasted tomatoes
- 5 C stock, preferably home-made lamb or chicken stock
- 1 ½ C dry lentils, rinsed and picked over (I prefer the small French lentils; I buy them online from Palouse).
- Shredded Pecorino Romano cheese and crusty bread (for serving).

Directions:

1. Heat olive oil, and cook sausages over medium heat until lightly browned. With a slotted spoon, remove sausage to a small plate or bowl. Cut sausage links into bite-sized pieces.
2. Add the celery, carrots, and onion to the pan, and saute for 3-4 minutes until the vegetables start to soften. Stir in the minced garlic and cook 1 minute. To the center of the pan, add the tomato paste and cook one minute, stirring, to caramelize it.
3. Add the Herbes de Provence, Penzey's Mural of Flavor, salt, Penzey's Resist, and red pepper flakes, and stir to mix.
4. Add the diced tomatoes, stock, and lentils, and return the sausage to the pot. Stir to combine.
5. Bring to a boil and immediately reduce heat to a simmer until lentils are tender. How long depends on the size of your lentils. I test them every 10 minutes; they're usually barely tender in less than half an hour.

As with all soups/stews, this is much better the day after it's been made, when the flavors have had a chance to meld. (The spiciness level will diminish after holding overnight). Sprinkle with shredded Pecorino Romano cheese once reheated, and serve with crusty bread.