

dal bhat - the recipe

Dal Bhat is the most common traditional Nepalese recipe. It is the staple diet of the majority of the people eaten twice a day: mid-morning and early evening. It generally consists of lentils (dal), rice (bhat), a vegetable curry (tarkari), which is a mix of available seasonal vegetables, and green vegetables like spinach (saag). A small portion of pickle (achar) is usually included. Recipes vary by season, locality, ethnic group and family. It is eaten traditionally by hand, mixing the lentils with the rice and making a ball of the mixture with your hand, adding curry and pickle to it.

Directions

How to cook dal

Wash lentils and soak them for 5-10 minutes. Drain. Add water, salt and turmeric. Cook in a pressure cooker for 10-20 minutes or in a pot simmering, covered, for 20 to 30 minutes until lentils are soft and the consistency is similar to that of porridge. The amount of water can vary and depends on the consistency of dal preferred. Use more water for more soupy consistency. If using a steamer, use rather more than less water to avoid burning the lentils.

Fry separately over medium heat oil/ghee with finely chopped onion, garlic and ginger paste and chopped fresh green chilli until golden brown. Add this mix to the dal. Add chopped tomatoes. Serve with rice.

How to cook bhat

Wash rice and soak for 5 minutes. Drain. If using a pressure cooker, boil 7 cups of rice in 8 cups of water for about 15-20 minutes. If using a pot, boil the rice with slightly more water over medium heat for about 20-30 minutes. The rice should have a fluffy, not sticky, consistency. You can also boil the rice to the point when a rice grain is still slightly hard when squeezed with fingers, then drain the rice and steam until ready to serve.

How to cook tarkari

In a frying pan over medium heat, fry first fenugreek seeds and onion in oil. Add cut potato cubes and cauliflower. Add cumin and coriander mix, turmeric, chili powder, a cup of water, and salt. Then add garlic and ginger paste and finally the finely diced tomatoes. Cook under low heat until the curry has a gravy-like consistency. Add water if required.

How to cook saag

In a frying pan, fry 1/2 tsp of fenugreek in oil until the seeds turn black. Add spinach leaves and salt. Cook until spinach is tender.

Ingredients

For Bhat (Rice)

7 cups of rice
8 cups of water

For Dal

1 1/2 cups lentils (any kind or mixed)
4-5 cups water
Salt to taste
1/2 tsp turmeric
Oil/ghee
1 onion (optional)
1 tbsp garlic and ginger paste (freshly crushed with a mortar and pestle)
Fresh green chilli to taste (optional)
1-2 tomatoes (optional – goes well with orange and yellow lentils)

For Tarkari (Vegetable curry)

Oil/ghee
1/2 tsp fenugreek
1-2 onions
5 potatoes
1 kg cauliflower
2 1/2 tsp cumin & coriander powder mix
1/2 tsp turmeric & chilli powder
1/2 tbsp fresh garlic and ginger paste
4-5 tomatoes
1 cup of water
Salt to taste
Fresh coriander to garnish

For Saag (curried spinach)

Oil/ghee
Spinach leaves, adult/leafy preferred (cut to bite-size pieces)
1/2 tsp fenugreek
Salt to taste

For achar (pickle)

1/2 kg tomatoes (boiled or roasted and skinned)
Salt to taste
4-5 fresh green chillies (or 1 tsp chilli powder) Fresh coriander